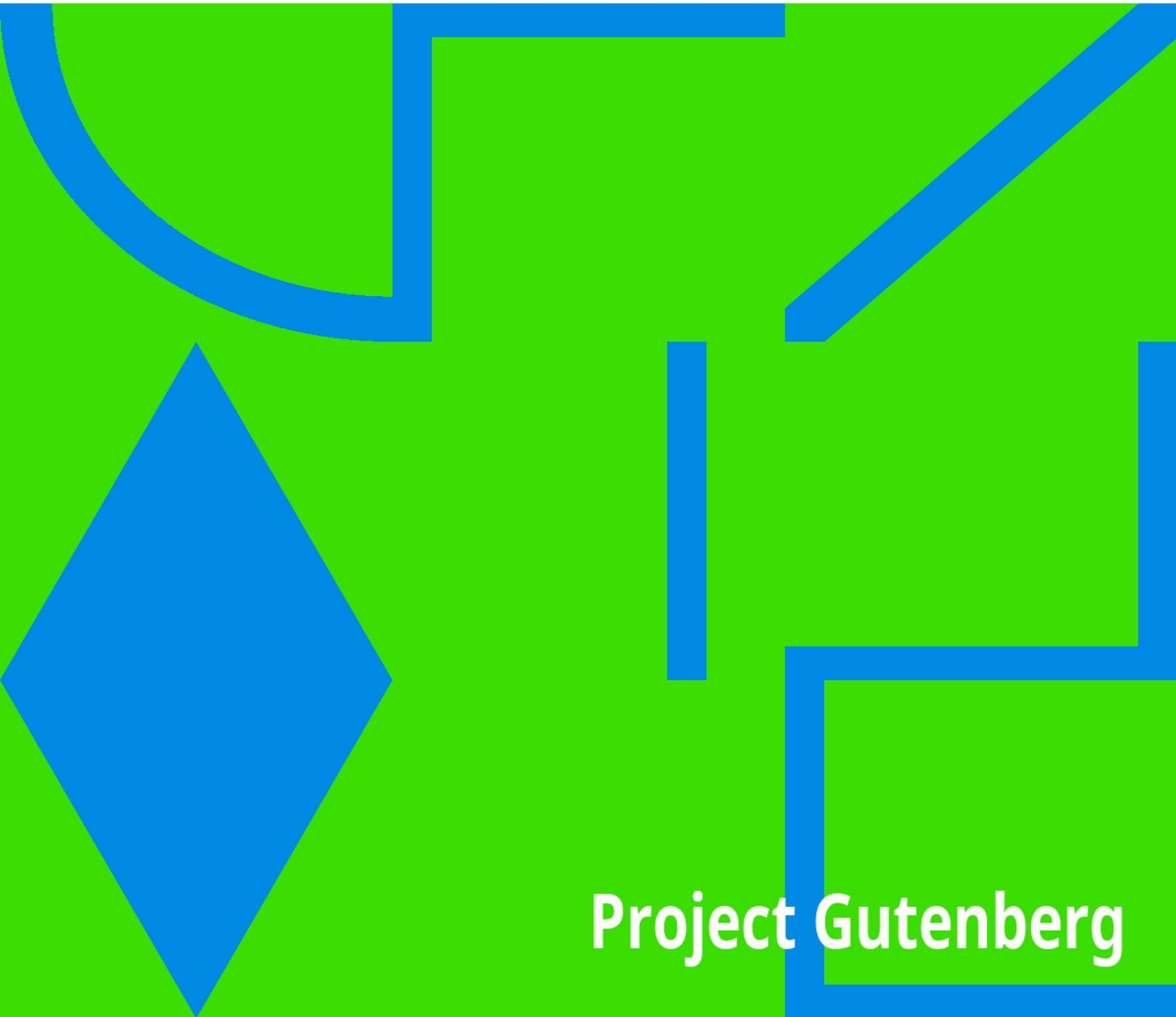


Jonah's Luck

Fergus Hume



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Title: Jonah's Luck

Author: Fergus Hume

Release date: January 16, 2018 [eBook #56385]

Most recently updated: November 10, 2018

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Bowen from page scans provided by
Google Books (the University of Wisconsin-Madison)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JONAH'S LUCK

Transcriber's Notes:

1. Page scan source: Google Books
<https://books.google.com/books?id=0CT7dv6IKAEC>
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JONAH'S LUCK

JONAH'S LUCK

BY

FERGUS HUME

AUTHOR OF

*"The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," "The Guilty House," "The White Room," "The Wooden Hand,"
"The Fatal Song," "The Scarlet Bat," etc., etc.*

LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1906

This Edition is issued for circulation in India and the Colonies only.

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JONAH'S LUCK

CHAPTER I

THE ADVENTURE OF THE INN

It was the close of a chilly autumn day; and under a lowering grey sky the landscape of river and marsh and low-lying hills looked forbiddingly forlorn. White mists veiled the wet earth; the road, running between withered hedgerows, was ankle-deep in mud, and the stubbled fields held streaks of water between their ploughed ridges. Occasionally the pale beams of a weakened sun would break through the foggy air: but the fitful light, without warmth or power, only served to accentuate the depression of the scene. The most cheerful of men would have succumbed to the pessimism of the moment.

As it was, the solitary creature who trudged along the miry highway accepted his misery with sulky resignation. At intervals he lifted a hopeless face to the darkening clouds: sometimes he peered idly to right and left, and twice he halted, breathing heavily, a monument of wretchedness. But usually, with his hands in the pockets of a thin jacket, and with a bent head, he plodded doggedly onward, bearing submissively a situation which he could not mend. In his gait there was the hint of the pedestrian who aims at no goal. Without eagerness, without resolution, with slack muscles and a blank expression, he toiled like a hag-ridden dreamer through those dreary, weary, eerie, Essex marshes, a derelict of civilisation.

Yet his face, when revealed by the wan sunshine, appeared young and handsome and refined, though sadly worn and lean. The skin, bronzed to a clear brown by wind and rain and sunshine, was marred by unexpected wrinkles, less the work of time than of care. His closely-clipped hair and small moustache exhibited the hue of ripe corn; his eyes possessed the fathomless blue of Italian skies; his thin nose, slightly curved, his firm chin

and set lips revealed character and determination. Also, he had the frame of a wiry athlete, the spring-gait of a long-distance walker, and the expansive forehead of a student. Such a man should not have been ploughing through the mud of a lonely country road, with but a threadbare suit of blue serge to protect him from the inclement weather. Something was wrong: and none knew that better than the tramp himself. But whatever might be the cause of his misery, he kept it in his heart, being by nature reticent, and by experience, suspicious.

At sunset the air became darker, the mists thicker, the scene even more dreary. Still he laboured onward, but now, for the first time, with a hint of resolution in his movements, bracing himself, as it were, for a final spurt, to attain a newly-guessed-at end. On the right he could hear the lapping of the Thames against its weedy banks, on the left a dull dripping of water from leafless boughs, saluted his ears. Sometimes there sounded the cry of a belated bird; again would come the shrill whistling of trains, and not infrequently the hooting of a siren, as steamers passed each other on the blind river. And, between pauses, he could hear his own weary breathing, and the squelching of the water in his well-worn shoes. None of these sounds tended to raise his spirits, which were, at the moment, as low as the tide of the unseen stream.

Only when a dim light glimmered through the mists did he show any signs of interest in the physical, and then he heaved a sigh of relief. A jingle of money came from his right-hand pocket as he moved his fingers, and a gleam of satisfaction flitted across his sullen face. The light, as he surmised, must come from some cottage, or farm-house, or inn, and there he would be able to obtain bed and board for the night. It had been his intention to push on to Tarhaven, in search of a friend, but the rapid closing in of the night and the increasing gloom of the fogs, forced him to spend his last few pence in rest and food. The evil of to-day he could no longer endure: the morrow would, and must, look after itself--a true beggar's philosophy, and what was he but one of the unemployed.

The light became stronger as he drew near, and he found himself unexpectedly on the outskirts of what he presumed was a small village, and within a yard or so of the inn. The hostel was pretentious, seeing that it

consisted of two storeys, and yet it was mean in appearance, as the walls were merely of whitewashed mud, and the roof of sodden grey thatch. Over the low, broad door, flanked by dripping benches, appeared a sign advertising, in rude black letters, that the house was "The Marsh Inn." Through the windows on either side of the closed door, gleamed a ruddy light telling of comfort and warmth within, obtainable, doubtless, at a small charge. With his hand on the latch, since the entry was free to all comers, stood the tramp, while a shrill voice objurated within, without pause or grammar.

"Jus' slip out t' git water, y' bloomin' silly. Pope wants 'is tea, bein' took with poetry. I don' keep y' fur show nohow. But thet's fine lydies all over: ho yuss. I want y' fur a glarse cupboard, in corse, y' lazy Jezebel, 'Eaven forgive me fur bringin' y' int' 'Oly Writ, es the parsin torks of."

Before the end of this pleasant admonition the door flew open so suddenly that the stranger started back. Past him, shot a girl of small stature, with a white, haggard face, firmly closed lips and defiant eyes. She was scarcely a woman, and weak in her appearance, so the zinc bucket she swung at her side was undeniably too heavy for her frail strength. The tramp heard her gasp as she sprang into the mist, and with the unconsidered haste of a kindly heart, he followed impulsively. Her laboured breathing guided him to a well, encircled with rough stone-work and surmounted by an iron wheel. Down dropped the jangling bucket, and the girl, breathing with exhaustion, strove to bring it to the surface again, weighty with water. The effort extorted a low, heart-breaking sob.

"This is too much for you," said the tramp in a refined and pleasant voice. "Allow me!" and he fell to work.

The girl started when he spoke, but she did not cry out. Evidently she was accustomed to command her feelings. In the mist she could scarcely see the face of her assistant, but his voice sounded like that of a gentleman, and there lurked a quality in its tones which gave her confidence. In a moment or so he had the filled bucket in his grip, and was walking towards the inn. At the door the girl silently took his burden from him with a nod of thanks, and entered with a word of gratitude. And her voice was also refined, by no means the voice of a servant. Howsoever this girl came to occupy so menial a position,

the tramp guessed that she was a gentlewoman. However, he was too weary to weave romances about beggarmaids, and was no King Cophetua to do so. He sighed and walked in.

The room was small and ancient, with a low ceiling and a gigantic fire-place, in which glowed a noble driftwood fire. On either side of this stood settles, and in the centre of the room, was an oblong deal table, upon which appeared pewter tankards, and clumsy china mugs. The floor was sanded, the smoke-panelled walls were decorated with cheap hunting pictures, vilely coloured, and with illustrations cut from *‘The Graphic’*. Also there was an old horse-hair sofa, of the ugly Albert period, a cumbersome chair or two, and spittoons. A dingy paraffin lamp dangled from the grimy, whitewashed ceiling, blackening it with smoke, and diffusing a dull yellow glare. In fact this especial tap-room was of the kind usually to be found by the dozen in agricultural districts, unlovely, dirty, cheap, and vulgar, yet comfortable enough in an animal way.

On one settle, sat a lean, loosely-knit youth of of twenty, with a slack, foolish face, and a drooping underlip, revealing small serrated teeth. His hair was long and unbrushed, his clothes were of well-worn tweed, extremely untidy, and badly fitting. Book in hand he stared at the ceiling, with lack-lustre eyes, oblivious to his surroundings. Opposite to him, and watching sneeringly, sat an elderly man, with a strong square face, much inflamed with drink. His apparel was disreputable, his head bald, and his beard untrimmed. Yet he had the thoughtful eyes of a scholar, and his hands, though dirty, were white and slender, and eloquently emphasised the fact to the observant, that he worked less with them than with his brain. Undoubtedly he had been gently reared, and the cause of his falling into this mire, could be discerned only too plainly in his red nose and shiny skin, and in the affectionate way in which he grasped a glass of what looked like water, and which was really gin.

Lastly, the new-comer's eyes wandered to the landlady, and in her he beheld the representative Whitechapel virago, so well-known in the police-courts of that district. She was tall and lean, fierce in looks, vehement of tongue, prodigal of gestures: a slattern in dress and a tyrant in manner. Having chased the girl with the bucket into the back parts of the house, she strode forward with the swing of a grenadier, and the insolence of a bully, to face the new

guest.

"An' wot may y' want?" she demanded, harshly scornful.

"Bed and board for the night," replied the tramp, curtly.

"Ho! An' the money? Eh? D'y think I'm a-goin' t'waste five bob."

The man produced two half-crowns.

"A meal now, a bed later, and breakfast at nine in the morning."

"Five, an' praps bad money," muttered the woman, biting one of the coins, "sevening y' mean."

"Five shillings is all I mean to give. If you don't," he made a motion to take back the money.

The woman, who was really overpaid, closed her broad red hand sharply, and nodded contemptuously.

"But y' don't git th' bes' bedroom, thet bein' taiken by a gent, es is a gent, an' not a broken down toff. 'Ow do I know es y're respectable?"

"I certify," said a grand mellow voice from one settle, "that Mr. Angus Herries is well-born and honest!" Then with a sudden plunge into the Scottish dialect. "Dinna ding the laddie wi' sic blatter, ye fule wumon."

Herries wheeled round at the sound of those trumpet tones, and stared at the stout old rascal, who sipped his gin with a knowing leer.

"Gowrie," he gasped, quite taken aback. "Mr. Gowrie."

"Ye've a quick eye, my laddie. Michael Gowrie it is, though ye micht ca' me the Reverend Michael Gowrie, an' nae burn the tongue o' ye. Sit ye doon, my mon, an' we'll hae a dram togither for the sake o' auld lang syne." He hummed the last seven words.

Herries sat on the opposite settle, next to the untidy youth, who cast sidelong,

disdainful looks on him, but took no further notice.

"I want food rather than drink," said the young man wearily.

"Aye! but drink is the ain an' the tither ye ken."

"Mister," cried the landlady, who had been bottling up her wrath, "I'd hev y' know, es m' naime es 'Liza Narby, an' I comes of genteel folk in Rotherhithe. Don't y' call me a bloomin' fool. D'ye see?"

"Pardon me," said the Reverend Michael in excellent English. "I did not misuse the word 'blooming,' which applies only to young and lovely beings of your sex."

"Such es Elspeth," sneered Mrs. Narby, with the venom of an ugly woman.

"Haud your tongue, ye limmer," thundered Gowrie, evidently irritated, and cast a look at the door, through which the girl had vanished, "or, nae mair custom do ye get frae me."

"Ho!" shouted Mrs. Narby, with her arms akimbo, and going at once on the warpath, "'spose I kin do without thet any'ow, an'----"

She was about to launch out in true Whitechapel style, when the untidy youth intervened listlessly.

"Milton talks of a blooming archangel," said he, addressing the Rev. Michael Gowrie.

"Nae in your mither's sense," chuckled the scholar.

But that a bell tinkled somewhere in the back premises, Mrs. Narby would have returned to the attack.

"There's thet gent, es come this night," she said, looking at her son,--for the untidy youth, held such a relationship towards this Amazon. "Go an' see wot he wants, Pope. Whoy, he might take a fancy t' y', an' elp publish yer poetry."

"I want no patrons," said Pope rising haughtily. "Genius stands quite alone."

All the same, he stalked out of the tap-room quickly, to see why the bell had sounded, and was followed by his mother, who was heard scolding her servant again. Herries took no notice of these Cockney vulgarities, being too weary to enjoy their humour. He stared into the glowing fire, while Gowrie chuckled, and finished his gin and water with great relish.

"Aye!" he drawled, wiping his coarse red lips with the sleeve of his dilapidated coat, "yon's wha ye ca a gowk, or maybe a stirk. Poetry quotha; the lad hes nae mair poetry nor ma fut. An' tis a queer thing, Herries, that you randy quean deems him a genius, nae less. There's a vein o' verse in yon limmer, else she wuldnae hae ca'd her bairn Pope."

"After the poet?"

"Tush, laddie. Pope, the wee crooked thing, wes nae a poet. Gi' me glorious Robby Bur-rns. Aye, aye, the besom o' a landleddy hes a glimmerin' o' the divine. 'Tis queer where the speeritual spark, as ye micht say, taks up its abode. I hae a wee bit glimmer maesel, an' I thocht ye hed it also, Herries. But ye've come doon, sadly, puir saul,--eh,--the looks of ye."

"Drink has nothing to do with them at least," retorted Herries nettled, "while to look at you,----"

"Eh, an' what ails me, laddie?"

"Drink! Gin, whisky and suchlike. Ten years ago, you had me as a pupil in Edinburgh, and although a minister without a church, you were at least respectable. Now----"

"Ye may weel say't, laddie. Drink's the curse o' a' sons o' Adaam. I wes a stickit meenister, foreby, and didnae wag ma pow in a pu-pit, mair's the peety. Aye, aye," he sighed, "whusky's the deil's broth, I'm theenking."

"How did you fall so low?" Angus asked his old preceptor.

"Whusky! Whusky!" said the old reprobate, "tho' I've tacken to gin as cheaper. But 'tis weary wark at times, for gin's nae sa quick as it micht be, in bringing oot the glorious points o' a mon."

"It doesn't make you drunk enough, I suppose you mean?"

"Joost sae. Ye micht pit it yon way."

"What a mercy you never married, Gowrie."

"Ca' me Meester Gowrie, be decent to your elders, laddie. Marrit, is it?" He chuckled again, and cast a strange glance at Herries from out his inflamed eyes. "Ou aye, marrit. Weel,--weel,--we're a' son's o' Adaam, ye ken."

"Then are you----?"

"Hold your tongue, sir," interrupted Gowrie, in fierce English, "respect the secret of a gentleman. You an' me's met in a queer gait," he pursued in the homely Scotch, "maister an' pupil, an' baith doon on oor hunkers, as ye may say. It's a waefu' warld, I'm theenking."

Herries made no direct reply, being occupied with his thoughts. Ten years before he had been a pupil of the Rev. Michael Gowrie in Edinburgh, and even then the wreck before him now, had not been noted for sobriety. When Herries went to the University, he had lost sight of his old preceptor, and was therefore much surprised to meet him in these out-of-the-way parts, and in such straits.

"How do you live?" he asked abruptly.

"Well!" said the other in his odd mixture of Scotch and English, "I write for the daily press. Nature studies ye ken, laddie. I present the warks o' God in decent language tae an ignorant public, as ye micht say. It keeps me in drams, though the emoluments are nae what they micht be tae a scholar, an' a gentlemon foreby. An' yer ain history, laddie? a sad ain I doot not."

"The history of Jonah," said Herries, gloomily.

It was at this moment that the girl returned to spread a half cloth on the table. Herries would rather have eaten in a less smoky atmosphere, but the girl informed him that the gentleman,--it seemed that his name was unknown,--had the best parlour, and one of the bedrooms, so that there was but little

accommodation.

"Aye, aye," said Gowrie meditatively, "Elspeth is richt. It's here I'll sleep maesel. An' what's yon gentlemon daeing here, lassie?"

"I don't know," said Elspeth shortly, and with an averted face.

"He'll hae been benighted, maybe?"

She shook her head.

"He came only an hour ago, well wrapped up in a fur coat, from Tarhaven."

"Ye'll ken his name?"

"No. He refused to give his name, but said that he expected to see a gentleman here about eight o'clock. Then he has arranged to go before breakfast in the morning, and has paid Mrs. Narby beforehand for his rooms."

"It's queer," said Gowrie, handling his pipe meditatively, while Elspeth left the room to bring in the food for Herries. "Ye see mony queer things in sic hooses as these, my mon. Aye, aye, poverty maks us acquaint wi' strange bedfellows, as Wully Shakespeare pit it varra weel."

Herries did not reply, but sat down to an ill-cooked mutton chop and a tankard of very flat ale. Gowrie treated himself to another steaming glass of gin and water, talking while his ex-pupil devoured his welcome meal. Elspeth wandered in and out of the room on various errands. Mrs. Narby, busy in the kitchen, presumably, did not present her lovely self, and the poet was also absent, probably being engaged in fascinating the unknown gentleman, in the hope of obtaining the patronage he seemed to contemn.

"And why are ye here, laddie?" demanded Gowrie, inquisitively.

"I come from Pierside," explained Herries, carelessly, "there I left a tramp schooner, on which I had shipped as doctor."

"Aye, aye, that's it. I mind ye studied medicine."

"I have studied everything," said Herries shrugging. "As you know, Mr. Gowrie, my parents left me just sufficient to provide me with an education, and a few pounds over to start me in life. I got my degree, and then began to practice in a London suburb. I failed there, and tried another, failed again and tried a third. Then I went on the stage, that refuge of the destitute, and could not make that pay. Finally I joined a gipsy ship as doctor, and have been frizzling and shivering in several parts of the world for years. Since then I have fared no better, and my last adventure was in an Arctic sealer. I left her, as I said, at Pierside, being unable to stomach the brutality of her captain any longer. Now I am on my way to Tarhaven to see an old medical friend, who may help me. That is my history, as sad as your own, Mr. Gowrie; but," this with a glance at the dissipated face, "perhaps more respectable."

"How do you make that out?" asked the other in his best English.

"I have never been a drunkard," said Angus significantly.

"It's no decent tae speak to me yon way," fumed the elder man, wincing.

"Isn't it the truth?

"Weel, ye dinna look varra drunk, I'll say that. Aye, I'll say that."

"I am not talking of myself, Mr. Gowrie, but of you. Any one can see how you come to be here."

"Weel, weel," cried the ex-minister testily, "there's nae mair to be said. Ma sin's nae yer sin, but I doot ye've a glass hoose of your ain. What will ye do now?"

"Go to bed," snapped Herries, rising.

"Wull ye nae stap, and hae a crack?"

"No! I'll see you in the morning."

"Man, I'll be gone early. It's London I'm bound for. Joost sae, tae see an eeditor aboot an article on the modest daisy."

The young man shrugged his shoulders again. On another occasion he would have been amused at Gowrie's impudence, with his odd changes from Scotch to English. But the heart was out of him, and meeting with an old friend, even so fallen a one as Mr. Gowrie, he could not help breaking out with his troubles. An overcharged heart will speak, however reticent may be the nature of its possessor, and after fiddling with the door-handle for a few moments, Herries burst out----

"I'm a Jonah, Mr. Gowrie," he cried, almost savagely. "I swear that I have done all that a man could do, to earn an honest living, but everything has gone wrong with me. I am sober, honest, industrious and,--as you said,--clever----"

"Aye," said the sage, "I'll bear testimony to that. Nae mair capable laddie ever passed through my varra capable hands."

"Then why am I so unfortunate?" demanded the miserable young man, looking up to the ceiling. "I am cursed in some way. Whatever I take up, fails. I try and try and try again. I foresee all chances, and work desperately. Yet again and again, I fail."

Facing Gowrie, with clenched hands and desperate eyes, Herries neither saw nor heard the door into the back parts of the house, open and shut suddenly. It was just as though someone, hearing the raised voice, had peered out, and then, after a glance, had retired hastily. Gowrie looked out of the tail of his eye, but saw nothing, and shook his head at his unfortunate pupil.

"It's a weary world," he said with drunken seriousness.

"The world is all right," cried Herries, "it is the infernal folk who live in it that make me hate life. Oh," he dashed his hands across his eyes. "I could shame my manhood and weep, when I think of my sorrow"--here he became aware that Elspeth was in the room gazing at him with pitying eyes. A feeling of pride made him close his mouth, and with an abrupt gesture of despair, he left the room at a run. The girl followed to show him his sleeping-apartment. Old Gowrie remained, and cried to Mrs. Narby for a third glass of gin.

"Aye, aye," muttered the old reprobate, "breeth we are an' dust we mau' be.

