

"Certainly."
 "Rather a big man?"
 "Yes, six feet or so—two hundred and ten pounds, perhaps."
 "And Mr. Matsumi was, of course, small?"

"Yes, small even for a Japanese."
 The Thinking Machine arose and placed his fingers on Mr. Phillips' wrist. He stood thus for half a minute.

"Did you ever notice any colour after the bell rang?" he inquired at last.

"Odour?" Mr. Phillips seemed puzzled. "Why, I don't see what an odour would have to do—"

"I didn't expect you to," interrupted The Thinking Machine curtly. "I merely want to know if you notice one?"

"No," retorted Mr. Phillips shortly. "And could you explain your precise feelings?" continued the scientist. "Did the effect of the bell's ringing seem to be entirely mental, or was it physical? In other words, was there any physical exultation or depression when you heard it?"

"It would be rather difficult to say—even to myself," responded Mr. Phillips. "It always seemed to be a shock, but I suppose it was really a mental condition which reacted on my nerves."

The Thinking Machine walked over to the window and stood with his back to the others. For a minute or more he remained there, and three eager pairs of eyes were fixed inquiringly on the back of his yellow head. Beneath the irritated voice, behind the inscrutable face, in the disjointed questioning, they all knew intuitively there was some definite purpose, but to none came a glimmer of light as to its nature.

"I think, perhaps, the matter is all clear now," he remarked musingly at last. "There are two vital questions yet to be answered. If the first of these is answered in the affirmative, I know that a mind—I may say a Japanese mind—of singular ingenious quality conceived the condition which brought about this affair; if in the negative, the entire matter becomes ridiculously simple."

Mr. Phillips was leaning forward, listening greedily. "There was hope and fear, doubt and confidence, eagerness and a certain tense restraint in his manner. Doctor Perdue was incredulously silent; Hatch merely waited."

"What made the bell ring?" demanded Mr. Phillips.

"I must find the answer to the two remaining questions first," returned The Thinking Machine.

"You mentioned a Japanese," said Mr. Phillips. "Do you suspect Mr. Matsumi of any connection with it—the mystery?"

"I never suspect persons of things, Mr. Phillips," said The Thinking Machine curtly. "I never suspect—I always know. When I know in this case I shall inform you. Mr. Hatch and I are going out for a few minutes. When we return the matter can be disposed of in ten minutes."

He led the way out and along the hall to the little room where the gong hung. Hatch closed the door as he entered. Then for the third time the scientist examined the bells. He struck the fifth violently time after time, and after each stroke he thrust an inquisitive nose almost against it, and sniffed. Hatch stared at him in wonderment. When the scientist had finished he shook his head as if answering a question in the negative. With Hatch following he passed out into the street.

"What's the matter with Phillips?" the reporter ventured, as they reached the sidewalk.

"Scared, frightened," was the tart rejoinder. "He's merely morbidly anxious to account for the bell's ringing. If I had been absolutely certain before I came out I should have told him. I am certain now. You know, Mr. Hatch, when a thing is beyond immediate understanding it instantly suggests the supernatural to some minds. Mr. Phillips wouldn't confess it, but he sees back of the ringing of that bell some uncanny power—a threat, perhaps—and the thing has preyed upon him until he's nearly insane. When I can arrange to make him understand perfectly why the bell rings he will be all right again."
 "I can readily see how the ringing of the bell strikes one as uncanny," Hatch declared grimly. "Have you an idea what causes it?"

"I know what causes it," returned the other irritably. "And if you don't know you're stupid."

The reporter shook his head hopelessly.

They crossed the street to the big apartment-house opposite, and entered. The Thinking Machine inquired for and was shown into the office of the manager. He had only one question.

"Was there a hall, or reception, or anything of that sort, held in this building on Tuesday night, the eleventh of this month?" he inquired.

"No," was the response. "There has never been anything of that sort here."

"Thanks," said The Thinking Machine. "Good-day."

Turning abruptly he left the manager to figure that out as best he could, and, with Hatch following, ascended the stairs to the next floor. Here was a wide, airy hallway extending the full length of the building. The Thinking Machine glanced neither to right nor left; he went straight to the rear, where a plate glass window enframed a panorama of the city. From where they stood the city's roofs slanted down toward the heart of the business district, half a mile away.

As Hatch looked on The Thinking Machine took out his watch and set it two and a-half minutes forward, after which he turned and walked to the other end of the hall. Here, too, was a plate-glass window. For just a fraction of an instant he stood staring straight out at Phillips' home across the way; then, without a word, retraced his steps down the stairs and into the street.