Puir laddie, an' sae clever. Aye a lad of pairts. I doot 'tis the drink," he wagged his head sadly. "Weel, and why should nae the puir wean droon his sorrows in the flowing bowl, the which term Thomas Moore applies tae whusky. He's got nae siller an' varra little o' that is in ma purse. But maybe he has enow tae help the guid friend whae guided his young footsteps. Hech," he rose, and pondered, "maybe if I flatter the lad, he may spare a bittock. Drink! aye drink, which maketh glad the hairt o' mon. He'll be guid for a shulling at daybreak."

In pursuance of this plan, the Rev. Michael Gowrie was shortly on his legs, staggering to the bedroom with a stiff jorum of gin and water. Mrs. Narby led the way, and pointed out the apartment occupied by Herries, with the unnecessary information that the unknown gentleman, now in the parlour, would sleep in the next room.

"An' me sleeping in the tap-room," mourned Gowrie. "Is yon gentleman in bed, wumon?"

"No. He's still in the parlour," snapped Mrs. Narby, bristling at being called a woman. "He's waiting fur 'is friend, as comes at eight."

"It'll be haulf an hoor tae eight," said Gowrie consulting a yellow-faced watch, not worthy of a pawnbroker's ticket.

"Ow shud I know? Give yer shady toff 'is drink, an' cut."

Gowrie had little difficulty in inducing Herries to swallow the hot liquor. The young man was worn out, and when the drink was finished his head fell on the pillow like a lump of lead. His kind preceptor tucked him in, and cast a longing glance at his pupil's garments, lying disorderly on a chair near the bed.

But Mrs. Narby glared grimly at the door, and Gowrie had no chance of examining the pockets, as he wished to do. It was with great reluctance that he departed with the ogress, while Herries, blind to the world, slept heavily, but, alas, not dreamlessly.

His dreams indeed were terrible. For hours and hours he seemed to be flying

from some dreadful danger. Along a lonely road he sped breathless and anguished. After him raced a shadow, which once caught up with him, and enveloped him in cold gloom. But out of that Egyptian darkness, he was drawn by a firm warm hand, and found himself under a glimmering moon, looking into the face of Elspeth. She pointed towards the East, and there broke swiftly the cool fresh dawn, at the sight of which his terrors vanished. It seemed to the dreamer that he kissed the girl, but of this he could not be sure; for the vision dispersed into fragments, and he finally fell into the deep slumber of the worn-out.

When he awoke it was daylight, and from the position of a faint gleam of sunshine, breaking through the still clinging mists, he guessed that it was nine o'clock. But Herries cast no second look through the window, when he saw what lay on the patchwork quilt. Thereon appeared a white bone-handled razor crimson with blood, and he found that one sleeve of his woollen shirt was likewise stained red.

CHAPTER II

A RECOGNITION

After that first startled look, Herries sprang from the bed, anxious only, for the moment, to avoid contact with that blood-stained razor. But blood also smeared the right arm of his shirt, which he could not part with, as he had no other to wear. His hands were clean, the bed-quilt was smooth, and the door closed. He could not comprehend how the razor and the blood-stains came to be there. Half dazed and unable to grasp the meaning of these weird things, he flung open the window. It looked down into a small, bleak garden, and

into thick white mists, behind which lay those weary marshes he had traversed on the previous evening. The inn might have been in the Aristophanic Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, for all the signs of earth-life that were visible in those dismal fogs. Herries, craning his body half out of the window, could hear men and women chattering in the street, and at times the shrill babble of children. So far as he could see and hear, nothing was wrong, yet he felt that something terrible had happened. It was at this point that he retreated suddenly from the window, with one awesome word beating insistently upon his confused brain.

"Murder!" he cried aloud in the empty room. "Murder!"

He sprang towards the door, clothed only in his shirt, and pulled it open with a jerk. Half frenzied with fear and possessed by an agonized feeling of terror, he shouted the word down the narrow staircase. People below were talking quietly, and moving about on various tasks intent, but at the sound of that choking cry, both movements and voices resolved themselves into an uncanny pause.

Shortly, the terror-stricken creature clinging to the top railings heard heavy footsteps ascending, and aware of his light attire, he slipped back into his room and into bed. The footsteps came nearer and a rough bearded face peered in at the door. It was that of the landlord, of whom he had caught a mere glimpse on the previous night. Mrs. Narby was well matched in her help-mate--outwardly at least--for he was a bulky, stout animal, with a heavy fist and a violent temper, when aroused. But for the most part he was too lethargic to become enraged, unless some special event demanded the use of uncontrolled passion. At the present moment, his mild face--in repose it was strangely mild--exhibited only wonder.

"What are you howling about?" he asked gruffly, and staring with bent brows at the white-faced man.

"Murder!" chattered Herries, shivering and sitting up in bed, chin on knees, "at least----" he flung the razor towards the man.

Narby, by this time well within the room, deftly caught the article, and examined it closely. "Blood!" said he under his breath; then looked at

Herries, still shivering as with ague. "But y' ain't dead, cut yourself maybe, shaving?"

"I have not shaved for two days. I have no razor with me, that is not mine. Who has been murdered?" so Herries babbled, confusedly.

"Why, no one," growled the landlord, bristling. "This is a decent inn, this is. Do you think we take in folks to cut their throats. You've had a nightmare and this razor of yours----"

"It is not mine," passionately interrupted the young man. "I found it on the quilt when I woke at nine this morning."

"It's nearly ten by now."

"Then I mistook the time, having no watch. But the blood----"

"It is queer," admitted Narby, meditatively, "but there's no one dead, so far as I know. Old Gowrie slept in the tap-room, and went off at seven. My wife and Elspeth are alive and busy; Pope, too, ate a good breakfast, and there's no sign of a corpse about me."

"What of the gentleman who came last night?"

"He went away at eight, as he arranged, without his breakfast. My wife saw him pass through the tap-room in that fur-coat of his, and no wonder on such a chilly morning. He never passed the time of day--gentry manners in this country, I 'spose."

"Then there's nothing wrong!" cried Herries, more bewildered than ever.

"Not that I know of. Someone's been having a joke with you, though who'd play a low-down trick like this is more nor I can tell."

Narby looked at Herries, and Herries stared back at Narby, both puzzled, and both bad-tempered. Whosoever had played this poor joke, if joke it was, the landlord at least was innocent of the jest. The young man shook his head to clear it of cobwebs and signed to the other to leave the room, intending to get up and dress. The voice of Mrs. Narby in the passage chained him to the bed.

"Wot's he 'ollerin' abaout?" she asked in her vile dialect.

"Had the nightmare," grumbled her spouse, pushing her back as she tried to peep in.

"Ho! Then he'd best cut. D'y 'ear,--you," she shouted. "We don't want no crazy coves 'ere. Elspeth, go an' mek the front room bed. The gent hev gorn, an' th' room mus' be streight in a jiffy."

There was an inaudible reply, as Elspeth's light feet tripped past the noisy landlady. Shortly Herries heard her speak, for his bedroom door was still ajar, and the worthy couple were discussing his strange cry, angrily.

"The door is locked," said Elspeth.

"Nonsense," cried Mrs. Narby, going to the girl. "Wot shud he lock it fur, I'd like to knaow, an' 'im gittin' orf th' fust thing in th' mornin'? Ho," Herries heard her shake the door violently, "locked it is. Blimme, if he ain't gorn with th' key, 'aving locked the bloomin' door. I'll have th' lawr of him. Elspeth, git outside, an' up t' th' front winder. Them trellises mek quite a ledder."

"I'll do it," said Narby, quickly.

"You're too 'eavy. Ony a light shrimp like Elspeth cud git h'up. I don' want my trellises mussed up. Elspeth!"

"I'm afraid." Herries heard the girl say timidly.

"Y' ain't! Wot cause 'ave y' t' be afraid, y' mealy-mouthed, little, silly slut. Up y' go, or----" evidently a fist was raised at this point.

"She shan't," growled Narby, who seemed to have more decent feeling than his wife. "Here, stand aside!"

"If y' break th' door, it means poun's an' poun's," screamed the virago. The listening man heard a crash, and an angry ejaculation from Mrs. Narby at the destruction of her property. Then came a wild cry from Elspeth, an oath from the landlord, and finally a panic-stricken silence. With his fears again

knocking at his heart, Herries jumped up, and hurriedly slipped into his trousers. Scarcely were they on, before Narby burst into the room, white-faced and savage. Behind, came his wife, bellowing like a fury of the Revolution. Elspeth in the meanwhile had fainted in the passage.

"You killed him!" shouted Narby fiercely, running towards Herries, and flung him like a feather on the bed.

"Killed--killed--whom?" gasped the young man, bursting into a cold perspiration.

"The gent as came last night. He's lying next door with his throat slit, you murdering devil!"

"Oh!" shivered Herries, "the razor."

"Your razor!"

"It's not mine. Let me up," and he struggled to rise.

"No. You stop here, until I send for the police. 'Liza!--ah would you?"

Herries, realizing his dreadful position, had begun to resist violently, and Narby held him down with brawny hands. As the two swung in close grips on the bed, there was a tinkling sound, and a shout from Mrs. Narby, who was red-faced and furious.

"Th' key,--th' blessed key," she screeched, picking it up from the floor, whence it had fallen off the bed. "Oh, the bloomin' Jack th' Ripper cove. He's ruined th' cussed 'ouse."

"It's a lie--a lie," breathed Herries, weakly.

Narby, with his knee on the other's chest, laughed grimly. "You'll have to prove that to a jury, my lad. The razor,--the key of the next room,--the--the--why here," he broke off to snatch at the stained shirt-sleeve, "more blood, you reptile," and he shook the young man with unrestrained anger.

"Ow! 'Ow! 'Ow!" Mrs. Narby began to exhibit symptoms of hysteria, "he

killed the pore gent. Pope,--Pope,--me darlin' boy. 'Elp! 'Elp."

"Let me up," gasped Herries, "you're stifling me."

"I'll leave the hangman to do that, sonny."

"I--I--won't--try to--to--escape."

"You bet you won't," said Narby, in quite an American way, and seeing that there was really a chance of the young man becoming insensible under over-rough handling, he released his hold. "Dress yourself," he said sternly, "but out of this room you don't go, till the police come. 'Liza!--I say, 'Liza?"

There was no reply. Mrs. Narby had hurled herself down the stairs and they could hear her harsh voice clamouring for her son, and for drink to revive her. Shortly the murmur of many voices swelled out. Evidently the woman had summoned the neighbours, and Herries shivered at the snarl of an enraged mob.

"I never killed the man," he wailed, utterly broken up. "I know nothing about him,--I never saw him,--I didn't,----"

"Shut up," snapped Narby roughly, and pushed him back again on to the disordered bed. "I've known a man lynched, down 'Frisco way, for less than this. I reckon you'll dance at the end of a rope, before the month's out. See here," he went to the window, glanced out and returned to shake a large and menacing finger, more American in speech than ever. "You try an' light out that way, sonny, an' I shoot you straight. I keep my Derringer for use, not for show. D'ye see; you stop here."

"I am perfectly willing," retorted Herries, now beginning to recover his courage, since the worst of the shock was over. "I can easily clear my character."

Narby smiled grimly, and shook his head.

"Better say no more," he advised, "what you say, will tell against you."

"Surely you don't believe me guilty?"

"You make me tired," said Narby sharply, "you are in the next room to a murdered man, you show me a blood-stained razor, and you have blood on your shirt, and the key of the next room. Believe you guilty! Well, I guess I do. Say your prayers, sonny, for you'll hang as sure as you're a living man, which you won't be long," and without another word, the burly landlord left the room, locking the door after him.

With an eminently human impulse to seek immediate safety, the prisoner ran to the window. But there was no escape that way. He could easily drop into the garden, climb over the low fence and fly across the marshes, hidden by the kindly mists. But the palings which parted the garden from the village street were now lined with curious and horrified spectators. Men and women and children stared insistently at the mean house, with that fascination begotten of a morbid love of crime. No such exciting event had happened in the dull little Essex village for many a year,--if indeed ever before; and the whole population was agog with excitement. Mrs. Narby was haranguing her neighbours, and fiercely pointing at intervals towards the house, crying wildly that the inn was ruined. Catching sight of Herries at the window, she shook a large fist, and a sea of faces looked upward. Then came a howl of execration. From that terrible sound Herries, though courageous enough, shrank back, and closed the window in a panic. Then he staggered to the bed and lying down tried to reason calmly.

The stranger in the next room, whosoever he was, had been murdered. The key of that room had been found in this one; also, on the bed-quilt had lain the weapon with which, presumably, the dead man's throat had been cut. Then there was the damning evidence of the bloody sleeve. Herries examined this, and found that the stains streaked downward from the elbow, as though someone with reddened fingers had drawn them down the woollen fabric. On making this discovery the unhappy man regained his feet, scenting a conspiracy. "Some enemy has done this," he argued, trying to keep himself cool and composed. "I have fallen into a trap. The assassin, after committing the crime, must have come deliberately into my room, in order to implicate me in the matter. I was sound asleep, so he could easily have smeared my sleeve and left the razor and key. But who could have done it, and why was it done? I know no one in these parts,--I arrived here alone and unknown, and--

--"

He stopped as a sudden thought flashed through his brain. Michael Gowrie knew his name, and Gowrie had come to this very room on the previous evening with a glass of toddy. Could it be that Gowrie had murdered this unknown man, and had then arranged the snare, so that a perfectly innocent being should bear the penalty of his wickedness. It was credible, and yet,--from what Herries remembered of the old scamp,--Gowrie was not the man to commit so dreadful a deed. In his degraded state, the ex-minister would steal at a pinch in order to procure money for drink. He would lie glibly; he would blackmail, and bear false witness to serve his own ends; but Herries could not think even so base a man capable of murder. For one thing he would not have the nerve, seeing that drink had shattered his system. No! It would not be Gowrie, and yet, if not Gowrie, who could have an interest in implicating a stranger in the awful tragedy?

Again, as Herries reflected when his brain became clearer, Mrs. Narby said that the gentleman, who had occupied the bedroom next door, had departed in his noticeable fur coat at eight o'clock. If it was he who had passed through the tap-room, it certainly could not be him, who was lying dead in the next room. The affair was puzzling, and not the least mysterious thing was that no one in the house knew the dead man's name. He had come to see someone and had duly retired to bed; next morning he was found dead. If this was the case, who then could be the man who had visited him on the previous night? Who was the man who had left at eight in the morning, disguised in a fur coat belonging to the dead? There could be but one answer. He was the assassin.

Again Herries looked out of the window, and saw that two men,--yokels apparently,--were guarding it below; he stole to the door, and strained his hearing to listen. Many people were coming and going in the passage, and he heard the faint murmur of voices. What was going on in the death-chamber, he could not think. The partitions of the inn, doubtless constructed long ago for smuggling purposes, were unusually thick, and even had a man spoken loudly in the next room, the listener would have heard nothing but the sound. In that case, as he argued, he could not have saved the dead man, even had he been awake. Probably the poor wretch's throat had been cut in his sleep. And who had killed him? And why had he, Angus Herries, a stranger, a wanderer

on the face of the earth, been dragged into so hideous an affair?

These questions he asked himself constantly, while the slow hours dragged onward. The village--Desleigh was its name, as he heard later--was a long distance from the nearest town, whence a police inspector could be called; and the local constable, without doubt, had two or three of such villages to attend to. It was quite four or five hours since he had been shut up in his room, and no one had been near him. To pass the time, and escape from the terrible thoughts which tormented his brain, Herries dressed himself as neatly as he could. On leaving Pierside he had taken nothing with him, as his enemy the captain had detained all his luggage. He had nothing but the clothes he stood up in, and a few shillings,--say ten. On arriving at the "Marsh Inn," he had possessed fifteen, but five of these he had given for bed and board. He cursed the inn. Had he not halted here, this trouble would never have come upon his already over-burdened shoulders. And yet, he could not be sure of this. He had always been Jonah the unlucky, and Jonah he would remain, so far as his limited vision could see, until the end of his life. Throughout five and twenty years of existence he had suffered nothing but trouble. Everything went wrong with him. This new disaster was all of a piece with the rest of the pattern, that was being woven,--against his will, it would seem--on the looms of life. He wondered, with a sigh, why God permitted so many troubles to befall him, since he could see no good reason for their coming to him so persistently. Then out of sheer desire to do something, he searched his pockets for the remains of his poor fortune.

The ten shillings had vanished. Yet Herries knew that he had counted them on the previous evening, immediately before he retired to bed, and he had placed them in the right-hand pocket of his trousers,--eight shillings and four sixpences. Alarmed at the loss, which meant everything to him, he felt in every pocket, looked under his pillow, examined the floor, but could find no trace of the money.

"How on earth can I get to Tarhaven?" he asked himself, and then it came upon him with a shock, that he was not a free man.

Shortly a soft tap at the door roused him. He told the person who knocked to enter, and a key turned in the lock. Elspeth, her face white and her eyes red, entered, carrying a tray laden with coarse food. This she set down, then

impulsively she rushed forward and caught his hand.

"You never did it," she panted, eagerly, and staring at him with burning eyes. "You never, never did it."

"Of course not. I can prove my innocence. No," he made a gesture of despair, as the full terror of his situation rushed upon him, "I say that to comfort myself. I am in a perilous position."

"That a kind man such as you are, should do such a thing," the girl went on, almost to herself, "it's ridiculous. You helped me with that bucket; you would not murder a poor soul in his sleep."

"That I did not. I swear by all that I hold sacred," said Herries, grateful for this true sympathy. "But you see how I am placed; you know the strong evidence against me."

Elsbeth nodded.

"Mr. and Mrs. Narby are talking of it," she whispered, with a significant glance at the door, behind which no doubt some one was watching. "The police will be here soon. They have sent to Tarhaven, for the Inspector and the Doctor."

"What is the time now?"

"It is close upon three o'clock," said Elspeth. "Armour, who is the village constable, is on his rounds at some other village, and although they have sent out to get him, he cannot be found. But Pope has gone by train to Tarhaven to bring the Inspector. I expect he'll return every minute. And I cannot stop long; they will miss me. But I want to be your friend," she added again catching his hand. "Tell me, is there anyone I can send for, who will help you?"

"There is my friend, Dr. James Browne of Tarhaven. I have not seen him for a couple of years, but I daresay he'll remember me. Write and ask him to come, or perhaps you could procure me writing material."

"No. They," she alluded to the Narby's, "will allow you nothing."

"Then send the letter yourself to Browne, you kind little soul. He may say a good word for me."

"Is there no one else?"

Herries' head drooped.

"There is one I should not like to hear of my disgrace," he said, faintly.

"Ah!" the girl's dark eyes lighted up with a jealous flame, "and her name, Mr. Herries?"

The young man looked surprised.

"How can you guess that I am thinking of a woman?"

"I guess, because--because--oh, you would not understand. What is her name? I'll see her if you like," her face grew red as she spoke, and had Herries been more experienced in the other sex, he might have seen that her feelings towards him, for his simple act of kindness, were such as to make her hate anyone doing things for him, save herself.

However, he saw nothing of this, and gave the information with all frankness.

"Maud Tedder, she is a cousin of mine, the daughter of Sir Simon Tedder, a famous manufacturer you may have heard of."

Elsbeth nodded.

"I've seen his name on jam tins and such like," she said rapidly. "He has a great house at Tarhaven."

"I know. I have been there once, a couple of years ago. But he quarrelled with me, and turned me out."

"Because of Miss--Miss?" she could not say the name.

"Yes! I wanted to marry my cousin. Sir Simon would not let me."

"And she--she----?"

"She obeyed her father, as a daughter should," said Herries bitterly. "But I do not know why I talk of these very private affairs to you. But if you would----"

"Hush!" Elspeth placed a silencing finger on her lips, "the police."

Hardly had she left the room, when the Inspector--as he evidently was from his smart uniform--entered in an abrupt manner. He was a kindly, red-faced man, with a military moustache, and an official manner, which made him assume a severity which Herries guessed was foreign to his nature. Two policemen were visible in the narrow passage as the Inspector entered the room, after a word or two with the girl, to learn why she had been with the prisoner.

"Your name?" demanded the officer sharply, and taking in Herries' looks with a shrewd and observant eye.

"Angus Herries. I am innocent," said the accused man hurriedly, then, anxious to exculpate himself, he talked on vehemently, and thereby did the worst thing possible. "I do not know the dead man's name, or the man himself. I have never seen him. I was fast asleep all the time. I found the razor, and----"

"Stop," said the Inspector peremptorily, "anything you say now will be used in evidence against you. Hold your tongue, until I am ready to examine you, and follow me," and with that he turned his back to march out of the room.

Herries saw that it would be as well to be circumspect, and walked silently after the representative of the law. The official turned to the right and opened the door of the death room at which Narby was standing. This was the first time the Inspector had been inside, and he wanted Herries to be present to see what effect the sight of his supposed victim would have on his nerves. The young man was glad to enter. He wished to face the worst at once.

The room was similar to the other, bare, cold-looking, and sparingly

furnished with the flotsam and jetsam of auction rooms. Everything seemed to be disordered, but the bedclothes were smoothed out, and thereon lay a stiff figure, covered with a sheet. The police officer turned down the sheet and beckoned Herries to approach. The very next moment the young man staggered back amazed.

"Great Heavens!" he gasped, thunderstruck, "it is Sir Simon Tedder!"

CHAPTER III

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

"Sir Simon Tedder!" Inspector Trent--as the red-faced official was called--relaxed his stiffness, so far as to display astonishment. "The millionaire, who made his fortune out of jam and pickles; who has a house at Tarhaven?"

"Yes!" faltered Herries weakly, and sinking into a chair near the door, he covered his shameful face. Trent, seeing tears trickling between the nerveless fingers, felt convinced, with the assurance of the shortsighted, that his experiment had proved successful. The guilty man's self-control had given way at the sight of his victim. So thought a jack-in-office, who was unable to see farther than his nose by reason of natural and official limitations. But the truth was--and a medical man would have surmised it--that Herries, with his long tramp, his weakened frame, his despairing outlook, and the surprising sight of his relative lying dead by violence, suddenly became as unstrung as an hysterical woman. The tears relieved him, and had they not broken forth, he would have become insane at the mere thought of this terrible disaster falling upon him, after years and years of cruel misfortune. He felt, and very

naturally, like a tormented rat in a trap, and could see no means of escape.

"Sir Simon Tedder," repeated Trent, with a gratified glance at the still white face of the dead, "the millionaire," he rolled the agreeable word on his tongue. "This will be an important affair!" and throwing out his chest, he swelled with triumph at the thought of the fame and praise which so notorious a case would bring him. "Why did you kill him, young man?"

Herries, ashamed of the momentary weakness, dropped his hands and dashed the moisture from his eyes.

"I--did--not--kill--him!" he declared with emphatic slowness.

Trent grew red and indignant at what he conceived to be a shameless denial.

"I have heard the landlord's story," he retorted, pompously.

"And have therefore made up your mind, without hearing the other side, that I am guilty," said Herries, bitterly. "Is it the custom of the English law to hear only the accuser?"

"I am now prepared to listen to the defence," announced Trent, hastily, and in spite of the strong evidence, and his own belief, he felt sorry for the wreck before him, although red-tapeism condemned the too purely human feeling.

Leaving a stolid policeman to guard the door of the death-chamber, pending the arrival of the doctor, Trent led his prisoner down the stairs, and into the stuffy back-parlour, which Sir Simon had occupied on the previous evening. Mrs. Narby glared at the unfortunate man, whom she accused of having ruined her inn, and Pope's weak, silly face, alive with morbid curiosity, could be seen over the brawny maternal shoulder. Herries shuddered. In spite of many misfortunes, he had always been popular in his Bohemian world, and it was both new and unpleasant for him to see venomous looks cast upon him. Last night he had been merely an object of contemptuous interest; now he was like a tiger prisoned behind bars, at which everyone looked with dread and hatred.

As the short autumnal evening, rendered even more immediate by the still

prevailing foes, was rapidly closing in, Trent lighted the cheap lamp which swung over the round table. The light and the oily smell came simultaneously, as both door and window were closed, and the room was crowded with frowsy furniture. The atmosphere was sickly and malodorous, and Herries never entered a stuffy apartment in after years without recalling that hopeless evening, when his misfortunes culminated in nothing less than a Waterloo.

The Inspector seated himself at the round table in a magisterial manner, and produced a portentous pocket-book. He permitted Herries to sit down in an antique arm-chair, slippery with horse-hair, and marvellously uncomfortable with an antimacassar of Berlin wool-work. Having moistened a pencil with his tongue he proceeded to ask what questions occurred to his not over-clever brain.

"What is your name?"

"Angus Herries."

"Your occupation?"

"I am a doctor, a ship's doctor, and I came last night from Pierside, where the Arctic sealer 'Nansen' is lying."

"Why did you come to this almost unknown inn?"

"I walked from Pierside, intending to seek a friend at Tarhaven. My strength gave way, and I stayed here to eat and sleep."

Trent took down these answers thoughtfully, then looked in what he fondly thought was a piercing manner at the suspected man.

"You told me that you did not know the deceased?"

"I did. That is perfectly true. Until you showed me the corpse, I was quite ignorant that Sir Simon had been killed. I did not even know that he was in this house."

"You knew Sir Simon Tedder then?"

"Yes!" Herries hesitated, then looked boldly at the officer, "I have nothing to conceal," he declared loudly, "Sir Simon is my uncle."

Trent looked at the shabby prisoner with great surprise; the reply amazed him, as coming from such a tramp.

"It is impossible," he said, sharply. "Sir Simon was wealthy and much respected. He would not allow his nephew to go about in rags."

Herries looked sullen.

"My uncle and I quarrelled."

"Oh," said the Inspector in a peculiar tone.

"Do you take that admission as a sign of guilt?" inquired Herries, ironically.

"I take it to mean that you had bad feelings towards the deceased."

The prisoner shook his head.

"You are wrong, I had no bad feelings."

"And yet you quarrelled?"

"Violently!"

"Take care. What you say may be used against--" Herries rose with an angry gesture.

"An innocent man such as I am does not need to be careful of his words," he cried. "My life history is miserable enough certainly, but there is no page of which I need be ashamed."

"For an educated man to be in such a plight--."

The prisoner again interrupted.

"Do you know what Jonah's Luck is?

"I know that the person you mention was swallowed by a whale," said Trent with dignity. "I am not entirely a heathen."

In spite of his misery Herries could not help smiling.

"I give you the whale," he said sarcastically. "In spite of my sojourn in the Arctic regions, I have escaped the gullet of that animal. I allude to the prophet's luck. Everything went wrong with him, as it has done with me. Do you know what it is, Inspector, to be unlucky--to try your hardest to earn bread and a roof in the face of circumstances too hard to conquer? Have you ever found doors shut against you? Has your family ever regarded you as a hopeless black sheep, because you had not the money to wash your wool white? I have been hungry, starving, almost without clothes, certainly without fire on freezing days. Life has crushed me into the mire, and every struggle I made to rise, was met with a fresh blow."

"Such miseries as these," said Dogberry, sapiently, "lead men to commit crimes."

"In my case, no," cried Herries, striking the table heavily. "I can look any man in the face, as I look into yours now, and can say that I am honest, in thought, word, and deed."

His clear blue eyes looked into those of the Inspector, and it was the official who first gave way. Turning over the leaves of his pocket-book, to disguise the impression which Herries' frankness had made on him, he took refuge in irritation, a sure sign that he had no feasible reply to make.

"This isn't what we are here to talk about," he said testily. "I wish to know what defence you have to make, to the charge brought against you by the landlord?"

"What defence?--that I am innocent."

"On what grounds?"

"On the grounds that I never expected to find Sir Simon here, that I did not know he was in the house, that I have no grudge against him."

"How do I know that?" asked Trent, cunningly.

"Because I tell you that such is the case," said Herries haughtily, "and if you will listen to a short account of my life, you may be able to conquer the prejudice against me, which the couple who keep this miserable inn have instilled into your breast."

"I am not prejudiced," snapped Trent, nettled, "say what you have to say, and let us end this business as speedily as possible."

"I am only too anxious to do so," said Herries coldly and folding his arms, still standing. "I am the son of Sir Simon Tedder's only sister. He was a hard man, always, and when she married against his will, he would never help her. My mother and father both died when I was in my teens. They left enough money for me to gain an education and secure a doctor's degree. I practised on shore with bad success, and so went to sea. I have been away from England for about two years, and since then I have never set eyes on my uncle, until you showed me his corpse just now."

"When did you see him last?"

"Two years ago. I was doing badly, and called upon him to learn if he would help me. He might have done so, but that I was in love with his daughter, Maud. I had met her at the house of some friends in Edinburgh, and saw her frequently. We loved, and when I saw my uncle I told him this. He became angry, and turned me out of the house. By his order Maud sent back my letters, and since then I have had nothing to do with either of them. Why then, I ask you, should I kill my uncle, seeing that I cannot benefit in any way by such a crime? I landed here two days ago, unknown and friendless. As I said, I was on my way to Tarhaven, to see a friend, when I put up at this accursed inn last night."

"Who is your friend?"

"Dr. James Browne of Elgar Avenue, Tarhaven. We were fellow students."

"I know him," said the Inspector, taking down the name. "Can he vouch for your respectability?"

Herries smiled bitterly.

"Respectability and myself parted company long ago," said he with a shrug, "but Browne knows all that I am telling you now, even to the courting of my cousin Maud."

"What did he think of your quarrelling with your uncle?"

"He approved of my leaving the house. As to the quarrel, Browne knows that I have a fiery temper."

"Oh," interrupted Trent in his peculiar tone, and thinking that he had chanced upon something suspicious. "So you have a fiery temper?"

"Yes," admitted Herries, not dreaming of what such an admission might mean to him. "But only when it is aroused by injustice and insults. Last night it was not so roused. I went to bed shortly before eight o'clock, ignorant, as I have said several times, that my uncle was in the house. Had I known that, I would have gone on to Tarhaven, weary though I was, rather than have slept under the same roof with a man who insulted my mother and myself shamefully."

Trent shook his head.

"All very fine. But the key of Sir Simon's room was found on the floor of your bedroom. The razor, with which his throat was cut, was in your possession, and there is blood on the sleeve of your shirt."

The young man hastily stripped off his coat, and held the right hand sleeve of his shirt under the lamp, close to Trent's eyes.

"There are the smears," he said quietly, "and you will see that they are made by fingers dipped in blood having been drawn down the sleeve. Could I have done that myself? Also, when I found the razor on my quilt when I awoke, I called up the landlord to ask him what it meant. I knew nothing of the crime

at the time, neither did Narby, as he will tell you. Were I guilty, would I have acted in so foolish a manner?"

"Oh yes, you would," said Trent, dictatorially, "criminals are very artful, as I have often found."

It was apparently impossible to convince a man so bent upon finding proofs of guilt where none existed, so Herries abandoned persuasion and turned away with a shrug.

"I have nothing more to say!"

"Yes, you have," insisted Trent, stupidly. "Why did you conceal that Sir Simon expected you last night?"

"He did not. He never knew that I was here, or even in England, as we had not corresponded since he turned me out of his house at Tarhaven two years ago. The maid Elspeth said that Sir Simon expected a gentleman. I was not the man."

"You were the only stranger who came last night," said Trent digging his pencil thoughtfully into the book.

"No. The expected visitor must have come last night, and have slept here. Mr. Narby will tell you that Mrs. Narby saw him pass through the tap-room at eight this morning."

"Did he not stop to pay the bill?"

"Mrs. Narby thought that the man was Sir Simon." The Inspector rose quickly.

"What?" he asked in an amazed tone.

"I am only telling you what Narby told me, before either of us knew that a murder had taken place," said Herries tartly. "He declared that his wife had seen the gentleman, who occupied this parlour last night,--and he was Sir Simon, as we know--pass through the tap-room at eight as he had arranged."

"As he had arranged?"

"Yes. He paid for the rooms, and a meal last night, so I was told."

"But if he was killed, he couldn't have passed out."

"Not unless he was a spirit," said Herries, with a shrug, "but the man whom Mrs. Narby took to be Sir Simon, certainly, according to her story, had a fur coat on, that belonged to my uncle, the same in which he arrived here last night."

Trent wrinkled his brow perplexedly. What Herries said quite upset his calculations, and he found himself face to face with a criminal mystery, such as had never before come into his official life. The accused man, saw his advantage and followed it up.

"Why should not this unknown man have murdered my uncle," he said quickly, "and have entered my bedroom to implicate me in the crime?"

"Why should he have done that?"

"I cannot say. But my bedroom door was not locked, and I was fast asleep, being quite worn out. The assassin left the razor and the key; he drew his bloody fingers down the shirt sleeve of my right arm, which probably lay outside the quilt. These are his marks," and Herries again shook his stained sleeve in the officer's face.

By this time Trent was more himself, and aggressively official.

"It is not for you to teach me my duty," he said, his self-love wounded. "The people who keep this inn must be examined before I can come to any conclusion."

"You might also examine Mr. Gowrie," suggested Herries quickly, "that is, if you can find him."

"Who is Mr. Gowrie?"

"An old tutor of mine, whom I found in the tap-room last night. He went

away--to London, I believe--at seven."

"Upon my word, Mr. Herries," said the Inspector sarcastically, "for a man, who merely _chanced_ on this inn," he emphasised the word, "you seem to have met, not only with relatives, but with friends."

"I met my uncle on his death-bed, and Gowrie in the tap-room," said Herries, heatedly. "It is strange, I admit, since I came here so very unexpectedly."

"Extremely strange," said Trent, scoffingly. "I don't believe in coincidences myself. Every word you say seems to connect you more and more with the crime. This Gowrie may have been your accomplice."

"If so, he has left me in the lurch," said Herries, sitting down wearily, and with all the fire gone out of him. "There seems to be a kind of fatality haunting my steps. Jonah's luck, I expect."

Trent tried to keep up his official dignity, as he went to open the door to call Mrs. Narby. But on passing Herries, the young man looked so dejected, that he clapped him on the shoulder.

"Cheer up," he said in rather a shamefaced manner, "the evidence is very black against you, I admit; but you may be able to clear yourself yet."

"Find out the man who passed through the tap-room this morning at eight, and my character will be cleared," said Herries.

Rather ashamed of his momentary yielding. Trent opened the door.

"I will thank you not to teach me my duty, sir," he said in a dignified manner, and Herries shrugged his shoulders. It was terrible to think that his liberty and life, should be in the power of so obvious an idiot.

In the presence of Herries, the Inspector examined Mrs. Narby, who from being voluble, now became tongue-tied. Mrs. Narby's youth had brought her into frequent contact with the Whitechapel police, and she knew the value of silence. Everything had to be clawed out of her by persistent questioning, and all her answers went to prove that Herries was assuredly the guilty person. As

her vernacular was vile and harsh, it will be as well to give the gist of her evidence in decent English.

Sir Simon Tedder, she said, had arrived about half-past six on the previous night, just before Herries came. He said that he wanted a parlour and a bedroom, as he was expecting a gentleman to call about eight o'clock. But the expected visitor never arrived and Sir Simon--he had not given any name, nor had Mrs. Narby asked him for one--seemed much annoyed. At ten o'clock he had retired to bed, after paying the score, and announced that he would depart, without breakfast, at eight in the morning. Mrs. Narby confessed that she saw him--as she believed--pass through the tap-room in his fur coat about that hour. He said nothing to her, and she said nothing to him, being well-pleased with the liberal sum he had paid her. She thought that having come to the inn secretly, he wished to preserve his incognito, so let him pass out without a word. But at ten o'clock--that is two hours later--the real Sir Simon had been found dead in his bed. Without doubt, the man who escaped through the tap-room could not have been the millionaire.

"But surely," said Trent, who was taking copious notes, "you must have guessed that the man who went away was not Sir Simon."

Mrs. Narby placed her stout arms akimbo and raged.

"I never know'd es 'is naime wos Sir Simon, or anythink else," said she shrilly. "An' th' gent es parsed through th' tap-room wos tall an' stout, same es this Sir Simon y' torks of. He wore the same fur coat es Sir Simon wore wen he come inter this very parlour overnight, so 'ow wos I t' know es the gent es slung 'is 'ook at eight this mornin' wasn't th' same es come et harlf-past six in th' evenin'."

"Are you sure it was the same fur coat?"

"Yuss," said Mrs. Narby, stoutly, "there ain't no fur coat lef' in' th' bedroom of th' gent es lies a deader. I looked fur it," added the landlady defiantly, "es I sawr th' value, an' wanted summat fur my bein' ruined by 'im," and she pointed towards Herries.

"I never killed him," muttered Herries, wearily. It seemed scarcely worth

while to contradict those who seemed certain that he was guilty.

"Ho, but y' did," cried Mrs. Narby, shriller than ever. "Y' wos a pore tramp with no money, and thet gent--Sir Simon es y' calls 'im--hed 'eaps an' 'eaps."

Trent looked up quickly.

"How do you know that?"

"I took in 'is tea," said Mrs. Narby, nodding vigorously, "an' Pope, me son, took in th' toast which the gent ate. He was settin' at thet there table, with a 'eap of notes an' gold beside 'im, and a big morrocker pocket-book, int' which he shovelled the money wen he saw Pope an' me come in. Look fur the blue pocket-book, Mr. Policeman, an' if it's gorn, it's that there cove," she again pointed to Herries, who again shook his head, "as 'ave it."

"You can search me," said the accused man, opening his arms.

Trent took him at his word, and ran his hand down the young man's sides. But nothing could be found. He then marched him and the landlady upstairs and into the bedroom. Herries, with his hands in his pockets, sat wearily by the window, while Trent examined the room, aided by Mrs. Narby. The lady was extremely active. She pulled the clothes from the bed, removed the wardrobe from against the wall, and wrenched up the carpet, but all to no purpose. Then while Trent looked up the chimney, Mrs. Narby, with surprising activity, scrambled under the bed. She emerged in a minute or so, with a smothered exclamation, covered with grime and fluff, and held in her large hand a blue pocket-book of morocco.

"The money!" cried Trent, darting towards her.

Mrs. Narby shook out the pocket-book triumphantly,--

"Empty," she cried vindictively, "he's the thief an' assassing!" and she flung the book at Herries' head.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

Mrs. Narby's discovery convinced Inspector Trent that his prisoner was guilty. The razor, the key of the dead man's bedroom, the smeared sleeve, and the pocket-book, all pointed to Herries as the assassin. And to this material evidence could be added several serious admissions. After an early denial, Herries had admitted that he knew the deceased; he had acknowledged him to be a relative with whom he had quarrelled; and he had stated that his temper was fiery; finally, the presumed murderer, arriving at an unknown inn on the particular night on which Sir Simon had slept there, had occupied the room directly adjoining that of his victim. In the face of such strong circumstantial evidence, it was scarcely to be wondered at that Herries looked upon himself as lost. Weaker proofs had hanged men just as innocent.

It was close on five o'clock when Trent came downstairs to see if the doctor had arrived. He locked Herries in the bedroom, intending to take him personally to Tarhaven prison, when the doctor had examined the body. In the meantime there was no chance of Herries escaping. From this solitary house, surrounded by marsh and fog, no one, without being well acquainted with the neighbourhood (and Herries was a stranger), could hope to get away without endangering his life. The two yokels still watched under the window, and three or four policemen were in and around the house. Trent felt that his valuable prisoner was perfectly safe, and went back to the stuffy parlour to examine Narby, and to question the landlady about the man called Michael Gowrie, to whom Herries had alluded.

The heads of the household being thus employed, Elspeth and Pope attended to the many customers who thronged the tap-room. A great number of people had been drawn to the inn by an account of the tragedy, and as some hours

had elapsed since the discovery of the body, the news was pretty widely known. Never before in its sordid history had the "Marsh Inn" done such a roaring trade, and Pope put his poetry and dreaming on one side, to deliver pots of frothing beer to thirsty labourers, who lethargically discussed the crime.

Elsbeth, looking more miserable and white-faced than ever, moved like an unquiet ghost about the room, fulfilling her duties in a mechanical way, while her thoughts were busy with the prisoner overhead. With the unreasoning affection of a woman, she was sure in her own mind that Herries was innocent, not because of what he said, but for the simple reason that he had been kind to her. That episode of the bucket, at their first meeting, had established a silent understanding between the two unlucky people, and each recognised in the other a kindred spirit. Never before had Elspeth met with an unsolicited act of kindness, and she was prepared to think of the man who rendered it to her trodden-down self, as a god. Moreover, the tones of his voice, the refinement of his face, the kindly look in his eyes, and perhaps his handsome exterior, appealed to her feminine nature. Moving about with steady eyes and firm lips, she was wondering all the time how she could help her hero to prove his innocence. But there is always one who loves and one who is loved. Herries was the latter, for as yet, and very naturally, his heart was untouched.

Shortly a picturesque figure entered the crowded tap-room in the person of a short, thick-set man, dressed in a coster costume of the ornate type. He wore bell-bottomed trousers of grey cloth, a short-tailed jacket of the same hue and texture, a yellow waistcoat, and a flaming red scarf twisted round his brawny throat. The dress was profusely decorated with buttons, mother-of-pearl buttons, which appeared in every place where a button could be sewn on. His brown bowler hat was trimmed with a large ostrich feather, and his feet were shod with elegant, thin-soled, high-heeled, brown boots, more suited to a London Street than to the mud of the Essex marshes. This unusual figure--unusual at least in the country--attracted much bovine attention, but the man pushed his way towards Elspeth, and saluted her by touching his hat and kicking out his right leg, sailor fashion.

"Sweetlips," said Elspeth, looking surprised at seeing him.

"Sweetlips Kind himself," replied the man in a pleasant and rather cultivated voice, "just come into this smoky engine house, as the fogs make it, with the caravan, and the missus--ill."

"Oh!" Elspeth's voice was full of sympathy, "is Rachel ill?"

"Diphtheria, poor lass, and what's a Cheap-jack like me to do with a sick wife in a caravan?" he drew the sleeve of his jacket across his kind, shrewd, grey eyes, and must have scratched himself with the many buttons. "Is there a doctor about?" he asked huskily.

"The nearest doctor is ten miles away," explained the girl in a sympathetic manner. "He comes to Desleigh only on Saturdays."

"Can't wait till then, my girl, the missus may die at any moment, if the stuff ain't taken from her throat. It's hard to lose her, after all these years of fair and foul weather. I want you to come to her, Elspeth, and I'll ride my horse to that doctor, if you'll tell me where he is to be found."

"I can't leave the inn just now," said Elspeth, thinking of Herries upstairs, depending upon her assistance. "We're in dreadful trouble."

"A pot of beer, please," said Sweetlips, quickly. "What's up?"

"There's been a murder."

"Lor! You don't tell me so."

"Yes. An old gentleman has been killed----"

"And the murderer is shut in a bedroom upstairs," finished Pope with a leer.

"He is not the murderer," said the girl indignantly, and turning a shade paler. "I don't know who killed Sir Simon Tedder, but I am quite sure that Mr. Herries didn't."

"Sir Simon Tedder," said Kind, dropping the pot of beer from his mouth. "The millionaire cove? Is he a deader?"

"His throat has been cut," said Pope, eagerly.

"Not by Mr. Herries," retorted Elspeth.

"Lor!" said Kind again, "Why, I've got some of his jam stuff, with the name on the tins. Here's a go. I could do a bit of business on this here," he went on, his lip trembling, "folk always crowd to places where a murder's been committed. But I've Rachel to think of. Come, Elspeth," he ended entreatingly, "come to the missus, and lemme go for the doctor."

"A doctor will be here soon from Tarhaven to examine the body," said Pope filling another pewter.

"The Inspector and the police are in the house, and the doctor is to follow."

"Two doctors will be here," corrected Elspeth, struck with a sudden thought. "I sent a telegram from the station to Dr. James Browne, who is a friend of Mr. Herries."

"You'll get into trouble with the police," Pope warned her.

"What do I care for the police, so long as Mr. Herries is proved innocent?" cried the girl passionately. "But if you will wait for a short time," she continued, addressing the mournful Cheap-jack, "one or the other of the doctors will come soon."

"I hope one of 'em will be in time to save my Rachel," said Kind with a sigh. "Lor, what a go it will be if I lose her. She's been the sun and the moon to yours truly for years."

Pope sniggered.

"If you're in such a hurry," he said in an unkindly tone, "ask Mr. Herries to see your wife. Mr. Gowrie told me that he is a doctor, and he's on the spot."

Elspeth's pale cheeks flamed, and she clasped her hands.

"Oh!" she cried, passionately, "do you think the police would let him go and see Mrs. Kind."

"Not much," snapped Pope and giggled. "He's got to see Old Ketch."

"Young man," said Sweetlips sternly, "I've knocked down a cove for speaking more politely than you do. Not so much of it, do you hear?"

Pope did hear, and being a rank coward, changed colour. After an uneasy attempt to assert his dignity, he was quelled by the Cheap-jack's stern eye, and moved away hurriedly in response to an imaginary call. Kind turned to Elspeth, who was thinking.

"If them two doctors don't come," said he slowly, "an' the police won't let this chap, as is accused, see the missus, she's a deader."

Elspeth covered her face for a moment and thought. "Where is your caravan?" she asked hurriedly.

Sweetlips pointed a careless thumb over his right shoulder.

"Just outside the village," he replied, "come, an' let us see the Inspector chap. He might listen to me, and let Mr. Herries come to see the poor missus."

"I fear not, Sweetlips, you don't know the police."

"Don't I, my girl," Kind gave a conscious laugh. "I know them better than I do myself, but quite in an honest way, mind you. I've been other things than a Cheap-jack in my time. But the missus, the missus," he said impatiently, "while I'm talking, she's dying. Come and see her, Elspeth."

The girl stood irresolute. She thought of Mrs. Narby's temper, and of Mrs. Narby's heavy fist, of Herries upstairs in danger of his life, and finally of the poor woman dying in the caravan. Some angel passing must have whispered courage to her at the moment, for suddenly her cheeks flushed a brave red, her eyes sparkled, and her mouth grew firm.

"I'll come," she said quickly, "but first tell me what you had to do with the police?"

Kind hesitated, then lowered his lips to the level of her ear--

"I was a detective once," he whispered, hoarsely. "Used to look after chaps like this Dr. Herries you talk of, and hang 'em if I could."

"You beast," said Elspeth in low tones, drawing back. "Dr. Herries is quite innocent."

"Then let him save the missus, and I'll save him."

"Can you?" she asked, her breast heaving.

"Yes, if he really and truly is innocent."

"He is. I swear he is," she cried passionately. "Wait till I get my hat and shawl, and we'll see the Inspector, and afterwards go to Mrs. Kind."

"Don't tell this police chap of my being a detective," said Kind, in an anxious tone. "I've cut that business; and if folks knew what I had been, they wouldn't come and buy things. All the patter in the world wouldn't help a Cheap-jack who had once hanged criminals."

"You'll save this one, only he isn't a criminal," said Elspeth, and glided away up the stairs, while Kind boldly went towards the parlour and knocked. Mrs. Narby opened the door. Sweetlips Kind explained himself in a few minutes, and asked that the prisoner, guarded, of course, should be permitted to see Mrs. Kind.

"Certainly not," said Trent, sternly, "the prisoner is in his bedroom, and there he must remain until he is lodged in gaol."

"But my wife will die," said Kind, faintly.