Hatch's head was overflowing with questions, but he choked them back and merely trailed along. They re-entered the Phillips' house in silence. Doctor Perdue and Harvey Phillips met them in the hallway. An expression of infinite relief came into the physician's face at the sight of The Thinking Machine.

"I'm glad you're back so soon," he said quickly. "Here's a new development and a singular one." He referred evidently to a long envelope he held. "Step into the library here."

They entered, and Doctor Perdue carefully closed the door behind them.

"Just a few minutes ago Harvey received a sealed envelope by mail," he explained. "It enclosed this one, also sealed. He was going to show it to his father, but I didn't think it wise, because of—because—"

The Thinking Machine took the envelope in one slender hand and examined it. It was a perfectly plain white one, and bore only a single line written in a small, copper-plate hand with occasional unexpected angles:

"To be opened when the fifth bell rings eleven times."

Something as nearly approaching complacent satisfaction as Hatch had ever seen overspread the petulant countenance of The Thinking Machine, and a long, aspirated "Ah!" escaped the thin lips. There was a lushed silence. Harvey Phillips, to whom nothing of the mystery was known beyond the actual death of Wagner, sought to read what it all meant in Doctor Perdue's face. In turn Doctor Perdue's eyes were fastened on The Thinking Machine.

"Of course, you don't know whom this is from, Mr. Phillips?" inquired the scientist of the young man.

"I have no idea," was the reply. "It seemed to amaze Doctor Perdue here, but, frankly, I can't imagine why."

"You don't know the handwriting?"

"No."

"Well, I do," declared The Thinking Machine emphatically. "It's Mr. Matsumi's." And in it lies the key to this affair of the bell. The mere fact that it came at a proven everything as I saw it."

"But it can't be from Matsumi," protested the young man. "The postmark on the outside was Cleveland."

"That means merely that he is running away to escape arrest on a charge of murder."

"Then Matsumi killed Wagner?" Hatch asked quickly.

"I didn't say it was a confession," responded the scientist curtly. "It is merely a history of the bell. I dare say—"

Suddenly the door was thrown open and Mrs. Phillips entered. Her face was ashen.

"Doctor, he is worse—sinking rapidly!" she gasped. "Please come!"

Doctor Perdue glanced from her pallid face to the impassive Thinking Machine.

"Van Dusen," he said solemnly, "if you can do anything to explain, that thing, do it now. I know it will save a man's reason—it might save his life."

"Is he conscious?" inquired the scientist of Mrs. Phillips.

"No, he seems to have utterly collapsed," she explained. "I was talking to him when suddenly he sat up in bed as if listening, then shrieked something I didn't understand and fell back unconscious."

Doctor Perdue was dragged out of the room by the wife and son. The Thinking Machine glanced at his watch. It was three and a-half minutes past four o'clock. He nodded, then turned to Hatch.

"Please go into the little room and close the window," he instructed. "Mr. Phillips has heard the bell again, and I imagine Doctor Perdue needs me. Meanwhile, put this envelope in your pocket." And he handed to Hatch the mysterious sealed packet.

It was twenty minutes past nine o'clock that evening. In the little room where the gong hung were Franklin Phillips, pale and weak, but eager; Doctor Perdue, The Thinking Machine, Harvey Phillips and Hatch. For four hours Doctor Perdue and the scientist had laboured over the unconscious financier, and finally a tinge of colour returned to the pale lips; then came consciousness.

"It was my suggestion, Mr. Phillips, that we are here," explained The Thinking Machine quietly. "I want to show you just why and how the bell rings, and incidentally clear up the other points of the mystery. Now, if I should tell you that the bell will sound a given number of times at a given instant, and it should sound, you would know that I was aware of the cause?"

"Certainly," assented Mr. Phillips eagerly.

"And then if I demonstrated tangibly how it sounded you would be satisfied?"

"Yes, of course—yes!"

"Very good." And the scientist turned to the reporter: "Mr. Hatch, phone the Weather Bureau and ask if there was a storm about midnight preceding the finding of Wagner's body; also if there was thunder. And get the direction and velocity of the wind. I know, of course, that there was thunder, and that the wind was either from the east, or there was no wind. I know it, not from personal observation, but by the pure logic of events."

The reporter nodded.

"Also I will have to ask you to borrow for me somewhere a violin and a champagne-glass."

There happened to be a violin in the house. Harvey Phillips went for it, and Hatch went to the phone. Five minutes later he reappeared; Harvey Phillips had preceded him.

"Light wind from the east, four miles an hour," Hatch reported tersely. "The storm threatened just before midnight. There was vivid lightning and heavy thunder."

To prosaic Doctor Perdue these preliminaries smacked a little of charlatanry. Mr. Phillips was interested, but impatient. The Thinking Machine, watch in hand, lay back in his chair, squinting steadily upward.