"I am sorry," replied Trent blandly and uneasily, for his own inclination was to permit the visit. "But I cannot exceed my powers."

"Then you won't, sir?"

"If you knew the police, my man, you wouldn't ask that."

"I know the police for the biggest set of fools on earth," cried the Cheap-jack

passionately. "You'll never hang this man, if I can clear his character. I'll save him to spite you, that would let my poor wife die, for your cursed red-tape business," and before the astonished Trent could express the indignation he felt, Kind was out of the inn, waiting in the foggy street for Elspeth. She joined him shortly in a state of intense excitement, and heard Kind's openly expressed wrath against Trent and his minions.

"Then you'll help Mr. Herries," she said, squeezing his arm.

"_Won't_ I, you bet, I just will," said Kind heartily. "Let us get the missus out of danger first, and I'll remember enough of my old business to hunt down the real murderer. Always provided," added the ex-detective cautiously, "that this man is innocent."

"He is--he is. I'll tell you all about it as we walk to the caravan."

"No, my dear," said Sweetlips gently, "until Rachel is safe, I can't think of anything else. Come quickly," he dragged her along into the fog, "she may be dead, poor soul. Come!" and the two figures vanished in the mist, which was thicker and darker and colder than ever.

The Cheap-jack's evil star must have been in the ascendant at the moment, for twenty minutes after he had turned his back on the inn, Dr. James Browne of Tarhaven arrived, hotfooted. He came by train to the local station, a quarter of a mile distant, and had walked to the inn through the fogs. At once, he asked for his friend, and Inspector Trent was informed of the fact. He immediately terminated his examination of Mr. and Mrs. Narby--from whom he had learned nothing new--and had the new-comer shown into the stuffy parlour, to be questioned.

"Your name?" demanded the Inspector, curtly official.

"Dr. Browne. I have come from Tarhaven, and wish to see my friend, Mr. Herries, who is, I understand, accused of murder."

"Who told you so?"

Browne took a telegram from his breast-pocket, and passed it in silence to the

officer. It was unsigned and contained but a few words, which were as follows: "Angus Herries accused of murder, Marsh Inn, Desleigh. Come immediately." When Trent read this, he laid it on the table, and scrutinised the doctor, carefully.

Browne was short and stout, and imperative. His hair was red, so was his moustache, and short beard, and he had choleric blue eyes. Apparently he had a temper, but, recognising the majesty of the law, and knowing that it would be needful, for Herries' sake, to stand well with its representative, he kept himself in hand. Experience had taught him the necessity of being cool at critical moments, and the present was critical, if not for himself at least for his friend.

"What do you know of this?" asked Trent, when he had taken in the exterior of his visitor.

"As much as you see in that telegram," retorted Browne, pointing to the table. "I was a fellow-student of Mr. Herries in Edinburgh, and have not seen him for quite two years. I know him well enough to say that he is not guilty of murder."

"The evidence is strongly against him."

"Circumstantial evidence has hanged an innocent man before now."

"It will not hang Mr. Herries if he can prove his innocence. By-the-way, did you see Dr. Harkness in the train?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"I sent for him to come here, and examine the body. If he does not arrive soon, perhaps you will take his place."

"Certainly, I'll do anything to help Herries."

"I don't see how a post-mortem can help him," retorted Trent. "Sir Simon Tedder's throat has been cut."

"Sir Simon Tedder!" Browne started, and looked dismayed.

"You know him?"

"Yes. He is Herries' uncle. I attended him at Tarhaven, where he has a house, for an attack of influenza, and tried to make peace between him and his nephew."

"Ah!" Trent assumed an air of satisfaction, "then you know that the two had quarrelled?"

"I see no reason to conceal the fact that I do know," snapped the doctor sharply. "But that was two years ago. Herries went to sea, and it is incredible that he should return to murder his uncle."

"Yet you must admit that it is strange, uncle and nephew should both have been at this inn?"

"I admit nothing, until I know the facts, Mr. Inspector."

"Here they are. Between ourselves, doctor, I should like to save Mr. Herries, who seems to have had a hard time."

"He has, poor soul."

"But," added Trent, cautiously, "it will be difficult to save him in the face of the evidence."

"What is it?"

Inspector Trent detailed all that he had learned from the people of the inn, and from the prisoner himself. Dr. Browne, with his keen blue eyes fastened on the official, listened intently, weighing the evidence in silence. Only when Trent ended, did he speak, and then curtly.

"You have captured the wrong man."

"Indeed," said Trent sarcastically, "perhaps you can tell me the name of the right one."

"Not being omniscient, I cannot. It is for you, Mr. Inspector, to learn the name of the man who passed through the tap-room at eight."

"You accuse him?"

"Of course. He is the assassin, and has implicated Herries by placing in his room, the razor, the key and the pocket-book. This unknown man must have been the one whom Sir Simon expected on the previous night."

"How do you know that?"

"Because, by your own showing, Sir Simon could not have known of his nephew's presence here. The unknown man did not arrive at the time he was expected, but when the inn was closed, he must either have been admitted by Sir Simon, and taken to the bedroom, or he must have got in by the window."

"The window is on the first floor!"

Browne cast a look upward at the low ceiling.

"I don't think an active man would have any difficulty in climbing."

"There is certainly some trellis work outside, against the window of the room Sir Simon occupied," said Trent half to himself, "but this is all theoretical."

"So is the evidence against Herries."

"Do you call a razor, a stained shirt, the dead man's pocket-book and the key of the dead man's room, theoretical?"

"These things were placed in Herries' room by the assassin to implicate him in the crime," said Browne obstinately.

"Why should the unknown man take that trouble?" argued Trent. "He could not have known that my prisoner was the nephew of Sir Simon, and it would have been easy for him to have left as he did, after--as you say--committing the crime, without taking the trouble to throw the blame on an innocent man. I don't see what the assassin gains by taking such trouble."

"He provided for his own safety, in case his name was discovered."

"But," went on the Inspector, "how do we know that this unknown man saw Sir Simon at all?"

"The landlady's evidence makes that clear," replied Browne in a decisive way, "she saw him wearing the fur coat of the deceased."

"It might have been the man's own. Fur coats are very much alike."

"There I disagree with you. But presuming this to be the case, have you found the fur coat of Sir Simon in his room?"

"No. The landlady searched and could not find it."

"Then its disappearance proves what I say to be true," said Browne in a triumphant manner. "What happened is this. The assassin could not arrive at the appointed time, and Sir Simon retired to bed. Later the man came, and either obtained admittance through the front door opened by Sir Simon when all were in bed, or climbed up by the trellis to which you allude. The two had a talk and a quarrel, and the visitor cut the old man's throat. Then he waited until the morning. Knowing how his victim was to leave the inn, he boldly walked out, leaving strong evidence against Herries."

"But why?" asked Trent, persistently.

"Oh, I cannot tell you the motive for the commission of the crime, Mr. Inspector. You must learn that from the man who passed through the tap-room in Sir Simon's fur coat. And I think," added Browne shrewdly, "that you will learn, that the assassin implicated Herries to save himself, in the event of his being suspected."

"I don't agree with you," said Trent, doggedly, and rose to show that the interview was at an end. "Herries is guilty."

"I should have been surprised if you had agreed," retorted Browne. "Herries is innocent."

"Question the man yourself then," snapped the Inspector, not in the best of

tempers. "His suspicious behaviour and lame explanations will shake your belief."

"Never," retorted the loyal friend, "I would as soon suspect myself as Herries, who is the best, as he is the most unfortunate, fellow in the world. What infernal luck he has had."

Trent stiffened his erect figure, and still obstinate, strode out of the room, followed by Browne, who looked like a very pugnacious bull-terrier. The two proceeded up the narrow stairs, and into the passage leading to the two rooms, round which all interest in the little hostel centred, since one contained a corpse, and the other, the presumed criminal. Policemen guarded each door, and both of them reported to Trent, that everything was going well. Taking the key of Herries' room from his pocket, Trent opened the door, and entered abruptly, as though to catch the prisoner unawares. The room was naturally in darkness, as it was now late, and no candle had been allowed the suspected man, in case he should set the inn on fire. Trent expected to find darkness, but he did not expect to experience a chilly clammy feeling, as though he were without, and not within. To be plain the bedroom was filled with mist, and a sudden suspicion struck the officer.

"Herries--Mr. Herries," he called, and when there was no reply, he turned towards Browne in the darkness of the passage. "Bring a light--bring a light."

The constable who had guarded the door, more ready than his chief, instantly struck a match, and the blue glimmer served somewhat to dispel the gloom. As the lucifer flamed up, Trent darted into the room, with an oath, and a cry of rage.

"The prisoner has escaped!" It was true. The window was open, the room was empty. As he had come out of the mist to that unfortunate inn, so had Herries vanished again behind the grey veil, which still hung over the marshes.

CHAPTER V

HUE AND CRY

"Gone!" cried Trent, both enraged and amazed. "How did he escape?"

"By the window," replied Dr. Browne, who was not ill-pleased to find the room empty, and he struck a second match to make certain, "yes! by the window."

"Anyone can see that," retorted the officer, sorely annoyed, for the position of affairs reflected no credit on his brains. "Holl! Fairburn! What is the meaning of this?"

The two policemen protested that they were not in fault. Fairburn, on guard at the door of the death-chamber, exonerated himself by pointing out that the corpse, which he had been set to watch, was still in the room, while Holl vehemently stated that he had heard no sound likely to lead him to believe in an intended escape.

"I did not hear the window being opened," said Holl, decisively.

"Why didn't you station a policeman under the window?" asked Browne, while the Inspector fretted and fumed, and wondered inwardly what the authorities would say to his negligence.

"Two men--villagers, were posted there," he said angrily. "I'll see them at once."

He ran hastily down the stairs, and out of the front door into the side garden, where the two men had been stationed. Finding no one there, he returned to the tap-room, and discovered the watchers busy with pots of beer.

"Why are you not at your posts, men?" he asked in a loud domineering voice.

"We got tired," said one bovine agriculturalist, explaining on behalf of himself and his friend, "and the damp was giving we the blamed rheumatics."

"What the devil does that matter, you fools? You should have remained where I placed you."

"You bean't our master," grumbled the spokesman, "and there weren't no money given to we."

Trent stamped, but could not gainsay this speech. It was his own fault, as he recognised plainly enough, for it was his duty to have posted official guards.

"How long have you been here?" he asked.

"Twenty minutes to half an hour," said the yokel, drawing his sleeve across his mouth, as he set down an empty pewter. "Bill, here, and me 'ull go back, if it be as you'll give we money."

"You can save yourself the trouble," retorted Trent sharply, swinging round on his heel, "the prisoner has escaped."

Immediately the tap-room was in commotion, and everyone rose in consternation. It was not pleasant to think that a murderer was at large and in the neighbourhood. Narby, from force of habit, felt for his revolver.

"Guess he can't hev gone far," said he, in his nasal American way, "th' fog 'ud stop him."

"The fog will save him, more like," said Dr. Browne, quickly. "He'll have time to get away before the mists lift. And I'm glad."

"Oh, you are, mister, and for why, may I ask?"

"Because the man is innocent."

"Innercent," shrieked Mrs. Narby shrilly, "an' me findin' the pocket-book, and Narby the razor an' key. Wot's yer torkin' of, anyhow?"

"Here!" cried Trent, impatiently, "while we chatter, the prisoner is escaping."

Twenty pounds to the man who finds him."

The yokels needed no further incentive to action. They made a rush for the door, and in a few minutes the lands surrounding the village were dotted with lanterns, each carried by a man eager to earn the reward. Trent remained behind to ask questions.

"Did anyone see the prisoner?" he asked Holl.

The constable saluted sulkily.

"No, sir. You gave orders that no one was to disturb him, and locked the door yourself. That girl," he pointed to Elspeth, who was an attentive spectator, "came up to see him, and went on her knees at the very door itself, that I should let her in. I told her that I could not, and that even if I would, the door was locked."

"Did she speak through the door?"

"No, sir, but the prisoner must have heard her asking me to let her enter," returned Holl smartly; and having saluted was dismissed abruptly.

"Now then," said Trent, beckoning Elspeth to approach, "why did you wish to see the prisoner?"

The girl was quite ready with her reply.

"To tell him, that according to his wish I had sent a message to his friend in Tarhaven."

"Ah!" cried Browne, nodding his thanks, "that was me. _You_ sent the telegram."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Herries said that you would help him."

"I intend to do all I can, my girl, but matters look black against him. All the same he is innocent."

"You had no right to send the telegram without telling me," said Trent to

Elsbeth in angry tones.

"Mr. Herries was kind to me," she returned, steadily, "and I was quite right in returning his kindness!"

"And Herries was within his rights in asking to see me," said Browne sharply. "The poor devil needs a friend, seeing how you have already judged him."

"I do not judge him," said Trent, very irritated, "the jury will do that, Dr. Browne."

"You'll have to catch your hare first, Mr. Inspector."

Trent would have made an angry reply, and there is no knowing to what lengths the quarrel would have proceeded, only that Browne's attitude was so sturdy, and his blue eyes so unflinching in their gaze, that the Inspector thought it would be best to leave the fiery little doctor alone. He was as much in the right, as Trent himself was in the wrong. However, the Inspector was determined to vent his wrath on someone, and chose Elspeth, who remained in the room, with himself and Browne. Everyone else, even Mrs. Narby, was out hunting the miserable man, whom they insisted was guilty.

"What do you know of this?" asked Trent. "Tell the truth!"

"I never tell lies," replied the girl quietly. "I know nothing. I went up over an hour ago to inform Mr. Herries that I had sent the telegram, and the policeman, who has just gone out, would not allow me to see him. I then put on my cloak and hat, and came down to go with Sweetlips Kind to his caravan."

"Why did you go there?"

"To see his wife, who is dying. If you remember, Mr. Trent----

"Yes, yes," snapped the Inspector rather ashamed of himself, and addressed Browne. "A Cheap-jack came here over an hour ago asking that a doctor should be sent to his wife. Your friend Herries is a medical man, but of course I could not let him go, and there was no one else."

"Is the woman very ill?" asked Browne, sharply.

"She was, but she is better now," replied Elspeth, "I looked after her. It is not a matter of life and death, now."

"In that case, I may as well see the corpse upstairs," said the doctor, briskly. "Will you come with me, Mr. Inspector?"

Trent agreed, readily enough, as there was nothing else left for him to do. His men and the villagers were out hunting the mists for the escaped criminal, and it was useless for him to join in, since his presence was required in the death-chamber. He went upstairs with the doctor, and Elspeth was left alone. She heaved a sigh of relief when they departed, and sat down before the fire to snatch a few moments of quiet before her tyrant returned, and to think over the position of affairs.

There could be no doubt that she loved this fugitive, for her heart ached to think of the peril he was in. The poor girl's life had been a hard one, and now at the age of twenty, there did not seem much chance of improvement. Overhearing somewhat of the story told by Herries to Gowrie, she thought that his bad luck was very much like her own. Since her cradle, she had been the victim of misfortune, and nothing had gone well with her. Yet, had Elspeth been better fed and better dressed, and loved as a girl of her age should be loved, she would undoubtedly have bloomed into a pretty damsel. But cares had aged her, and want of good food rendered her lean. If Herries was Jonah, she was Mrs. Jonah. As this quaint thought came into her mind, she smiled and blushed. Much as she would have liked to be Mrs. Jonah, there was small chance of her achieving her desire. The man she loved was a supposed criminal, flying from justice, and even had his case been less desperate, he could not marry her for lack of money. And again, even had he possessed money, he would not have made her his wife, as he was not in love with her, as she was with him. The future looked very dark to this poor Cinderella seated by the fire; and thinking of her sorrows, the tears ran down her cheeks, although she had plenty of pluck. But the most plucky person gives way at times.

She was aroused from her musings by the entrance of Pope in a state of excitement. He carried a lantern, and was covered with mud, his face was red,

and his eyes flashed brightly. Elspeth started up in alarm fearing the worst.

"Have they caught him?" she asked, laying her hand on her breast to still the loud beating of her heart.

"Not yet, but they soon will," said the poet. "Everyone is searching the marshes all around, and the lanterns are dancing like will-o'-the-wisps in the foggy air. I have tried to find him, but I cannot. Oh, I hope mother or father will, and then I'll have the twenty pounds to publish my poems."

"Would you sell that poor man for twenty pounds, Pope?"

"Why not, Elspeth, if he is guilty?"

"But he is not," declared the girl, vehemently. "You and everyone else have made up your minds that Mr. Herries killed Sir Simon. I don't believe that he did, and I hope that he has escaped."

"Then if he is innocent, Mr. Gowrie must be guilty."

Elspeth rose angrily, and darting forward, shook the long shambling lad furiously.

"How dare you say that?" she cried. "Why should Mr. Gowrie kill Sir Simon?"

"Sir Simon had money," stuttered Pope, much ruffled, and backing before the small fury who faced him. "He slept in this room, and could easily have gone upstairs, when everyone was quiet, to kill Sir Simon."

"He did nothing of the sort, Pope. I know Mr. Gowrie better than you do, and he is incapable of such wickedness."

"It was Mr. Gowrie who brought you here, wasn't it, Elspeth?"

"Yes," said the girl listlessly, and all the light died out of her eyes, "a year ago."

"I was away at that time," chattered Pope setting down his lantern, and

producing a cheap cigarette. "Mother placed me in an office; but I could not stand so sordid a life," he added with an affected shudder. "It was not the life for a poet, so I came back, and here I can write glorious verse."

"So you think," said Elspeth, who had read Pope's productions, and thought very little of them. "But you would be much better earning your own bread and butter, than living on your mother."

"They have brought a genius into the world, and it is their glorious duty to support him," said Pope grandiloquently. "When I am Poet Laureate, I'll make it up to them."

Elspeth shrugged her spare shoulders and went resignedly about her work. It was impossible to make Pope think himself any other but the most famous poet in the world, and his conceit amounted to a positive mania. Even as Elspeth moved away, the young man commenced to mouth one of his bombastic poems, devoid of grammar or sense, and Elspeth felt inclined to stop her ears, so vile was the rhythm. This she did not do, having a vivid recollection of having suffered at Pope's hands, when she had once betrayed disgust. The poet was mild enough usually, but when his vanity was touched he grew positively dangerous, and went--as the saying goes--baresark. Knowing his eccentricities, Elspeth, therefore, paid no attention to the verses, but worked on quietly, while Pope, fancying himself a Homer at the least, walked up and down declaiming turgid blank verse. Finally, finding that Elspeth did not applaud, he stopped and looked at her spitefully.

"Genius is wasted on you, Elspeth."

"Entirely," she answered coolly. "Why didn't you wipe your boots before you come in, Pope. They are covered with red mud. You have been to the creek at the back of the house."

"Why shouldn't I have gone there?" asked Pope, with a snarl, and his freckled face grew red.

"I don't think Mr. Herries would try to escape in that way."

Pope cooled down, and re-lighted his cheap cigarette.

"Well, he didn't go that way, although I hunted all along the banks," he said. "Have you any idea of where he has gone, Elspeth?"

"If I had, I shouldn't tell you, Pope."

"You must, you are only my mother's servant."

"That is not true, Pope," said the girl, but her eyes flashed angrily as she turned on him sharply. "Mr. Gowrie brought me here a year ago, and as he could not pay for his board and lodging he left me in pawn, so to speak, to your mother. I have been a drudge ever since."

"Well, and what is a drudge but a servant," snapped Pope, cowering over the fire to warm his lean hands. "Is Mr. Gowrie any relation to you, Elspeth?"

"Yes," she replied with an averted face, "don't ask questions."

"I want to know what your last name is?"

"Then you won't."

"Does my mother know?"

"She does not. She knows me as Elspeth, and that must content her, and you together. Why do you wish to know about me?"

Pope leered at her, and his eyes flashed.

"I thought that if you were washed that you might be pretty."

"Well," said Elspeth, unmoved.

"And that I might marry you."

The girl flushed.

"I would sooner kill myself," she cried in a spirited tone. "My life is hard enough, but marriage with you"--she shuddered and cast a look of loathing at this creature, who dared to present himself as her lover.

"Oh, very well, miss," said Pope shrilly, his voice invariably grew shrill when he became angry, "I'll tell mother about you, and she'll make it hot for you. You piggish drudge," he raged, stamping up and down the tap-room, "you ugly cat--you nasty beast, I wouldn't marry you, if you were set with diamonds like--like----" he stopped, abruptly.

"Like what?" inquired Elspeth sarcastically.

"Like the king's crown," ended the poet lamely, and then his wrath died down, as suddenly as it had arisen. "I say, Elspeth, I didn't mean what I said. Make me a cup of tea! Do! Do! Do!"

The creature was like a naughty child, and Elspeth made every allowance for his nerves. Quarrels of this sort were frequent between them, yet Pope in his own half-mad way was in love with Elspeth, and when things went awry with him, would always come to be comforted by her. This did not make her position any the more easy with Mrs. Narby, who was like a tigress with her cub, when Pope was in the question. Mean as was the inn, and lowly as was the position of herself and her husband, Mrs. Narby would have gone out of her mind with rage at the idea of her darling marrying Elspeth. That the girl was indubitably a lady, Mrs. Narby never recognised. She looked on Elspeth as a drudge, and would have broken her neck sooner than call her daughter-in-law.

To keep Pope quiet, Elspeth made some tea, and the poet retired to his favourite settle, there to compose poetry. In a few moments Trent came down with Browne, and they went into the parlour. When the poet was busy with his verses, and abstractedly sipping the tea, Elspeth crept to the door of the parlour, and listened. She blushed at the idea of eavesdropping, but in the cause of Herries, she would have dared to do a deal more. Unlucky as the hunted man was, he had at least two friends, Dr. Browne, and Elspeth, who had no surname.

"Until I make a proper examination I cannot be quite certain," she heard the doctor say, "but I think the old man was killed somewhere about twelve o'clock last night. Was no cry heard?"

"None," replied Trent. "At least the landlady told me so. And, as the bed is

covered with blood, I expect that he was attacked when he was asleep."

"Probable enough," mused the doctor. "Well, Mr. Inspector, you had better get your doctor from Tarhaven, and have the body officially examined. I suppose the inquest will take place here?"

"I think it will be best, doctor. I'll send to Sir Simon's house, and break the news to his daughter."

"Let me go," urged Browne, "I know her well, and will be able to tell her the tragedy in a more gentle way than you would."

"I am not exactly wanting in tact," said Trent annoyed, "and----"

He stopped at hearing a shout outside the inn, and Elspeth had only time to glide away from the door and back to the tap-room, before the alert Inspector was at the front door. Just as he was about to open it, Mrs. Narby entered with a rush, hugging in her arms a bundle of cloth.

"I've got it--I've got it," she shouted.

"Got Herries?" asked Trent sharply.

"The fur coat," shouted Mrs. Narby, who was red and perspiring, and threw down the coat on the floor. "See--the fur coat--sables, as I'm a living woman. That cove es parsed out wore it."

"Sir Simon's coat," said Trent. "What do you think of this, doctor?"

"Much the same as I did before," replied Browne, tartly. "The assassin wore this coat to facilitate his escape, and flung it away to prevent discovery!"

CHAPTER VI

THE CARAVAN

All search for the escaped criminal proved vain. Herries had vanished as completely as though the earth had swallowed him up, after the fashion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Apparently, he had noted the departure of the amateur guards from their post below the window, and had seized the chance of getting away unobserved. Certainly he did not know the neighbourhood and, in that treacherous marsh-land, ran every chance of missing his way in the fogs, to fall into some water-hole. But it was better--at least the accused man appeared to have thought so--to risk even so stifling a death, rather than face the more judicial and merciful one of the gallows. Herries had chosen to fall into the hands of God, who knew his innocence, rather than into the hands of man, who judged him guilty before trial.

But be this as it may, it was certain that he was gone, for although every square inch of land in and around Desleigh village was minutely examined, nothing could be found likely to afford a clue to his hiding-place--perhaps to his grave. Many of the rustics returned to the "Marsh Inn" swearing that the man must be dead.

"In them fogs, and with them dratted water-holes, and him knawing nothing," said the yokels, each and severally, "he be dead, surely."

Trent did not agree with popular opinion.

"Herries was half a sailor, and accustomed to fogs," he argued to Browne, "in some way he could take care of his skin, and would not run away to meet death."

"He ran away to escape death," replied Browne dryly. "However, should he come to me, I shall certainly persuade him to surrender."

"The man would be doubly a fool to come to you, and then give himself up," said the Inspector energetically.

"Not if he is innocent."

"His flight looks like innocence."

Browne shrugged his shoulders.

"Herries evidently lost his head for the moment. When he thinks over things he will return to prove that he has nothing to do with the crime."

"I doubt his being such a fool," said Trent gloomily. "You have no idea of his whereabouts, I suppose?" he ended anxiously.

The irascible little man clenched his ready fists, and answered in a voice choked with anger.

"I have been with you all the time, and I told you that I had not seen Herries for two years. How then can you ask me, of all people, where he has gone? Inspector Trent, are you a clever man, or a----?"

"There! There!" interrupted the other, before the odious word could be pronounced. "I made a slight mistake."

"Your mistakes, as you call them, may send Herries to the gallows."

"We have to catch him first," retorted Trent snappishly, and the conversation ended for the time being.

Decidedly the Inspector was in the wrong, and no amount of raging or arguing on his part would prove him to be right. He had failed to take proper precautions to guard the prisoner, and the bird had escaped the snare. Thinking again of the social importance of the victim, Trent cursed himself for having missed such a chance of improving his position. He knew well that the authorities would take no excuse, and at the moment, he could do nothing to repair his error. Herries was missing, and the whole police force would not be able to find him. Of course there might be a chance when the mists lifted, but the question was, when would they lift? Not for days perhaps, if the weather-wise rustics were to be believed, and thus Herries would have ample time to make his way to Pierside, or even into the jaws of the lion at

Tarhaven, and get on board some outward-bound tramp. Once out of England, and Trent's chance of making a sensation, and of getting a rise in his salary, would be gone.

He did the best that he could under the circumstances--that is, he left a policeman in charge of the cage whence the bird had flown, and stationed several in the village itself. The local constable, Armour, had not yet shown his face, and Trent was puzzled, as the man was bound, during the day, to come to Desleigh. But Armour was not visible, so the Inspector did what he could with the men he had brought from Tarhaven, judiciously disposing them about the place. It might be, he hopefully thought, that one of them might chance upon Herries wandering lost and miserable in the fogs. Then he placed the written depositions of Mrs. Narby and other witnesses in his pocket and started for Tarhaven. Before leaving the inn, however, he inquired if Browne was coming also.

"No," said that gentleman shortly. "I shall stop here, and see that poor woman in the caravan."

"Not your friend Herries then," asked Trent artfully.

"If Herries returns, I'll send a wire to you at once."

"I can't believe you."

"That is both rude and unnecessary," retorted Browne, the veins swelling in his high forehead. "But I quite see that you cannot grasp my meaning. It is useless to explain. Good-day," and Browne turned on his heel sharply, leaving Trent furious at being thus addressed. The hide of your Jack-in-Office is extremely thin.

Left behind, Dr. Browne turned his attention to a meal, after which he decided to visit the sick woman in the caravan. In spite of Mrs. Narby's masculine exterior, she was feminine enough to have an attack of nerves, owing to recent events. Dr. Browne won her gratitude, as much as she was able to spare, by prescribing for her, and as he announced his intention of stopping at the inn for the night, on the chance of meeting again with Herries, the landlady, before retiring to bed, gave him the stuffy parlour to eat in, the

bedroom of Herries to sleep in, and ordered Elspeth to attend on him. Consequently Dr. Browne found himself devouring a badly cooked meal in the parlour somewhere about six o'clock, and within half an hour of Trent's departure.

Elspeth waited on him, and cast furtive glances at him, as she was aware that he was her hero's friend, and indeed had heard the doctor champion the accused man. Browne, sensitive as a woman to occult influences, became aware that she wanted to speak to him, but feared to do so, by reason, as he thought, of shyness.

"Well," he said abruptly, when she brought him a cup of coffee.

"Yes, sir," said Elspeth, with a start.

"You wish to speak to me."

"I don't know why you----"

"But I know. You have been watching me closely. You sent the telegram, and know that I am Herries' friend. You are his friend likewise, why I don't know, and you wish to speak about him."

"I am his friend," said the girl steadily, "because he is the first human being who has been kind to me. There is nothing I would not do for him."

"Save his life then," said Browne caustically.

"I intend to," retorted Elspeth quickly.

The doctor turned in his chair and looked at her keenly. She was not exactly pretty, but there was a delicate and fascinating air about her, which meant more than mere physical beauty. Elspeth had "a way with her," as the saying goes, and Browne, sensitive, as has been said, felt her influence at once.

"Are you a lady masquerading as a servant?" he asked, bending his shaggy brows.

"I am a drudge left in pawn by a relation," said the girl, simply.

"What do you mean?"

"A year ago, I came here with a relative. He had not enough to pay for his bed and board, and moreover, wanting to get to London, he did not wish to be encumbered with a girl. To settle his bill and get rid of me, he left me behind to be Mrs. Narby's servant. She pays me nothing, and I do all the work."

"And how long is this slavery to last?"

Elsbeth made a gesture of despair.

"I do not know. Until my relative makes sufficient money to take me away. I cannot go myself, as I have no money, and only these clothes I wear now. Here, at least, I have a bed and food, hard though the situation is, so I have made up my mind to stay."

"Who is your relative?"

"I decline to say, just now."

"What is your name?"

"Elsbeth!"

"A Scotch name. Elsbeth what?"

"I cannot tell you at present," said the girl haughtily.

"Humph!" said Browne, quite puzzled, and also fascinated by this odd creature, who was a kind of Titania in domestic service. "You are a mystery. Well, it's none of my business. I have always kept clear of women, thank God, as they complicate life too much for a plain-thinking man. But Herries--what about him?"

"He is innocent."

"I know that, but how do you propose to prove his innocence?"

"Sweetlips Kind can do that--so he says."

"And who is Sweetlips Kind?"

"A Cheap-jack, whom I know very well. He was a----" here Elspeth paused and looked hard at the red-faced doctor.

"Go on. I am Herries' friend."

"Well then, Sweetlips Kind was a detective, and says that he will try and find the real murderer."

"Why should he take this trouble over Herries?"

"For my sake, because I have been waiting on Mrs. Kind--poor Rachel."

"And why should you take the trouble?"

Elspeth flushed.

"Mr. Herries was kind to me," and she related the incident of the bucket.

Browne hemmed and hawed.

"I shall never understand the reason why women exaggerate," said he with a shrug, and finishing his coffee. "Herries only did what any man would do for a woman."

"So far as this woman is concerned, no man ever did as much," said Elspeth dryly.

"Hum! Hum. I say; you are educated."

"Yes. I was at a very good girls' school eighteen months ago."

"What is your age?"

"Nineteen."

"You might be fifty by the way you talk. Well then, you want to help Herries, and so do I. Between us, we may best that fool, Trent."

"Sweetlips Kind will do that."

"Where is he?"

"In the caravan, attending to Rachel."

Browne rose quickly.

"By the way, I nearly forgot that woman, and she needed immediate attention, judging from what you said. I----" he made as to move to the door. Elspeth intercepted him.

"Not just now," she said hurriedly, "Rachel is better, and is now asleep. I attended to her."

"Pooh, you are not a medical man. I must go, if only out of charity."

What Elspeth would have said must remain a mystery, but she apparently was not anxious for the doctor to go on his errand of mercy. At all events she did not move away from the door. Just as she was about to speak, the door opened slightly, and a head topped by an ostrich-feather-trimmed bowler hat was thrust cautiously in.

"Elspeth!"

She turned at the cautious whisper, and opened the door wide.

"Come in, Sweetlips. Dr. Browne was just thinking of seeing your wife."

"Dr. Browne," repeated the Cheap-Jack, with a shrewd glance, "and who may he be?"

"I am Mr. Herries' friend," explained Browne, rather taken with the man's lean, clever face. "He wanted me to come and help him."

"He needs help," muttered Kind, rubbing his bristly chin. "He's in a hole if ever a man was."

"Can you get him out of it?"

"I," the Cheap-Jack feigned surprise, "pore cove like me?"

"I told him you were a detective," put in Elspeth.

"Oh my gal, and arter wot I said to----"

"Pooh, pooh," broke in the little doctor good-humouredly, "what is the use of doing things by halves? We three want to help an innocent man, so it is just as well we should understand one another."

"You are Mr. Herries' friend?" asked Kind, cautiously.

"I'm sure he is," said Elspeth fervently.

"Well then," Kind rolled his hat round and round in his large hands. "'Spose we get to business. If you mean well by the cove as is under suspicion, take me up to see the corpse's bedroom."

"Why?" asked Browne, somewhat startled by this blunt request.

"I want to have a look at the room, before the peelers disarrange things. If the cove in the fur-coat killed Sir Simon, he might have left some evidence behind him, which the police overlooked. Now," added Kind, measuring Browne with a keen glance, "you've seen the corpse, I've heard, and can get into that room again, by saying as you want to do some doctor's work with me to assist. Once let me get in, and I'll look round."

Browne made a cup of his hand for his chin, and pondered.

"I can do it," he said at last in a brisk manner, "but will we not go and see your wife first?"

"Not just now, Rachel's asleep."

"Alone?"

"In course," said Kind stolidly, "only me and she lives in the cart."

"I'll go and see after her, while you search the bedroom," said Elspeth about

to leave the room.

"But your missus, my gal?"

"She's in bed, and won't know. Pope will attend to the customers, and I'm too useful to him to be betrayed to his mother."

This plan was agreed upon, and Elspeth with a shawl over her head slipped out of the inn, with a hasty excuse to Pope. Browne sought out the constable left in charge, who had the key of the death-chamber and made apt his request. The man,--Fairburn it was,--knowing that Browne was in the confidence of his Inspector, as he thought, made no objection, and readily accompanied the two to the room. But he allowed them to enter alone, and thought that he was doing his duty by yawning at the door, looking up and down the dark passage in a listless manner. Kind carried the sole candle which the officer allowed to be taken into the room.

The corpse lay quiet and rigid under the sheet, and the feeble candle light made the room look quite funereal. To keep up appearances, as Fairburn was casting occasional glances from the doorway, Browne turned back the sheet and examined the corpse, telling Kind to bring water, and towels, and various other things, so as to give him a chance of moving unsuspected round the chamber. In this way, Sweetlips, by using the keen eyesight with which Nature had endowed him, to say nothing of his clever brain, saw a great deal.

"I'll open the window," he said aloud, and went to the dressing-table which was immediately before the casement. Here he remained for a little time, examining the position of the glass, and the table, both of which he noted had been moved. Then he moved round the room, apparently still under the doctor's orders to quell the suspicions of Fairburn, and when the constable was not looking, stooped to pick something off the floor. Near the bed was a small table covered with a red cloth, and on this were writing materials, which Kind also examined. Finally, he came to the bed, and looked at the corpse, at the crimsoned pillow and sheets, and at the heavy rep-curtain which draped the couch. A nudge told Browne that Sweetlips had seen all that he wished to see, and the two departed.

"It's all right, constable," said Browne, giving the key to the man, who

yawned on receiving it. "The regular doctor will come to-morrow, and you can tell him, if I am not here, that I have seen the corpse twice."

"Yes, sir," said Fairburn saluting, and tramped down the passage after locking the door, still yawning. Kind was perfectly satisfied that the inattentive policeman had guessed nothing of the real reason for the visit to the death-chamber. He turned to Browne, who was holding the candle.

"What of the room Herries slept in?" he asked in a low voice, and with more of the detective's peremptory manner than the Cheap-jack's careless ease.

"It is mine to-night," replied the doctor, and opened the door of the adjacent room. "Why do you wish to----?"

"I might find something here also. Wait!"

Taking the candle, he entered the room, and Browne, marvelling at the sudden assumption of authority by the man, waited in the passage. He was impressed by Kind's resolution, and careful handling of the situation, and began to think that here indeed was an ally worth having. Even the Cheap-jack's language had changed, and he spoke a tongue considerably removed from the slang vernacular which he affected as the proprietor of the caravan. When he came out, Browne, on fire with curiosity, asked him what discoveries he had made.

"I've found much, but much remains to be found," said Kind, shaking his head. "When we reach the caravan, I'll tell you what I think. That is----?" he hesitated, looked anxiously at Browne's open face, and then abruptly descended the stairs. Elspeth was already in the tap-room, and apparently had just returned. On seeing Kind she glided up to him, and said something in a low voice. He nodded.

"Rachel is awake," he remarked aloud, turning to the doctor, "'praps you'll come along and see her."

"Willingly," answered Browne, starting with alacrity for the door, "so long as you'll help my friend, I'll do anything."

"That's all right," said Kind meditatively, and refused to speak further. Nor did the doctor worry him with questions. The man seemed to be sunk in deep thought, and tramped along the muddy village street, apparently turning over his late discoveries,--whatever they might be--in his own mind.

It was still misty, and the stars were veiled by the thick white fog, so that the night was as dark as the pit. But Kind seemed to know his way as well as a swallow flying south, and unhesitatingly steered the doctor down the street, and into the outskirts of the village. Here, in a sloppy meadow, stood the caravan,--at least Kind by a gesture intimated that it was there, for in the pitchy darkness Browne could see nothing. The Cheap-jack kept well alongside the fence, and began to whistle "Garryowen" in a lively manner. This was evidently a signal to warn his wife that he was approaching, so that she might not be scared by footsteps. Suddenly Kind turned abruptly away from the fence, and Browne, following close at his heels, almost ran his nose against the vehicle, which which was Kind's migratory home. It loomed up unexpectedly, blacker than the blackness, if that were possible, out of the fogs, and the doctor stumbled up the steps, which could be discerned by the thread of light which formed a brilliantly bright line at the foot of the door. When the door itself opened, which it did in response to a triple knock by the Cheap-jack, such a flood of light poured out into the foggy gloom, that Browne was dazzled for the moment. When he entered, blinking his eyes, and the door was closed, he glanced round the interior of the caravan, and his gaze rested first on the sick woman, who was lying in a narrow bed at one end. Then Browne looked at the person who had opened the door, and beheld--Angus Herries.

CHAPTER VII

KIND'S OPINIONS

"You!" cried the doctor, staggering back, and scarcely able to believe his eyes. "Good Lord, Herries!"

"Yes! Herries," said the accused man, with a swift glance at the door to see that it was well-closed. "But don't speak too loud, my dear fellow, we never know what ears may be about."

"Oh, we're safe enough here," remarked Kind, who was bending over his wife. "What with the mists, and the rain, and the cold, no one will venture out this night into so dismal a meadow. That peeler at the inn was half asleep when we came away."

"You speak quite different to what you did," said Browne, puzzled.

"I'm a detective for the time being," rejoined Kind, coolly, "and recall some of my decent lingo. When I'm a Cheap-jack again, I'll slip back into the Whitechapel vernacular. I've been an actor in my time, and know how to suit my language to my rôle for the time being," and again he bent over his sleeping wife.

"You here," muttered Browne taking Herries' hand, and devouring his thin, haggard face with his eyes, "I am glad, and yet----" he shook his head in a doubtful way, recalling his promise to Trent.

"You think that I should not have run away?"

"It looks like guilt, Herries."

"What! Do you believe----?"

"Would I take your hand, if I believed that you were guilty?" interrupted the doctor sharply. "That I am here, should show you that I have the most implicit confidence in your innocence."

"Ah!" said Herries, rather sadly, "but you came to see Mrs. Kind."

"And you wouldn't have come," put in Sweetlips over his shoulder, "if

Elspeth had not whispered when we came out that Mr. Herries wanted to see you."

"You can trust me," said Browne, rather huffily, "and in any case, I presume you would not have sacrificed your wife's life to save Herries' neck."

"He has saved her," said Kind, looking at the young man with his heart in his honest eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked Browne, coming to the bed-side and stooping over the woman, who seemed to be in a sound sleep.

"Mr. Herries is a doctor. He came here, and sucked the stuff from her throat in the nick of time. But for his bravery, my poor Rachel would have been dead." Kind wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, and again looked at Herries. "I'll give my life up to finding the man who killed your uncle, so that you may be saved."

"Can you do that?" asked Herries sadly. "It seems to me that the evidence is so strong----"

"So it is,--so it is. But I have been searching the death-chamber and your room at the inn. I have found other evidence which may be of value."

"Oh!" Herries clenched his hands, eagerly, "what is it?"

"One moment," interposed Browne, in a low voice, so as not to disturb the patient. "Let us do things in order. What about Mrs. Kind?"

"She's all right, and will be much better when she wakes up," said Herries. "The stuff is out of her throat; it's a diphtheritic case."

"What have you done?"

Herries in an undertone rapidly gave details of his treatment, and the other doctor approved with nods.

"She would have been dead, but for you," he said, emphatically. "But how did you manage to escape?"

"Elsbeth!" said Herries, and would have explained, but that Kind beckoned them to the far end of the caravan, near the door, and pointed to a couple of stools.

"Let us talk low," murmured the ex-detective. "For after all, there may be spies about, and besides, I don't want Rachel disturbed."

"Fancy telling that to medical men," laughed Browne, softly.

Kind, relieved in his mind that Rachel's life was safe, smiled also, and placed two stools and an old chair close together. When the doctors were seated, he got out glasses, and a bottle of whisky, and the three had drinks, which, under the circumstances, they very much needed. While Kind was preparing his hospitality, Browne glanced round the narrow space of the caravan.

It was oblong, with a high roof, and excellently fitted up, something after the style of a cabin at sea, that is, with a due regard to economy of space. The arched roof and deal walls were painted yellow. From the former dangled various articles of merchandise, such as Kind sold, and the latter were decorated with pictures cut from various papers, and pasted on the wood in every available corner. At one end was a door divided into two pieces, so that the upper or lower half could be opened at will. Facing this, and placed sideways was the bed, or rather the bunk, in which Rachel was sleeping. It was comfortable enough, and gay with red curtains. Against one wall was the leaf of a table fastened with iron rods, and the other wall supported a cupboard in which food was stored. Two hooks immediately above the heads of the trio, and near the door, showed that Kind slung a hammock for his own sleeping accommodation. The whole place was clean and neat, and Browne thought that many people were worse housed than these imitation gipsies. They followed the example of the Tartar tribes, and in their wheeled dwelling moved about from place to place, at home everywhere, and picking up their living in all quarters.

"But," said Browne, thoughtfully sipping his whisky, "if anyone enters the caravan, Herries will be discovered."

"We can hide him," said Kind, cunningly.

"Where?" asked the doctor, staring round the confined space. "I don't see any hiding-place."

"Nor does anyone else, or it wouldn't be a hiding-place. But we can trust you, doctor, and----" Kind stooped and gave a hard twist to one of the iron rods which supported the side table. At once the floor of the vehicle parted in the middle, and displayed an oblong, shallow space where a man, with some discomfort, could lie at full length. "I had that made," added the Cheap-jack, "after my own design. I haven't been in the detective force for nothing, and thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a place where I could hide things from thieves. All my best goods were stowed there, but I shifted them when Mr. Herries came. While he was being hunted for, far and wide, he was lying there as snug as a pig."

"Very ingenious," said Browne, while Kind closed the hiding-place in the same manner in which he had opened it, "but I don't know how Herries did come here?"

"Elspeth saved me, bless her," said the young man, his blue eyes lighting up. "When she heard how ill Mrs. Kind was, and Trent refused to let me see her, even under escort, she came out and interviewed my friend here," he indicated the Cheap-jack, "and said that she would bring me. Then she returned to the inn, and went up to my room to----"

"She didn't see you," interposed Browne, recalling the policeman's account of Elspeth weeping at his feet for admission.

"No. That would have given her design away. She pretended to weep and knelt down to ask the policeman guarding the door to let her in. Then she slipped a note under the door, and went away without suspicion. The note said that the two rustics on guard under the window would be taken away in half an hour--that I was to drop from the window, and go to the fence. There Kind would be waiting to guide me to a hiding-place. I expect Elspeth got the two watchers to go into the tap-room by promising them drink. When the coast was clear, I opened the window softly and dropped. Kind was at the fence, and grasping my hand hurried me away in the mist to this place. Here, I first attended to Mrs. Kind, and----"

"And saved her life," said the Cheap-jack bursting with gratitude. "He sucked the stuff from her throat, doctor. Then I hid him under the floor, having first shifted the goods. He came out to see that Rachel was getting along all right, and I whistled 'Garryowen' to let him know I was coming with you."

"How did you know that I was coming?" Browne asked Herries.

"Elsbeth came here to ask me if I would like to see you," explained the young man. "Of course I did, as I knew that I could trust you. Then she went back, and told Kind, and----"

"Oh, that was what she whispered to you in the tap-room," said the doctor, glancing at the Cheap-jack. "H'm! Well, I suppose you may trust me, Herries. All the same, I told Trent that if I chanced on you I would persuade you to give yourself up and send a wire telling him that you had done so."

"Browne, would you betray me?"

"No, of course I wouldn't," snapped the doctor, savagely. "All the same, this running away will not do you any good."

"Browne," said Herries, much agitated, "if I had stopped, I would have been condemned on the evidence which Trent discovered. That man will never let me have a fair trial. He is dead against me."

"Because he can't see further than his nose," retorted the doctor. "He is sorry for you in a way, but he seems to have made up his mind that you are guilty."

"And that being the case, how can I hope to get free?"

"You can prove----"

"I can prove nothing," interrupted Herries despairingly. "I was in the next room, and my uncle was murdered. The razor, the pocket-book and the key of Sir Simon's bedroom were in my possession, and stains of blood were on my shirt sleeve. In the face of such evidence, how can I prove my innocence? I have nothing but my bare word."

"But cannot anyone give evidence in your favour?"

"Michael Gowrie might."

"Humph. I hear that the old scoundrel was at the 'Marsh Inn.' Trent told me. I remember him in Edinburgh ages ago. I wonder if he----"

"No," said Herries, emphatically, "Gowrie is an old scamp, but he would not commit a crime."

"Well, I don't know. It seems that Sir Simon brought some money with him in gold and notes. Gowrie was always a money-grubber."

"Yes, but even he would not have the nerve to cut a man's throat and then incriminate me, who had done him no harm."

"A man will do much to get money and to save himself," said the doctor sententiously. "What do you think Mr. Kind?"

The Cheap-jack who had been in a brown study, woke up at the direct question.

"I have never met the man you call Gowrie," he said, after a thoughtful pause, "but he is as innocent as Mr. Herries here."

"How can you be sure of that?"

"Because, from what I discovered in the death-room, I am sure that Sir Simon was murdered by the man who passed out in his fur coat, and who masqueraded as him to get away."

"What did you discover?" asked Herries, quickly.

"Several things. The window was open----"

"Mrs. Narby might have done that, to air the room," said Herries.

"People don't generally air the room, with a dead body within it," said Kind dryly, "and certainly a close-fisted woman like Mrs. Narby would not risk her furniture being spoilt by the incoming mist. No! that window was opened by

the man who climbed up to murder Sir Simon, and as the dressing-table was before it, no one looked until I did."

"How do you know that a man climbed up?"

"How else did the man who escaped in the fur coat--the true assassin--enter?" questioned Kind, sharply.