"Now, Mr. Phillips," he announced, "in just thirty-three and three-quarter minutes the bell will ring. It will sound ten times. I am taking pains to reproduce the exact conditions under which the bell has always sounded since you have known it, because if I show you there can be no doubt."

Mr. Phillips was leaning forward, gripping the arms of his chair.

"Meanwhile, I will reconstruct the events, not as they might have happened, but as they must have happened," continued The Thinking Machine. "They will not be in sequence, but as they were revealed to me by each added fact, for logic, Mr. Phillips, is only a sum in arithmetic, and the answer based on every known fact must be correct as inevitably as that two and two make four—not sometimes, but all the time."

"Well, a man was found dead here—shot. His mere presence indicated burglary. The open window showed how he probably entered. Considering only these superficial facts, we see instantly that more than one person might have entered that window. Yet it is hardly likely that two thieves entered, and one killed the other before they got their booty, for nothing was stolen, and it is still less likely that one man came here to commit suicide. What then?"

"The blood mark on the bell. It was made by a human hand. Yet a man shot instantly dead could not have made it. Therefore we know there was another person. The door locked on the outside absolutely confirmed this. Or

dinally, I dare say, the door is never locked! No? Then who locked it? Certainly not a second thief, for he would not have risked escaping through the house after a shot which, for all he knew, had aroused every one. Ergo, some one in the house locked the door. Who?"

"One of your servants, Giles Francis, is missing. Did he hear some one at the room? No, for he would have warned the household. What happened to him? Where is he? There is, of course, a chance that he ran out to find an officer and was disposed of in some way by an outside confederate of the man inside. But remember, please, the last we know of him he was asleep in bed. The vital point, therefore, is, what aroused him? From that we can easily develop the subsequent actions."

The Thinking Machine paced and glanced at his watch, then toward the east window, which was open with the screen in.

"We know," he resumed, "that if Francis had been aroused by burglars, or by a sound which he attributed to burglars, he would have awakened other servants. We must suppose he was awakened by some noise. What is most probable? Thunder! That would account for his every act. So let us say, for the moment that it was thunder, that he remembered this window was open, partially dressed himself and came here to close it. This was, we will also presume, just before midnight. He met Wagner here, and in some way got Wagner's revolver. Then the fatal shot was fired."

"From this point, as the facts developed, Francis' acts became more difficult of comprehension. I could readily see how, when Wagner fell, Francis might have placed his hand over the heart to see if he were dead, and thus stained his hands; but why did Francis then smear blood on the fifth bell of the gong, leave this room, locking the door behind him, and run into the street. In other words, why did he lock the door and run?"

"I had already attached considerable importance to the gong, primarily because of the blood, and had examined the bells closely. I even scratched them to assure myself that they were bronze, and not a precious metal which would attract thieves. Then, Mr. Phillips, I heard your story, and instantly I knew why Francis locked the door and ran. It was because he was frightened—horribly, unspeakably frightened. Naturally there was a nerve-racking shock when he found he had killed a man. Then as he stood, horror-stricken perhaps, the bell rang. It affected him as it did you, Mr. Phillips, but under circumstances which were inconceivably more terrifying to a timid man. The bell rang six, seven, eight—perhaps a dozen times. The Francis, looking down upon a man he had killed, it was maddening, inexplicable. He placed his hand on it to stop the sound, then, crazed with terror, ran out of the room, locking the door behind him, and out of the house. The outer door closed with a spring-lock. He will return in time, because, of course, he was justified in killing Wagner."

Again The Thinking Machine glanced at his watch. Eighteen minutes of the specified thirty-three had elapsed.

"Now, as to the bell itself," he went on, "its history is of no consequence. It's Japanese and we know it's extremely old. We must assume from Mr. Matsumi's conduct that it is an object of—of, say, veneration. We can imagine it hanging in a temple; perhaps it rang there, and averted multitudes instead. Perhaps they regarded it as prophetic. After its disappearance from Japan—we don't know how—Mr. Matsumi was naturally amazed to see it here, and was anxious to buy it. You refused to listen to him, Mr. Phillips. Then he went to Wagner and offered, we'll say, several thousand dollars for it. That accounts for Wagner's letters and his presence here. He came to steal the thing which he couldn't buy. His denial of all knowledge of the bell is explained readily by Detective Mallory's statement that he had long been suspected of handling stolen goods. He denied because he feared a trap."

"I may add that I attributed an ingenuity of construction to the bell which it did not possess. When I asked if you ever noted any odour when it sounded, Mr. Phillips, I had an idea that perhaps your present condition had been brought about by a subtle poison in which the gong had once been immersed, particles of which, when the bell sounded, might have been cast off and down into the