"Sir Simon expected him. He might have gone down to the front door of the inn, and let him enter, after all were in bed."

"No. Sir Simon had his own reasons for keeping the appointment with this man dark, and knew also that this man Gowrie--as I learned from Trent--slept in the tap-room. To have admitted his friend in that way, would have aroused the suspicions of Gowrie, and there might have been trouble."

"Gowrie might have seen the admission of the stranger, and have been bribed to go away," suggested the doctor, who still held to the belief that his old tutor was implicated in some way.

"No," said Kind again, "and I'll tell you why. I found a red silk handkerchief pinned across the window of Sir Simon's bedroom."

"As a sort of signal. Eh?"

"Yes. From what I have gathered, this is what happened. Sir Simon came to the 'Marsh Inn' from Tarhaven to meet someone, who was blackmailing him."

"But, Kind," said Herries, quickly, "I knew very little of my uncle and did not get on well with him, but he was an honest man, and not the kind of person to be blackmailed."

"And I, who knew Sir Simon intimately, as his doctor," added Browne, "can add my protest to that assumption. Sir Simon was a straightforward man, if a trifle close-fisted. He certainly would not lay himself open to blackmail."

"Sir Simon was a millionaire," said Kind in his driest manner, "and those sort of people do not invariably make their money honestly."

"My uncle was perfectly honest," insisted Herries resolutely.

"I admire you for sticking up for him," said Kind, sarcastically, "especially as he was so hard on you, Mr. Herries. All the same, if it was not a case of blackmail, why didn't Sir Simon see this man at his own house? Why should he come to a lonely little inn with a large sum of money? Why should he be so anxious to see this stranger, that having retired he placed a red handkerchief in the window, and put a candle behind it by way of a signal? Answer me these questions."

"It does seem strange," muttered Browne, thoughtfully.

"So strange that there can only be one explanation," retorted the Cheap-jack decisively. "This man, whomsoever he was, could not get to the inn at the appointed time, which was eight o'clock. He came very late, before twelve in fact----"

"Why not after twelve?" asked Herries.

"Because, as Dr. Browne here will tell you, the millionaire was murdered somewhere about midnight."

"I cannot be quite sure," put in Browne hastily. "I made only a superficial examination of the body."

"Well, we'll say midnight, as you cannot be very far out of your reckoning."

"I certainly think that either at midnight, or shortly afterwards, Sir Simon was killed."

"Then that fixes the time. The stranger must have arrived before midnight, as the pair might have had a talk before the murder."

"No," said Browne, quickly, "Sir Simon was, I think, from the orderly way in which the bedclothes were placed, murdered in his sleep."

"Good," said Kind quite unruffled, "let us say that. The man climbed up to the window, which was left open by Sir Simon with the signal of the red handkerchief, and killed the millionaire."

"There is no difficulty about climbing," said Herries thoughtfully, "for when Mrs. Narby found that the door was locked she insisted that Elspeth should climb up the trellis-work."

"Ah," said Kind with satisfaction, "that makes the mode of entry more certain. I have not seen the trellis-work, as I have not visited the inn for more than nine months. Mrs. Narby must have had it put up later. But the man must have been a light, active fellow to climb up so slight a ladder. He got in at the window, for the table was moved aside, as if to let him enter,--perhaps by Sir Simon, unless he was asleep."

"But why couldn't Sir Simon go to the downstairs front door?"

"I told you," said the Cheap-jack with a gesture of impatience. "He wanted to keep the man's visit dark, and knew that Gowrie was in the tap-room. Of course all this is theory, but to-morrow I'll examine the trellis-work, and if I find it broken, for the lightest and most active man might break parts of it, I'll be certain that my theory is absolutely true."

"We'll take it as true," said Browne, "well?"

"Well," echoed Kind, reflectively, "the stranger enters, and finds, as you say, Sir Simon asleep. He sees the money on the table, or perhaps guesses that it is in the pocket-book."

"How do you know that?"

"I found a table with writing materials near the bed," said Kind, "and several sheets of paper had been used, as some were torn up. Sir Simon had been making calculations. I know that, because some of the torn pieces had figures on them. Sir Simon evidently was trying to calculate how much or how little he could give his blackmailing friend. The man, however, saw the gold, and at once made for it. Sir Simon woke, and would have made an outcry. But the stranger seeing him awake does not give him time to cry out, but cuts his throat at once."

"How could the stranger see in the dark?" asked Browne, sarcastically.

"You forget," said Kind gravely, "that the candle was on the dressing-table. Sir Simon left it there, lighted, to shine through the red handkerchief, else what was the use of the handkerchief at all?"

"Yes, yes, I see that," said Herries, eagerly, "go on."

"The deed being done, the stranger waits in the room until daybreak, and then, knowing how Sir Simon was to leave the inn, put on the dead man's fur coat and boldly walked out with his plunder."

"Why didn't he escape again by the window?"

"Ah, that is one of the things which I wish to find out."

"And what about the incrimination of Herries?" asked the doctor, sceptically.

"Do you smoke cigarettes?" asked the Cheap-jack, turning suddenly on Herries.

"Yes,--sometimes."

"Did you smoke one at the inn?"

"No. I haven't had a cigarette in my lips for quite three months. I hadn't the money to buy them, and so took to a pipe. Why?"

"Then the man who murdered Sir Simon entered the room--your room--to incriminate you. After emptying the pocket-book, he took that and the razor into your room. You were sound asleep, worn out, as I was told by Elspeth--
_"

"That's quite true, and old Gowrie gave me a glass of toddy to make me sleep the sounder."

"Oh," said Kind in a peculiar tone, and considered; after a time he went on, but did not say why he had made the exclamation. "Well, then, the murderer smeared your shirt sleeve, and left the razor on the bed, and the pocket-book under it. Then he retired to the death-room and waited till dawn. When ready to go, he locked the door of the room in which the dead man lay, and put the

key in your room."

"But how do you know that he was in my room at all?" asked Herries, somewhat annoyed by all this theory.

Kind asked another question.

"Did Sir Simon smoke?"

"No," said Browne, "he never smoked in his life."

"In that case," Kind fished out the stump of a cigarette, "what do you make of that? I found it in your room, Mr. Herries."

The young man took the cigarette, which was burnt down half way, and examined it carefully. Then he smelt it.

"Periquette tobacco?" said he thoughtfully, "comes from France,--from Algiers,--from----"

"Tangiers," interposed Kind, taking the cigarette, "see,--this cigarette is marked 'Tangerian.' I have never seen one like that in England. It might have come from France, or from Algiers or Tangiers, but one thing we can be certain of, that the murderer came from foreign parts only a short time ago. A man doesn't keep cigarettes for months, unless he has a large quantity. The murderer may have had a quantity, but the chances are that he hadn't. In fact," Kind leaned back with the air of a man, who has made up his mind, "I believe that the man came from a ship and was a sailor, else why should he have displayed such activity in climbing up to a window."

"It's all theory," said Browne, shaking his head disconsolately.

"The cigarette isn't."

"No. All the same, I don't see how you are going to find this man."

"That must be your task, doctor."

"Mine?" Browne jumped up.

"Yes. Mr. Herries must stop here for the present. Later, when I have found the man, he can give himself up. You, doctor, know Miss Maud Tedder, the daughter of the deceased?"

"Yes."

"Then go and see her at Tarhaven. Ask her questions, for in Sir Simon's past life will be found the reason for his murder."

"But if it was blackmail, and I am bound to say that it looks like it,--and if the meeting was kept secret, I don't see what Miss Tedder will know."

"Ah, I must leave the hunting of the man to your cleverness," said Kind. "You have the entry of the house at Tarhaven and can prosecute your enquiries without suspicion. I can't do that, but while you are working at Tarhaven, I'll search round here, and I daresay I'll learn something worth knowing."

Browne nodded.

"I'll do my best," he said. "I'll call and see Miss Tedder to-morrow, and question her."

"And tell her," said Herries in a low voice, "that the man who loved her is in danger."

"I daresay she'll know that to-night from Trent," said Browne calmly. "Do you love her now, Herries?"

"No. She treated me very badly."

"Just what a girl like that would do. She has no heart; she is a penny doll, full of whims and fancies, with a passion for rank and fine clothes. Humph! She'll be able to indulge now, as she will undoubtedly have something like fifty thousand a year. But perhaps, for the sake of auld lang syne," he added clapping his friend on the shoulder, "she may spend some of the money in saving you."

"I'll do that," said Kind sharply, and with a glance in the direction of his still

sleeping wife. "Nothing I can do is too much for the man who gave me back my Rachel."

"You will stay here, of course?" Browne asked Herries, looking at the floor, where the hiding-place was concealed.

"Yes. I am guided by Kind, who thinks it best."

"Meantime, I do," said the Cheap-jack, "later, when we are sure of our ground, you can give yourself up. But to surrender now, would be to put a rope round your neck. Trent is a blundering ass."

"I quite agree with you," said Browne heartily. "Well, good-bye, Herries, I must return to the inn, and to-morrow, I'll see Miss Tedder at Tarhaven. And Gowrie?"

"I'll find him," said Kind, quickly, "he certainly may be able to help, and he will too. Elspeth will make him!"

"How do you know?"

"Elspeth said that she was Gowrie's daughter," said Kind briefly. "The man is unknown to me, but Elspeth will find him."

CHAPTER VIII

MISS MAUD TEDDER

Tarhaven, as everyone knows, is a town of recent origin. As it is within a reasonable distance of the metropolis, and the railway fares are not too high, trippers come down every bank-holiday to the number of thousands. Likewise, owing to the facilities for reaching London, many clerks and business men make their abode there, and the town, thanks to improved locomotion, may be called a suburb of the great city. And as the streets of Tarhaven are wide, and the houses comfortable, and there is always plenty of amusement, the place is invariably full of people. There is a floating, as well as a resident population, of no small number, consequently Tarhaven is able to rank as a seaside resort along with Brighton, Bournemouth, and Scarborough.

On the outskirts of the modern town, Sir Simon Tedder had built a palatial mansion, or rather he had added largely to the ancient manor-house, which he had purchased from a decayed family, who were lords of the place long before Tarhaven sprang into notoriety. The town itself grew out of the nucleus of a tiny fishing village below the cliffs, and now spread out far into the country, pushing back the woods, swallowing up the villages, and turning old highways into modern streets with smart shops. The "Moated Hall," Sir Simon kept to the ancient name, because there really was a moat, although the same was devoid of water, stood on a slight eminence, one mile from Tarhaven, in the middle of a well-wooded park, and was as shut in from the world as was the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. Restored and added to by an artist, the place maintained its old-world air, and resembled one of those delightful houses which appear in the middle pages of "Country Life." When Dr. Browne entered the grounds through the scrolled gilt iron gates, and proceeded up the ancient avenue between elms and oaks, and beech-trees and ash-trees, he emerged into the wide space in the centre of which, elevated on its mound, rose the antique fabric of warm-hued red brick. He acknowledged that it was hard on the owner of such magnificence to meet his death in an obscure inn. Sir Simon had sprung from nothing, and by his own unaided endeavours had attained to this splendour, only--as it would seem,--to finally depart this life, in the mire, out of which he had crawled.

"And who knows by what questionable means," mused Browne, as he mounted the shallow steps which led to the terrace, and strolled leisurely towards the huge iron-bound door. "There may be something in Kind's

blackmailing idea after all. Pound added to pound in the orthodox way would not have bought this fairy palace. Who knows through what dark and miry ways Sir Simon walked to arrive at such a goal. Well," he pulled the bell, "if the mystery of his death is to be solved, we will have to grope in those same ways."

A stately footman, who looked like a disguised bishop, admitted the doctor into a large and lofty hall paved with black and white tiles, and surrounded with marble copies of celebrated statues. Directly before the visitor, on entering the door, rose the antique staircase, wide and with shallow steps, splendidly carpeted. On the first landing was a huge window of stained glass blazing with crests, resplendent,--to use Keats' gorgeous image,--as the wings of a tiger-moth. The light filtering through this made a kind of coloured ecclesiastical twilight, and accentuated the severe beauty of the architecture. But Browne did not linger here long as he knew the place well and was more anxious to see the daughter of the house than the house itself. The stately footman conducted him to the drawing-room, a long, wide, lofty apartment, crowded with expensive furniture, and here he remained, while the man went to tell his mistress that her visitor was waiting. As the servant was departing, Browne stopped him with a word.

"Parker," he said, looking directly at the man, "I suppose Miss Tedder knows of this terrible affair."

"Meaning Sir Simon's murder? Yes, sir, she does, sir, and has been taking on awful. I doubt if she'll see you, sir."

"Tell her that it is absolutely necessary that I should see her."

Parker bowed his powdered head in a Jovian manner, and made his exit, while Browne walked up and down the magnificent room, wondering how he could begin a very difficult conversation. He could scarcely put the theory of blackmail as crudely as Kind had done, and it was not probable that the girl herself would suggest such a motive for the murder. Maud Tedder, as Browne knew, was not a thoughtful young lady, and he was quite prepared for a scene. He half regretted that he had not asked to see Mrs. Mountford, the girl's former governess and present chaperon, who was a gloomy, self-possessed female given to pessimism, but always perfect mistress of her

emotions. However, he had no time to consider what should be his first move in this,--so to speak,--game of chess, for almost at once, the door flew open impetuously, and Maud Tedder ran into the room with outstretched hands.

"Oh! doctor, doctor," she cried, emotionally, "I am so glad you have come. I do want someone to talk to about poor papa's death. If you hadn't come, I should have sent for you,--I should indeed but now that you are here," she dragged him to a Louis Quinze sofa, all carving and brocade, "we can talk over everything, freely."

"Hasn't Mrs. Mountford----?"

"No, Mrs. Mountford hasn't," interrupted the girl, producing a flimsy lace handkerchief, which was more for show than for use. "She does nothing but groan. Poor papa dead, oh," she shuddered, "isn't it too awful for words? Inspector Trent,--a horrid stiff thing, I think,--came last night and told me. I wondered that papa hadn't come home, and I fancied that something might have happened, but I never, never, never," she was emphatic, "never dreamt that anything so terrible as murder had taken place."

So she ran on, not allowing Browne to get a word in edgeways. He sat looking at her while she chattered, and acknowledged that although this feminine butterfly was extremely pretty, she was scarcely the girl to gain the love of a serious-minded young fellow such as he knew his old school-friend to be. Maud Tedder was slight and fair-haired and delicate, and resembled nothing so much as one of those Dresden-china shepherdess ornaments, which are dear to china-maniacs. Her complexion was pink and white, her features insignificant, her hair insipidly golden, and her eyes pale blue. A very pretty doll to come out of a bonbon box, but scarcely the daughter for stern-faced, grasping, bullying Sir Simon Tedder, who had won his wealth and knighthood by sheer brain-strength.

"What is to be done?" asked Browne, when she gave him a chance of asking a question.

"Oh, Mr. Trent said that the inquest would take place to-morrow at the 'Marsh Inn.' Then poor papa will be buried, and the lawyer--Mr. Ritson you know--will tell me what I am to do with the money. As soon as everything is

settled, I shall go away to Switzerland with Mrs. Mountford, and stop there for a few months. I'm a foolish little thing and never know what to do, but it seems that I must act in this way. Poor papa," and she wiped her eyes with the flimsy handkerchief, and shivered.

Browne was surprised at the sensible way in which she talked, and the cut and dried programme she had sketched out. He would not have credited her with such foresight, as Miss Tedder decidedly took after her mother, a frail, brainless beauty of old descent, who had died three year previously. But perhaps she had more of her father's brains than he had believed, and now that she was in a position to use them, had summoned them to her aid. The programme was sufficiently reasonable, but Browne noted that she did not say a word about the accused man, and with him she had been supposed to be in love over two years ago, before he had taken to the sea. At once, Browne, who was nothing if not blunt, reminded her of this oversight in his gruff way.

"What about your cousin?"

Maud gave a little scream, and flung herself back into an angle of the sofa to cover her eyes with the handkerchief.

"Angus, oh, don't talk about that wretch," she said sobbing, "that he should have killed poor papa; it's too terrible."

"He did not kill him," said Browne, rather disgusted by the speech. She seemed to judge him without evidence.

"But he is," said Maud sitting up, and flushing a violent red, "I'm sure I wish he wasn't, as he really was a nice boy, and I liked him very much two years ago. Inspector Trent told me that the razor----"

"I know all about that," interrupted the doctor quickly, "the evidence is against Herries. All the same he is innocent."

"I'm sure I hope so. It would be so horrid to have a cousin hanged for murder. I don't know that Bruce would marry me if that took place."

"Bruce! Who is Bruce?"

"I thought you had met him," said Miss Tedder, opening her pale blue eyes to their widest extent. "Captain Bruce Kyles, who was such a great friend of papa's."

"Oh yes," Browne suddenly remembered, "that was the fellow who commanded a war-ship belonging to one of those tin-pot South American Republics."

"He is an officer in the Indiana Navy, replied Maud, much offended."

"So I believe," rejoined Browne, not at all disturbed. "That shabby little Republic down Patagonia way. They've got about five second and third-rate ships, I believe, and the Germans propose to wipe them out, or annex them."

"I don't know why you should talk of the Indiana Republic as 'them,' doctor. It's an 'it' and the Germans won't annex it. Bruce has come home to get more war-ships, and papa intended to do business with him."

"Did papa intend you should marry him?" asked Browne shrewdly.

Miss Tedder drew up her small person to its full height, which was not much.

"I don't know why you should be so familiar, doctor. Of course I look on you as a friend, as papa did. All the same, we are not such friends as to warrant you----"

"I see, I see," broke in the medical man impatiently. "I am less a friend than a doctor: yet I thought that your greeting was a warm one, and so perhaps have trespassed unduly. I beg your pardon. Sir Simon," he emphasised the title, "approved of your marrying this--this--Captain Kyles?"

"Oh yes. He saw that I loved him, and Bruce comes of a very old Scotch family,--quite as good as our own"--the doctor suppressed a smile. "Bruce has rank in Indiana, and some day he might become the President of the Republic. Papa intended to announce our engagement shortly, but now he is dead and----" she began to sob again.

"Humph! You love this man?"

"With all my heart, although I don't see why you should ask me."

"I beg your pardon once more," said Browne dryly, "but I am the most intimate friend of Angus Herries, who is in dire peril, and I understood that you loved him."

Miss Tedder let fall her handkerchief to accentuate her denial with hard, indignant eyes.

"I never, never did," she said almost shrilly. "Of course I met him in Edinburgh, and thought he was good-looking, over two years ago; then he was my cousin, and clever. But papa did not approve, and Angus was poor, so I----"

"Obeyed your father and threw him over. Eh?"

"It was only a girlish fancy, doctor. I love Bruce, and Bruce is the man I intend to marry."

"So as to be Madame la President, I suppose. Well, with your fifty thousand a year, I have no doubt that Captain Kyles will be able to buy your Republic right out. However, this is none of my business."

"I should think not," said Maud, who looked cross.

"But the peril of Herries is my business. He has escaped, but may be captured at any moment. What do you intend to do?"

"Offer one hundred pounds reward!"

Browne jumped up.

"For his capture?"

"Oh!" Maud stuck her fingers in her ears, "I wish you wouldn't shout when I'm in such grief. Inspector Trent advised me to offer----"

"One hundred pounds. I wonder he didn't suggest a thousand, as no doubt he hopes that the money will go into his pocket. But surely you don't want your

cousin hanged?"

"No,--of course I don't. But if he is guilty----"

"He is not, I tell you."

"Then who killed papa?"

"A man with whom Sir Simon had an appointment at the 'Marsh Inn,' on the night of his death. Listen," and Browne detailed all that he had learned, suppressing certain facts that bore on the escape of Herries. Seeing that Maud believed her cousin guilty and was in close communication with Trent, it would not do to place the safety of Herries in her untrustworthy hands.

"Oh! I do hope that what you say is true, and that Angus is not a murderer," cried Maud clasping her hands.

"Would I tell a lie?" asked the doctor angrily.

"No. But then you are such a friend of my cousin's that you might colour the thing a little."

"And you, who loved the man, who are a relative of the man, ought to colour likewise. Instead of that, you offer a reward to hang him."

Terrified by the good doctor's vehemence, Maud broke down sobbing----

"I am sure I want to do what is right," she cried, from behind the flimsy handkerchief. "No one would be better pleased than I to think that Angus was guiltless."

"You ought to clear his character, and marry him."

"Marry him." Maud's handkerchief dropped in amazement.

"Yes. He is your cousin, and should share in this wealth, which is too much for you alone. And then he would make you a much better husband than this man Kyles, who comes from no one knows where, and is a rank adventurer, if ever I saw one."

"You had better not let Bruce hear you say that," threatened Maud. "He is in the house now, With Mrs. Mountford."

"Ah, where the carcass is, there the vultures gather. I would say to him what I say to you with the utmost confidence, Miss Tedder. I wish to be your friend, and as I am not a marrying man, you can see that I have no eye to your money. But you are a young girl and have no one to counsel you but Mrs. Mountford, who does not always give good advice. You should believe in the innocence of your cousin against all evidence, and clear his character, and----

"And marry him," finished Miss Tedder, tapping her small foot. "No, I certainly will not. Anything I can do to save him from the consequence of his wickedness----"

"He is not wicked. He is innocent."

"Then let him prove his innocence," she rose with a dignified air as if to intimate that the interview was terminated. "But I must do what Inspector Trent says. Even though Angus is my cousin, my papa is,--rather was,--my papa, and I must offer a reward for the apprehension of the murderer."

"Who is Herries?"

"Inspector Trent says so."

"And you believe it. Well," Browne shrugged his shoulders, "if this is woman's love, give me man's hate. Did you know that your father had an appointment with anyone two nights ago?"

"No. Papa never said anything about it. He went away in the afternoon, and said he would return next day. I knew nothing of his whereabouts until Inspector Trent came and told me that Angus had killed papa."

Browne shrugged his shoulders again. It seemed impossible to impress this butterfly with the fact Herries was innocent. She seemed a heartless sort of creature. He took no further trouble to contradict her, but went on with his questions.

"Do you know why your father took so large a sum of money with him?"

"No. I did not know that he had taken any money. How much was it?"

"I can't say; but the landlady's son at the 'Marsh Inn' saw a considerable sum in gold and notes on the table. That has disappeared."

"Along with Angus," sneered Maud.

"I think not. You make out your cousin to be a thief as well as a murderer. He is neither. So you know nothing of the reason of your father's visit to the 'Marsh Inn?'"

"I didn't even know that he was going there."

"Good-day, then," and Browne turned on his heel. "Stop, doctor," Maud ran after him and laid a detaining hand on his arm. "I don't want you to think badly of me. I do hope that Angus is not guilty, indeed I do. If you know where he is----"

"How should I know?" asked Browne warily.

"Well, I thought you might, as you were at the inn."

"I went there in response to a telegram calling me. I arrived to find that Herries had escaped. But presuming that he did communicate with me," Browne put it this way to see what she would say, and at the same time, to guard Herries, "what do you wish me to tell him?"

"That I will give him a sum of money to leave England."

"And so confess that he is guilty. Thank you for nothing."

Maud clenched her hands and bit her lip.

"I don't mean what you mean," she declared angrily. "If I can prove his innocence I should be glad to do so, but I know nothing of my father's affairs or what led to his death. Mr. Ritson, the lawyer, may know. Ask him, and perhaps he will help you to prove my cousin's innocence. But things look

black against Angus. Inspector Trent says so. It would be wiser if he went away."

"Why do you wish him to go away?"

Maud stamped her foot, "I don't want a cousin of mine to be hanged for the murder of my father," she said irritably. "Can't you see how unpleasant that would be for me? I am engaged to Bruce, but he is proud and haughty. If Angus was hanged, Bruce might refuse to become my husband."

"Not while you have fifty thousand a year," said Browne, grimly.

"You don't know Bruce----"

"Not well, as I have only met him once. But at the first glance I saw that he was an adventurer. He is the very model of those soldiers of fortune who abounded in Europe in the Middle Ages."

"And like them he may carve out a kingdom for himself."

"Doubtless, since money now-a-days is more necessary than a sword to procure such a kingdom," retorted Browne. "However, that is your affair. What sum will you give Herries, always presuming that he will communicate with me?"

"One thousand pounds."

"Did Inspector Trent advise that sum?"

"He advised nothing because he knows nothing. And he says," added the girl decisively, "that when the policeman is found, he may be able to prove my cousin's guilt."

"What policeman?"

"The constable called Armour, who looks after Desleigh and two other villages in the Marshes. He has disappeared."

"Humph! I heard something of that. Trent was expecting him every minute,

but he never turned up. But I dare say he is on his rounds, as his beat is a wide one."

"No, doctor. The Inspector declares that Armour has to visit Desleigh village at least once a day. For two days he has been absent, so Mr. Trent thinks that-
---"

"That Herries murdered the policeman as well as your father," Browne laughed. "What a mare's nest he has found. Well, Miss Tedder, I wish you every joy as the wife of the future president of the Indiana Republic!" and he bowed good-day.

This time, the girl did not attempt to stop him, and Browne opened the door himself. However, she followed him into the hall.

"I really wish to help Angus," she repeated, "and I am sure Bruce will do his best for my sake."

"What has Captain Kyles got to do with the matter?"

"I have asked him to help me to find out who killed my father."

"That is, Captain Kyles is hunting for poor Herries."

"Oh, I don't mean that, but--why, here is Bruce," she turned towards the passage that ran beside the stairs, and smiled. "Bruce!"

In response, a tall dark man, with deep-set eyes and a reckless bearing, advanced into the hall. He held out a telegram to Miss Tedder.

"It has just come from the Inspector," he said, with a stealthy glance at the commonplace looks of Dr. Browne.

Maud ran her eye over the paper, and passed it to her visitor.

"That may help either to save or condemn my cousin," she said, quickly.

"Armour the policeman has been found, bound hand and foot, in a ditch near the river," read Browne. "Humph! What does that mean?"

"I take it to mean that Armour killed Sir Simon," said Kyles in a deep voice, and very composedly.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOLICITOR

Browne surveyed the buccaneer with some curiosity. He had met him twice or thrice, before Sir Simon joined the majority, but beyond a casual glance had not taken much notice of the man. Now that he learned of Maud Tedder's engagement, he was interested in the adventurer, who, by his marriage with the heiress, would become the possessor of immense wealth. Also, it would seem that Kyles had something to do with Herries' fate, since he could, to all appearances, influence that young lady in her judgment. After an exhaustive glance, Browne confessed to himself that the scamp--he believed him to be a scamp--was an extremely good-looking man, and romantic enough to win the heart of an even less sentimental girl than Miss Tedder.

Captain Kyles met the gaze of Dr. Browne serenely enough, and evidently guessed that he was being weighed in the balance of the little doctor's opinion. His personality was perplexing, as he appeared to be a cross between a sailor and a soldier, an amphibious animal of the "jolly" class. His slim figure was very erect and military, yet, when he walked, he had the rolling gait of the quarter-deck. His face was immobile, as though his features had been drilled into a set expression of perfect blankness; yet his gestures were free and easy, as though he possessed the open mind of a jack-tar. In looks and bearing he resembled one of those dare-devil filibusters who dominated the Spanish Main in far-off days, and in his swart complexion, not unlike that

of a Spaniard, he proclaimed his Highland blood. With his graceful figure, his sparkling dark eyes, well-moulded features and drooping black moustache, he looked the beau-ideal of a Bow-Bells, Family-Herald hero. That Miss Tedder loved this handsome fellow dearly could be seen from the way in which her colour came and went and her bosom heaved at the mere sight of him. Tragic as had been the circumstances of her father's death--a father who had adored her--she appeared to think more of love than of her irreparable loss.

The doctor, not being a romantic school-miss, did not approve of Captain Kyles, in spite of his alluring exterior. In the smartly-dressed, suave, cool person before him, he saw the typical adventurer who would win Maud and her thousands a year by sheer cajolery mixed with scarcely concealed bullying, and then would probably neglect her when the babyish beauty of her looks was gone. At the same time, to do him justice, he was surprised and pleased to hear Captain Kyles defend the accused, as he was certainly doing in a manner, when he accused Armour.

"I should have thought," remarked the doctor, sarcastically, "that like everyone else, you would judge my friend Herries as guilty."

Kyles shrugged his square shoulders, and brushed some fluff from the breast of his blue serge coat.

"From what Inspector Trent says, it would seem that Herries--that is the name, isn't it?--is the criminal," he drawled, and his voice was not the least attractive thing about him, "but that makes me believe the man to be innocent. Had Herries killed Sir Simon, I fancy he would have arranged things better to secure his own safety."

"Perhaps he lost his head," suggested Maud maliciously. "Criminals do, you know, even the cleverest."

"Dear!" said Kyles, so grimly that the adjective was robbed of its value. "I have told you before, and I tell you again, that your cousin is innocent."

"Oh," said Browne quietly, "then you know that Herries is Miss Tedder's cousin?"

"I know all the family history," replied Kyles lazily. "As I am to marry Miss Tedder, I considered it my duty to learn it.

"It was my place," boomed a heavy, gloomy voice coming from the back of the hall, "to inform Captain Kyles of the Tedder history."

The stout and stately female who approached in this dramatic way, was Mrs. Mountford, the ci-devant governess who had improved Maud's young mind, and who now acted as her somewhat cheerless companion. She was of the fleshly type, with a firm jaw and a heavy jowl, and a pair of cold grey eyes. The face was that of a hanging judge, and she would have looked well in a wig and gown, seated on the Bench. Before that stony eye and impassive countenance the most hopeful prisoner would have collapsed at once. Invariably arrayed in deepest black, she glittered like a starry midnight with jet beads and jet trimmings, with bugles and chains and ornaments. She wore jet bracelets to match a jet brooch, and jet earrings of the Albert period; lengthy earrings, like the jet chain which was wound like a cable round her fat neck. Mrs. Mountford only needed a plume of feathers to resemble a hearse-horse, and her mere presence darkened the none too cheerful hall. Dr. Browne did not like this female mute, for in spite of his cynicism, he could be cheerful on occasions, which Mrs. Mountford, in mourning for her neighbours' faults, never was. How Maud Tedder, light-minded, frivolous and gay, could endure the wet-blanket society of this raven was more than the doctor could understand. And he prided himself on understanding the feminine character.

"I should have thought that Sir Simon could best have informed Captain Kyles of all that there was to be known," he said in reply to the gloomy lady, "that is," he added pointedly, "if Sir Simon approved of the engagement."

"Of course papa approved," broke in Maud smartly. "Though, as I have already said, I don't see what business it is of yours. Did you come here to make yourself disagreeable?"

"My child," croaked Mrs. Mountford, in her bass voice, "this is not the time or place to say such truths."

"Nor the time for Dr. Browne to make remarks about things which do not

concern him," snapped the younger lady pertly.

"I beg your pardon," said the doctor ceremoniously, "I have no right to interfere----"

"I should think not," cried the irrepressible Maud, and was again frowned down by Mrs. Mountford, who seemed to be the mistress of all the proprieties.

"I merely came to assure Miss Tedder that her cousin is innocent," finished Dr. Browne, and moved towards the front door.

"So I think," observed the captain, who had taken no part in the war of words, "and anything I can do----"

"You can do nothing," cried Miss Tedder, who seemed anxious to place her cousin in the dock. "If Angus is to be hanged, he will have to be hanged, though it is hard that I should suffer from such a disgrace. But papa's murderer must be punished."

"I tell you Herries had nothing to do with the murder," said Dr. Browne, violently, and his face becoming suffused with blood. "I wonder at your persistence in accusing him."

"I go by what Inspector Trent says, and----"

"See here," remarked the sailor in his lazy drawl, "I don't like to see a fellow go to the wall, if I can help him. Miss Tedder," he bowed to Maud, "has consented to be my wife, but I do not think that either one of us would care to have a relative hanged for a capital offence. Besides, to my mind, the evidence is so clear that I believe Herries to be guiltless. I shall therefore go along with this gentleman, and learn what I can likely to help the poor fellow. Dr. Browne," he bowed to the medical man, and in a somewhat foreign fashion by clicking his heels together, "I understand, also wishes to prove Mr. Herries' innocence."

"I do," said the doctor doggedly, and wondering why the Captain was so anxious to assist, "and I intend to."

"In that case," Kyles extended a small and shapely hand, "we may as well work together."

Browne took the hand. Indeed, he could do nothing else.

"But I should like to know why you are so certain that Herries is innocent?"

"Are you not certain?" inquired Kyles gravely. "Yes, but then I know Herries well, and although appearances are dead against him, I----"

"Hold on," remarked the sailor in a somewhat American fashion, "it is because appearances are dead against him that I assist. Both in the States out West and in Mexico, I was nearly lynched for horse-stealing. The evidence was plumb against me, and but that good-luck came my way at the eleventh hour, I should have been a goner. Can you wonder then that my sympathies are with Herries?"

"I see, you have a fellow feeling."

"You might put it that way."

"The hall," boomed Mrs. Mountford once more, "is scarcely the place to discuss these matters."

"I entirely agree with you," said the doctor, with emphasis, "so I take my leave. If you have any influence with Miss Tedder, ma'am, I advise you to induce her to be less bloodthirsty."

"Me," cried Maud, in a shrill and angry tone, like an infuriated mosquito, "me, bloodthirsty?"

"None the worse for that," said her lover genially. "We don't stock a cotton-wool civilisation in Indiana."

Browne laughed. He rather liked Kyles, and his abrupt way of dealing with Miss Tedder. When they were married, it was easy seen who would rule the house, for all Maud's airs and graces and feminine wiles seemed to make very little impression on the rover. No doubt, so good-looking a fellow had been much run after by the fair sex, and had learned how to govern women.

"Good-day, Captain," said the doctor heartily, "I am glad you can see further than your nose in this case. I presume I'll meet you at the inquest to-morrow?"

"Bruce will take me," said Maud hastily.

"And I," chimed in the mistress of the proprieties, with the toll of Big Ben, "will be there to chaperon Miss Tedder."

This being settled, Browne took his departure, and walked down the avenue wondering why Maud should be so vindictive towards the man to whom she had once been engaged, and that man her very own cousin. He could not understand, for there seemed to be no reason that she should desire Herries' death, which she certainly seemed to do. Browne asked himself whether she dreaded lest Herries should insist upon renewing the engagement, when Maud became possessed of her millions, or perhaps--as he again thought--the engagement had never been broken. In that latter case, since Maud desired to marry Kyles, she might think to cut the Gordian knot of an entanglement by sending her cousin to the scaffold. But even in such a case, it seemed incredible that she should behave so wickedly. Browne had always deemed Maud to be a butterfly; now it seemed that she was a tigress. He resolved to lay the case before Herries, when next he visited the caravan, and see what his opinion was of her behaviour.

The thought of the caravan brought up the image of Kind, who was sheltering the fugitive, and, as is often the case, scarcely had the name passed through Browne's brain, when he ran up against the man himself at the gates of the park. Kind, in his odd dress and chewing a blade of grass, was seated on a stone, with his hands in his pockets and a pondering expression on his shrewd face.

"Mornin'," he said, rising, as soon as the doctor emerged from the park, "beastly weather, ain't it?"

"Did you come here to tell me that?" asked Browne, looking up at the leaden-coloured sky in a humorous manner.

"No. I came to see you about this man, Armour, the policeman, who----"

"Yes," interrupted the doctor, strolling towards Tarhaven beside the Cheap-jack, "I know all about that."

"Who told you?"

"Well, to be precise, I don't know everything. But while I was talking to Miss Tedder, a telegram came from Trent saying that Armour had been found, bound, in a ditch."

"Yes, Trent's there, and is making more mistakes than ever. He is still hunting for Mr. Herries," ended Kind, with a grin.

"He hasn't found him, I hope?" asked Browne hastily.

Kind turned the blade of grass in his mouth.

"Not much chance of that," said he contemptuously. "Mr. Herries' hiding-place is too easy found for Trent to find it. Were I in his place," added Kind, wagging his head until the ostrich feather shook in his bowler, "the first thing I should do, would be to search the caravan."

"Why?" asked Browne puzzled.

"Because it's a likely place. If a man bolted, and came across a caravan, he would ask its owner to hide him. But Trent doesn't believe that Mr. Herries would be fool enough to hide in so suspicious a place. It sounds rum, I know, doctor, but that's human nature."

"You argue something like Captain Bruce Kyles."

"And who may he be?"

"He is a Captain in the Indiana Navy, and that's a Republic in South America. I understand that he has come to England to arrange about buying new war-ships for the Republic, so in this way he was brought into contact with Sir Simon, who speculated in other things beside jam and pickles. Consequently, Captain Kyles, who is a romantic-looking scoundrel, has induced Miss

Tedder to fall in love with him, and will undoubtedly become the master of her money."

"And he argued in the same way as I do, doctor?"

"Yes. He declares that the evidence is so plain against Herries that he believes the man to be guiltless."

"Oh." Kind gave a shrewd glance at his companion, and became meditative. "He argues in that way, does he? It does him credit: no fool, I should say. But why," asked Kind, wheeling round, "does he take the trouble to defend Mr. Herries?"

"That's what I have been asking myself," said the doctor, dryly.

"Does he know Mr. Herries?"

"No. He has never set eyes on him."

"Queer," murmured the Cheap-jack with his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the ground. "I must have a look at this Captain."

"You will see him at the inquest to-morrow, along with Miss Tedder and Mrs. Mountford, who is the young lady's companion."

Kind nodded absently, being still occupied with the problem of Kyles' unsolicited defence of the accused man.

"Where are you going now, doctor?" he asked, as they neared the town.

"To see Mr. Ritson, the solicitor of Sir Simon. I wish to ask him if he has any knowledge of what took Sir Simon to the inn."

"He won't know," rejoined Kind, shaking his head decisively. "If Sir Simon had intended to let Mr. Ritson know, he would have made the appointment at his office. The 'Marsh Inn,' and his giving no name, and carrying a large sum of money, and the kidnapping of Armour, all hint at blackmailing."

"The kidnapping of Armour," echoed Browne, stopping short, amazed.

"I forgot, you only know that Armour was found in the ditch," said Kind. "A railway porter on the way home this morning found him. He was taken to Desleigh where he lives, and Trent was sent for. But I know Mrs. Armour, who is an old friend of mine, and I saw Armour before the Inspector saw him. Then Trent arrived, and sent that telegram to Miss Tedder."

"And what explanation does Armour give?"

"He had gone his rounds and arrived at Desleigh about one in the morning. He rested on the bench outside the tap-room door until two o'clock, or rather between two and three. Then he says that some men,--he could not guess how many,--suddenly came out of the mist and gagged him and bound him and wrapped his head in a shawl. They carried him to a ditch some distance from the railway station and left him there. The poor chap was nearly stifled when he was found, as all the time his head was tied up in the shawl."

"But why was he kidnapped?"

"Ah, that is what I want to find out," Kind looked at Browne. "You have given me a clue."

"What is the clue?"

"I'll tell you after the inquest," said Kind, turning away: then when he was some distance off, he called back. "See Mr. Ritson, doctor, and come to the caravan after the inquest."

"But you wanted to see me about----"

"I have seen you," called back Kind, "and have said what I wanted to say about Armour."

Browne ran after the man, who still walked on.

"We have come to no conclusion," he panted, for the doctor was plethoric.

"I have," said the Cheap-jack. "You have given me a clue, I tell you, and I'll explain when we are together with Mr. Herries," and so saying, he walked off quickly. Browne, although anxious to question him further, had not the breath

to follow him, and moreover, saw that Kind would answer no more questions at the moment. This being the case, he went to seek out Mr. Ritson, wondering greatly why Armour had been kidnapped, and wondering still more what clue Kind had obtained from him. Browne could recall nothing in his conversation likely to afford such a clue.

Mr. Ritson had an office in the High Street of Tarhaven, a most imposing office, next door to a bank. There was nothing of the pettifogging lawyer about Mr. Ritson's office, as it was all mahogany and brass plates and plate-glass windows. Ritson was well-known as the legal adviser of half the county, and was supposed to be extremely wealthy. He was a tall, thin, severe old gentleman, with silvery white hair, and a parchment-hued face, and a dry manner. As a rule, he was not given to speaking much, but usually waited to hear what his clients had to say, that they might commit themselves. But when Dr. Browne, who knew him very well, was admitted into the lofty, airy apartment, which was Mr. Ritson's sanctum, he was surprised by the warmth and volubility with which the usually silent lawyer greeted him.

"I am very glad to see you, doctor," said he, advancing with outstretched hands. "Had you not come, I should have sent for you."

"Humph!" said Browne, the cynic, "I seem to have become a person of importance. Miss Tedder greeted me in the same way."

"You have seen Miss Tedder?"

"Yes. I should have thought that you would have seen her also."

"About what?" asked Ritson quickly, and returning to his desk.

"About her father's death, and the will and----"

"The will," interrupted Ritson, vehemently, "that is exactly what I fear to see her about."

"You fear?"

"Yes, doctor," he caught Browne's button-hole, "some time ago, when we

were talking of Sir Simon's wealth, you mentioned that you knew his nephew."

"Yes. Poor Herries, who is accused of the murder."

"Ah!" Ritson wiped his high bald forehead, although he was usually a cold-blooded man, "that's the difficulty. I must speak."

"Speak away," said Browne, more and more surprised.

"In confidence."

"Of course, in confidence," assented the other.

Ritson sat down suddenly, and began to fiddle with his papers, and Browne, straddling his legs with his hands behind him, watched. It was strange that so quiet a lawyer should be so moved. Certainly the death of Sir Simon was very terrible, and naturally Ritson, who had known him for years, was startled by the tragedy. But it seemed to the doctor that there was something more behind the mere fact of the murder,--something having to do with the dead man's will.

"Well?" he said impatiently, while Ritson kept shifting pens and sealing-wax, and paperweights, as though he were playing chess.

"Yes, yes," Ritson threw himself back, and thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. "I never speak of my clients' affairs to anyone."

"No," nodded Browne, "everyone is aware that you are trustworthy."

"Then you will be surprised that I am about to betray--no, that is not the word,--that I am about to forestall the reading of the will made last week by the late Sir Simon Tedder."

"Is it necessary?"

"To ease my mind, it is."

"What do you mean?"

"Why should Sir Simon make such a will?" said Ritson, almost to himself. "I thought that it was strange at the time, but now, when this nephew has murdered him, and----"

"Herries did not," cried Browne growing red. "Yes, he did," said Ritson determinedly, "and to get the money."

"The money?" Browne leaned forward his hands on the desk, and stared into the agitated face of the solicitor.

"The money. Sir Simon has disinherited his daughter in favour of Angus Herries, who now has fifty thousand a year."

CHAPTER X

THE INQUEST

"You must be mistaken," stammered the doctor, staring, as well he might, considering the astounding news which he had heard.

"I don't make mistakes either in or out of business," replied Mr. Ritson haughtily. "Last week I drew up Sir Simon's will, which was short and to the point. In it he disinherited Maud Tedder and left all his money and property to his nephew, Angus Herries."

"Good Lord." Browne collapsed into a chair near the desk. He found it difficult to believe that Herries the outcast was now Herries the millionaire. "Fifty thousand a year," gasped the doctor, his red hair almost standing on

end. "What will he do with it?"

"Buy his freedom, I expect," said Ritson grimly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well," the lawyer took up a quill pen, and began to play with it. "Mr. Herries is certainly entitled to fifty thousand a year, but he has to do something to earn it."

"Do what?" asked Browne more and more perplexed.

Ritson bent forward.

"He has to find out who killed Sir Simon, and thereby earn his freedom, and the money."

"I am still in the dark. Will you explain?"

"I have told you enough."

"You will have to tell me more," said Browne, determinedly.

"My duty to my dead client----"

"See here," the little doctor jumped up, and slapped his hand down on the desk, "there was no need for you to have told me anything, so it is too late to talk of your duty to your dead client; but as you have told me so much, you must tell me everything."

"Yes," Ritson nodded his silvery-white head, "you are right. I have committed a breach of legal etiquette. Miss Tedder should have been the first to hear the will, which has to be read after the funeral at 'The Moated Hall.' But then Mr. Herries, who inherits, should also be present, and he is accused of the crime."

"He has escaped the immediate consequences," said Browne, meaningly.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Good Lord, how should I know?" cried Browne explosively. He was not quite sure as to the truth of Ritson's statement, and thought that it might be a trap to lure Herries from his hiding-place.

"You are a friend of Mr. Herries, and you went to Desleigh, as Inspector Trent told me."

"Quite so. But I was with Inspector Trent at the time Herries escaped out of the window of his bedroom."

"Then you do not know where he is?"

"No!" said the doctor, lying manfully.

Ritson looked depressed.

"That is a pity," he muttered, "for unless I can see him, I don't know how to put things right."

"Explain them to me."

The lawyer turned on his visitor in the twinkling of an eye.

"You do not know where he is?"

Browne was not at all disconcerted, having had one moment in which to think of a plausible answer.

"If Herries communicates with anyone it will be with me," he said, quietly, "as he knows that I am his firm friend, and believe in his innocence."

"You do,--you really do?"

"Certainly. Herries did not even know that his uncle was in the inn, and certainly could not have known that he was the heir."

"No, No," Ritson rapped his teeth with the feathered end of the quill-pen, "yet the evidence is dead against him."

"I am with you there. All the same," here Browne shamelessly pilfered Kyles' ideas, "the evidence is so clear that I believe my friend to be innocent."

"Hum! Hum! Hum!" Ritson cleared his throat, and settled his old-fashioned black satin scarf, "quite so,--quite so. Then you think, doctor," he leaned forward, confidentially, "that this very clear evidence was got together to implicate Mr. Herries in a crime of which he has no knowledge?"

"I am sure of it. Inspector Trent has given his version, which is coloured by

the belief that Herries is guilty. Let me tell you the other side, Mr. Ritson."

"I am all attention," said the lawyer, placing the tips of his fingers together, and looking up at the ceiling. Browne thereupon detailed all that he had heard, and seen at the inn. But he did not yet trust Ritson so far as to relate how Herries had found a refuge in Kind's caravan, nor did he state that Kind himself was an ex-detective, sworn to assist the accused man, out of gratitude.

Ritson listened in profound silence, and when the recital was finished he did not commit himself to a statement. On the contrary, he again began his game of chess with the sealing-wax, pens and paperweights, and asked an irrelevant question.

"And you saw Miss Tedder?"

"Yes. She believes, on Trent's authority, that her cousin is guilty."

"Consequently, she is much disturbed," suggested the lawyer.

Browne smiled cynically.

"You place too much faith in human nature, Mr. Ritson. Miss Tedder seems most anxious to get her cousin hanged."

"Hey, hey," Ritson sat bolt-upright with his hands on the arms of his chair, "say that again, my good sir."

Browne did say it again, and said more. He gave a detailed version of the interview, of the coming of the telegram announcing the finding of Armour in the ditch, and of the opinion of Captain Bruce Kyles, which was so much at variance with Miss Tedder's. Ritson stared hard at the little doctor, as he told his tale dramatically, and when it was ended he rose and went to look out of the window.

"This is very remarkable," said Ritson, turning from looking at the busy High Street to look at Dr. Browne.

"Very!" assented the medical man, saying as little as he could.

"And what is your opinion?" asked Ritson, returning to his seat.

"I have none, save that Herries is innocent."

"Then you don't think," said the lawyer, again playing chess, "that Miss Tedder in some way has heard of the will which disinherits her, and is anxious to have her cousin hanged so that she may get back the money."

"Will she get back the money if he is hanged?" asked Browne artfully.

"Why, yes. I pleaded for the girl. It seems that Maud--I have known her from a baby, so I can call her by her Christian name--well then, it seems that Maud insisted on marrying Captain Kyles, a man of whom Sir Simon did not approve."

"I don't wonder at that; the man is an adventurer."

"So Sir Simon thought. However, his looks--the scamp is certainly handsome--captured the affections of Miss Maud, and she declared that she would marry him. Sir Simon told her that if she did, he would disinherit her. He carried out his threat by leaving all his money to the nephew whom he treated so badly. But I pointed out that Maud ought to have enough to live on. Sir Simon disagreed, and said that Maud should have everything or nothing. Finally, he yielded,--in a way!"

"In what way?"

"He left the money to Herries for life and afterward to Maud. Meantime she gets one thousand a year."

"I see. Then you think that Maud wishes to see her cousin hanged so that she may inherit the money at once."

Ritson did not reply at once to this question.

"It is difficult to say," he observed, at length. "I cannot make up my own mind, and that is why I have consulted you,--why I have violated the confidence of my client. It is enough to get me struck off the Rolls, and very

rightly too."

"Anything you say is safe with me," said Browne, sympathising with the lawyer's desire to act rightly.

"You see," continued Ritson, still defending himself, "as the circumstances of the case are so dreadful, time is of every value, therefore, I thought it best to anticipate, in confidence, of course, the reading of the will. What do you advise?"

"Ah, I don't know all the circumstances of the case," said Browne cautiously. "What, for example, do you mean by saying that Herries would have to buy his freedom with his money?"

"Well," said Ritson, nursing his chin, "if he is guilty----"

"He is not!"

"We will presume for the sake of argument that he is," pursued the solicitor. "Well, then, if Mr. Herries is guilty, he will have to use his money to get the best lawyer in England to defend him, or else----" Ritson hesitated. "I am aware that I am suggesting the compounding of a felony," he said nervously, "but Mr. Herries might employ this money to escape,--that is, he might bribe people to hold their tongues until he is beyond pursuit."

"I don't think Herries would do that," said Browne vigorously; "he knows that he is innocent, and will prove his innocence in some way. He is not the man to lie idle under such a stigma."

"He is unlucky."

"Very unlucky,--a perfect Jonah, as he is fond of calling himself."

"Well, his luck has turned, seeing he has inherited the money."

"I don't agree with you, Mr. Ritson. He has to remain in hiding, because he is accused wrongfully of murder, and again, you told me that he does not get the money until he has found out who killed his miserable uncle."

"Quite so, but if he does, he will at once prove his entire innocence, and gain a fortune. That is good luck."

"Luck which is yet to come. Why did Sir Simon make it a proviso that Herries should seek for his assassin? Did he then expect to be murdered?"

"Yes, and for that reason, along with the other--Maud's love for Captain Kyles--he made the will."

"Did he tell you whom he expected would kill him?"

"No! I asked him, as the proviso was so strange: but he told me as little as possible."

"You gained no clue to a possible assassin."

"I did not."

"Is there anything in his past life which made you guess that----?"

Ritson interrupted.

"There is nothing. So far as I know Sir Simon was perfectly safe, and there was no reason to think that his life was threatened by anyone. Apparently it was, however, since he made such a will. And it is stranger still," added the lawyer meditating, "that he should have made me write a letter setting forth the fact that he had left the money to Herries."

Browne jumped up so quickly that he overturned the chair.

"What?"

"It is as I told you," said Ritson, composedly. "When the will was signed and witnessed, he asked me to write a letter."

"Have you a copy?"

"Certainly. I insisted on keeping a copy, although Sir Simon was none too pleased. But I refused to sign my name to a letter unless I had a copy,

especially," added Ritson slowly, "as I did not know to whom the letter was written."

"You should not have written it then," snapped Browne, annoyed at seeing his hopes of clearing Herries dashed to the ground.

Ritson touched the bell, and when the clerk appeared gave him instructions to bring in the letter book. While the boy was absent he turned again to Browne.

"You don't know how determined Sir Simon was," he said quietly, "and moreover, when you read the letter you will see that there is no reason why I should not have written it. He asked for an envelope, and addressed the letter himself. My clerk copied it, and brought it in. Sir Simon slipped it into an envelope--the one he had directed secretly--and went away. That was several days ago, and I have never seen Sir Simon since. I never even heard of him until Inspector Trent, knowing that I was his lawyer, called to inform me of his lamented death, and to invite me, as the late knight's legal adviser, to attend the inquest."

"You did not see the address?"

"No. I caught sight of one word however,--quite by accident."

"What was the word?"

"Well," hesitated Ritson fidgeting, "it certainly might throw some light on the mystery of his death, although I scarcely think so. But to betray a client's business relations is----"

"The affair is too serious to admit of a tender conscience," said Browne, imperiously. "Herries is in danger of his life, and I believe Maud Tedder knows much more than she chooses to tell. Seeing what her attitude is, I am determined to save Herries and prevent her getting the money."

"Surely you don't think that Maud knows who killed her father, and is deliberately sacrificing her cousin?"

"I don't know what to think," answered Browne impatiently. "We can talk of

that later. Tell me what word you saw."

"Tarabacca!"

"What does that mean?" asked Browne puzzled.

"I can't tell you. But the word I saw was certainly something like that. I can't be sure of the spelling, but it conveyed something like tobacco to my mind. Tarabacca," repeated the lawyer, as his clerk entered with the letter-book, "it was certainly a name like that."

"Perhaps the name of a town. It sounds like a foreign name."

"It certainly is not the name of any English town," retorted Ritson opening the book. "Here you are,--a short letter as you can see."

The little doctor advanced to the desk, and ran his eye over the few blotted lines almost illegible on the tissue paper used for copying.

"Dear Sir," he read aloud, "this is to inform you that my client Sir Simon Tedder has left all he possesses to his nephew Angus Herries, and that he has formally disinherited his daughter Maud Tedder of everything save one thousand a year.--Yours obediently, J. Ritson."

"Well," said Ritson, when Browne closed the book. The doctor shook his head.

"I cannot understand," he said, helplessly.

"Nor I. What is to be done?"

"There is nothing to be done save to wait. My advice to you, Mr. Ritson, is to be silent until the inquest is over. When Herries hears of his good fortune, he may give himself up."

"You advise him to do that?" asked Ritson anxiously.

"I certainly do. Good-day. We will meet at the inquest," and Browne, in a state of great perplexity left the office.

He certainly was perplexed, as he had never before had such mystery to deal with. Browne was a straightforward man, and liked everything to be done openly. But the underhand dealings connected with this death puzzled him sorely. He could not see his way to any solution, and went home to pass a restless night. Again and again did he ask himself whether Maud Tedder had anything to do with the crime, and again and again did he mutter to himself the strange word "Tarabacca." But to neither question did he obtain any answer. When he rose next morning to go to Desleigh he looked very weary and red-eyed.

But Browne was not fated to be present at the inquest, for just as he was starting he received a message from a very wealthy patient saying that she was dangerously ill, and insisting that he should come to her at once. The patient was too rich to lose, and moreover was extremely irascible, so Browne went to her house, and as she proved really to be dangerously ill, he was forced to remain there for the greater part of the day. It was quite three o'clock when he found himself leaving the Desleigh station to walk along the straight, muddy road which led to the now celebrated village.

The weather was much better, for although the sky was still grey and sunless, the mists had vanished. Browne, walking smartly towards his goal, cast a musing eye on the dismal flats and wide marshy lands which environed the village. He wondered how anyone could live in such a place, and wondered still more why Sir Simon had come to so dreary a locality to meet with his terrible death. As he drew near Desleigh, he met an outcoming throng of human beings, of motor cars and bicycles, and carts and horses coming towards the station. Apparently the inquest was over, and the reporters, and those morbid people attracted towards the inn by curiosity, were returning to the railway, that they might be taken to their various destinations. A close carriage, with the arms of Sir Simon on the panels, drove past at full speed, and Browne had no doubt that Maud and her chaperon, along with Captain Kyles, were within. He felt sorry that the blinds were down, as he wanted to see how Maud looked, and whether her expression was one of triumph. He guessed that it was, as he felt pretty certain that the verdict of the jury had ticketed Angus Herries as a criminal of the worst type. Strange to say, he was so sure of what the verdict was, that he did not stop any of the hurrying people to ask questions.

At the entrance to the village, he perceived the sloppy meadow wherein stood the gaily coloured caravan of Sweetlips Kind, and he smiled to himself to think of what would be said did anyone know that the accused man was snugly ensconced under the flooring of the vehicle. He then recognised how true it was what Kind had said regarding the safety of the hiding-place. No one, much less Trent, suspicious as he was, would credit Herries with being such a fool as to remain so near the scene of his supposed crime. And therein lay the man's safety. As Browne sent a second stealthy glance in the direction of that refuge for innocence, he stumbled against a woman who was coming swiftly along the road with her shawl up to her eyes. In her blindness, she had run up against him.

"Where are you going?--oh it's you, Elspeth."

It was indeed Elspeth. She had run out of the inn, with a shawl over her head, and a fringe of this was pressed to her tearful eyes. As the doctor spoke, she let the shawl drop, and he saw that her eyes were red with weeping, and that her small white face looked smaller and whiter than ever.

"Yes, it's me," she said nervously, glancing at the many men and women who were hurrying past to the station. "I am going to see Rachel, who is still ill. She is alone," this with a meaning glance at the doctor, and apparently uttered for the benefit of the public. "Sweetlips is drinking at the inn."

"What is the verdict?" asked Browne eagerly, although he knew very well what answer he would get.

"The only one that could be given," said Elspeth, leaning against a barbed wire fence on the side of the road. "The jury say that Mr. Herries murdered Sir Simon. There is a reward offered."

"By Miss Tedder?"

"Yes. She offers five hundred pounds."

"Oh," said Browne, biting his nether lip. He saw in this increase of the reward a fresh proof of Maud's vindictive feelings towards her cousin. Apparently she was determined to leave him no chance of escape, and again Browne

wondered, as he had wondered through the long night, if Maud Tedder was cognizant of the assassination of her father.

"Inspector Trent has been congratulated on the evidence he has collected," sobbed Elspeth, "and also he has been blamed for letting Mr. Herries escape."

"I don't wonder at it," said Browne, "the wonder is that he should have been congratulated at all. I never knew of such a bungling piece of work. Herries has not been caught yet?"

"No," neither of them looked toward the caravan as they spoke, "but many people intend to stop here, and search the district. There are three detectives,-one of them knew Sweetlips."

"Do these detectives believe Herries to be guilty?"

"Oh yes, and they each intend to search for Mr. Herries."

"What do they think of Kind's opinion?"

"He told them that he thought Mr. Herries was guilty," said Elspeth, in a meaning tone.

Browne quite understood her. Sweetlips was posing as an enemy to Herries, so as to save his life.

"And Kind is also going to try for the reward," said Elspeth with a glimmering smile on her lips.

The doctor rubbed his hands and laughed. There was a suggestion of comedy in Sweetlips Kind's attitude, notwithstanding that he was playing with the issues of life and death. However, he had learned all that he wished to learn, since he now knew that the verdict had been given adverse to Herries, that the reward had been increased, and that the accused man himself was still safe in his hiding-place.

The stream of people and vehicles grew thinner, and it would seem that very shortly the village would again be left to its desolation, now that the sensation was at an end. Elspeth supplied the doctor with more information.

"Sir Simon's body is to be taken to Tarhaven to-night," she said, "and he is to be buried in three days. Miss Tedder agrees to give one hundred pounds to Mrs. Narby, for the damage done to the inn by the murder having been committed there."

The doctor smiled inwardly, thinking of his interview with Ritson, and of the small chance Maud Tedder had of paying six hundred pounds. However, he did not wish to complicate matters further, by explaining the disappointment awaiting the presumed heiress, and merely answered the question in the same vein.

"I should think that the crime had increased the popularity of the 'Marsh Inn,'" said he with some grimness. "Probably Mrs. Narby has never had such good customers since she took up the trade. It's an ill wind that blows no one any good, Elspeth."

"She has sold out nearly all her liquor," the girl informed him. "And as there was scarcely anything to do, she allowed me to come away and visit Mrs. Kind. I wish you would come also, doctor. Rachel is still weak."

"I'll come," replied Browne, mechanically, as he was keeping his eye on a tri-car--Lagonda make--which was slowly surging past them. The next minute he swore loudly, for, although there was ample room, the chauffeur insisted on crushing both himself and Elspeth against the barbed wire fence, with painful results. "Here, confound you," cried the doctor irritably. "Look out where you are going."

The occupant--the sole one besides the chauffeur--was a dark-complexioned woman in the prime of life, with a haughty face, and quite an aristocratic air. She was richly and fashionably dressed in some lustreless black material, which she wore with infinite grace. From her large, melting, dark eyes, and her olive complexion, together with the strange fact that she was smoking a cigarette in public, Browne thought that she was a Spaniard--a foreigner at least. But she appeared to understand English, for on hearing his none too gentle language, she turned her proud face in his direction, and taking the cigarette from between her full red lips, flung it fairly in his face. Then at a word from her--a foreign word--the car shot forward down the road, leaving a

vile smell behind. In another minute, the Lagonda was speeding towards the station, so rapidly that Browne was unable to follow, much as he wanted to. However, he shook his fist, and picked up the stump of the cigarette, which had fallen at his feet.

"I wish I had caught sight of the number of that beastly machine," snapped the irascible little man. "I'd bring that woman into court and have her fined. Good Lord, to think that this--this," he shook the cigarette stump in Elspeth's face,--"should be thrown at me. I wish I could,--hullo!" he stopped and examined the cigarette earnestly. "Tangerian! Tangerian, as I'm a sinner."

"What do you mean?" asked Elspeth, astonished at his expression.

"Mean!" bellowed the doctor, seeing that no one was within earshot, "why, I mean that this is a foreign cigarette, unknown in England."

"Well?"

"Well! Kind picked up a similarly marked cigarette stump in Herries' bedroom, and it was dropped there by the murderer. That woman is,--she is,-- I say,--stop,--stop!" and Dr. Browne, brandishing his umbrella, ran in a wild manner after the vanishing tri-car, shouting like a Red Indian on the warpath.

CHAPTER XI

LOVERS

Naturally enough, Elspeth could not understand the hurried explanation of the

doctor, and could not guess what an important clue the little man was following up. For a moment or two, she watched him puffing and panting down the dreary road, and then, with a sigh, she entered the spongy meadow wherein the caravan was standing. It looked bright and gay in its coat of yellow paint, although a portion of it was covered with tarpaulin to preserve from rain various brooms and brushes and mats and baskets, which dangled on all four sides. The day was still fine, but already the sky was darkening with the coming night, and the vehicle looked rather lonely in that wide bleak meadow. The horse which usually drew the caravan seemed to know this, for it kept as close as possible to its perambulating home.

As Elspeth approached, she began to sing "Garryowen," since she was unable to whistle, so as to let Herries know that a friend was coming. Also when she climbed the steps, she gave the triple knock on the door, and waited with a beating heart for a sight of that dearly loved face. The door was cautiously opened, and she hastened to breathe her own name. Shortly she was within, and the door was again locked. Herries stepped across the gaping space of his cramped hiding-place, which was open. He usually kept it ready, so as to slip in and cover himself with the boards, which he could do by touching the spring, as speedily as possible. One never knew what stranger might come to the caravan, either in the way of business, or out of curiosity to see the sick woman. Rachel herself, looking much better and with a flush on her formerly pale cheeks, was sitting up. She received Elspeth with a rather knowing laugh, and held out a large hand, covered, gipsy-fashion, with silver rings.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," she said in a hearty tone. "I can talk now, as my throat is getting rapidly well, thanks to Dr. Herries."

"I am not exactly a doctor," said the young man, smiling, "you can call me Mr. Herries, the surgeon."

"Oh, you're a doctor right enough," said the proprietress of the caravan with a nod. "No one could have cured me so quickly as you have done. And Sweetlips will help you, doctor, as you have helped me. See if he doesn't. You'll walk a free man yet."

"What is the verdict, Elspeth?" asked Herries, anxiously, "but I need not ask," he added, smiling bitterly. "Wilful murder, eh, and Angus Herries the

murderer? I thought so."

Elspeth nodded, and leaned against the wall of the vehicle, as her heart was too full to speak. Mrs. Kind strove to cheer the poor young fellow who was dreeing so hard a weird.

"Come, come," she cried, in a hearty, good-humoured voice, "you're no worse off than you were before."

"Ah, but I think he is," said Elspeth, clasping her thin hands. "There is now a reward of five hundred pounds offered."

Herries started and flushed and bit his lip.

"By whom?"

"Miss Tedder."

"My cousin, by the girl who said that she loved me. After that, after that--" he flung himself down on the broken chair, and gnawed his fingers.

"She never loved you," said Elspeth with a tremor in her voice, and a high colour in her cheeks.

"How do you know?"

"I have seen her. A doll, a soulless woman, a selfish girl. She could never love a man as a man ought to be loved. Do you think that I would have doubted you, that I----" here she became conscious that she was revealing her secret, and became violently red.

Mrs. Kind touched Herries' arm.

"I told you so," said she in an undertone. "What do you think now?"

Herries sat mute with loosely clasped hands, and stared at the shrinking girl. Elspeth was clinging to the caravan wall, utterly confused, and although her face was turned away, she felt that the eyes of the man she loved were upon her, striving, as it were, to read her very soul. And why should he not, since

that soul was clean and pure, and ready to give itself to this man, who was under the ban of the law. As the knowledge of this came to her, she lifted her head proudly and sent a glance in the direction of Herries, which showed plainly all she thought, all she was trying to conceal.

"Good God," murmured Herries under his breath, and hid his face in his hands. "What have I done to deserve love like this?"

In a flash he comprehended the nobility of the girl, servant though she was. He recalled how she had aided him to escape, how she had searched out this place of refuge, how her eyes never left his face, and how she seemed to hang on his words. Hitherto he had been blind, but now in a hundred ways he knew that this poor, shabbily-clothed drudge loved him with surpassing strength. He raised his eyes to look at her delicate face, at her beautifully poised head, and into her wonderful eyes, pools of liquid light, irradiated by purity, and by a love half wifely, half maternal. She was Gowrie's daughter, according to Kind, but he could see nothing of Gowrie in her. In looks and nature and principles she was as far removed from that easy-going old sinner, as the earth was from the sun. All that was of her was beautiful and gracious. She needed but love and care and artistic surroundings to blossom out into a lovely, serene, radiant woman. He had been blind not to have seen this before. He had never dreamed that she loved him. But Mrs. Kind had opened his eyes to a certain extent, being woman enough to read Elspeth's secret. Now the single glance from the girl's soulful eyes revealed everything. She loved him, adored him, him the outcast, the accused murderer, the man on whom Fortune had turned a chilly back.

"I never thought of this," said Herries, raising himself with some difficulty, for his tumult of thoughts made him weak. "Elspeth!"

"No!" she flung out her hands, and her face flamed, "say nothing. I am--I am--your friend."

"You are the sole woman who has looked at me in such a way," said Herries hoarsely, and regardless of the patient, he bent forward across the narrow space of the caravan to catch impulsively at Elspeth's cold little hands. "I never guessed, I never dreamed of such joy, but now, I know, I feel that you love me, as I love you."

Mrs. Kind clapped her hands and laughed with glee.

"It's as good as medicine," she cried, with the ready tears in her eyes, "I was right, I was right. I saw--I knew--oh, these men, these men, how little they understand us women."

"But it's impossible," murmured Elspeth, snatching away her hands. "You cannot love, you--you know nothing about me, you----"

"I know your soul, I have seen it in your eyes. I know that it seems strange to you, it does to me," he drew his hand perplexedly across his forehead. "I never thought that Romeo and Juliet was true to nature; that sudden love, that passionate romance, seemed impossible, incredible. I could not believe that true love could be born of a single glance. But now I understand, and you have taught me to understand. It is the love of soul and soul that springs up thus rapidly, like Jonah's gourd, in a night. Jonah, ah, yes, for years I have compared myself with that unlucky prophet, for everything has gone awry with me, these many days. I looked forward to a miserable future similar to the miserable past. This accusation of murder seemed to be the climax of bad luck. But now I know that it is but one of those evils out of which comes infinite good. You love me: there is no more to be said."

"Tit, tit," cried the onlooker from the bed, "there is heaps to be said, doctor. Tell her how you love her, how pretty she is, and----"

"I am not pretty," interrupted Elspeth, vehemently, "no one can say that, Mrs. Kind."

"You are not pretty," assented Herries gravely, for he guessed that an overstrained compliment would make her think him shallow, "but you have the beauty of the soul, which shines through your face. It is that loveliness, which has caused me to recognize and return your love. Maud Tedder attracted me by her beauty, by her external beauty, and so the love I had for her--if it could be called love--was not lasting. But you, dear,--you," he exclaimed ardently, "it is your soul I worship and adore."

"You may be mistaken," stammered Elspeth, "it is so sudden----"

"No more sudden than is your love for me."

"Ah!" she smiled faintly, "but I am a woman and impulsive."

"Does that mean you may be mistaken."

"No. A thousand times no. I love you with all my heart, and nothing can lessen or do away with that love."

"Then you would not have me less fond, would you, dear? If I do not love you as you love me, then am I but a mere animal, unable to recognise the higher things of life. I did not recognise them until you looked at me,--until the veil fell from my eyes, and the warmth of your affection kindled a flame in my heart. But my soul has spoken to your soul, and if we had met and wooed for years, we could get no nearer the one to the other, than we are. Ours will be a marriage made in heaven,--the ideal heavenly marriage."

"Marriage!" she murmured, confused, "marriage."

"Yes, although I admit that I am a poor husband for you. I have no money,--I am under the ban of the law,--my life is full of misfortunes. Ah, dearest heart, think how deep must be my love, when I asked you to become my wife at this juncture."

"Bless me," cried Mrs. Kind, not following this reasoning, "I should think it was the other way about. A chap as loves a maid shouldn't drag her down to poverty."

"You are wrong,--you are wrong," said Elspeth, passing swiftly to the side of the bunk, "and Mr. Herries is right. Were we both rich, and careless of the deeper things of life, which poverty alone can teach, then we might marry without knowing each other's souls. But now, when we are in the depths, when Fate is doing her worst, when there is no earthly gain on either side, now is the time that we know our love is heavenly and lasting."

"Then you love me indeed," said Herries coming up to her.

She turned and put out her hands. All that was womanly in her, came to the

surface in this hour, when both were at the nadir of their fortunes.

"I love you," said Elspeth simply, and there was no need to say more, as her eyes spoke far more eloquently than did her tongue. "I will be your wife, when and where you will."

Herries was not an emotional man, but the tears came into his eyes as he bent forward to kiss those virgin lips. This sudden love, so new, so wonderful, so heart-inspiring, was so simple in its genesis that for the moment he could scarcely think that it was actual fact.

"I ask nothing further of Fortune now," said the young man, and his strong voice quavered. "I have gained the love of an angel."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Kind shifting uneasily on her pillow, "that's what all men say before marriage, but afterwards----"

"There will be no afterwards," cried Herries impetuously. "The beautiful present will be always with us."

"Beautiful present, doctor, and you being hunted down."

"I am not caught yet," said Herries gaily. "For the rest, I can afford to wait,--with Elspeth."

"But if you are captured?" she asked, her head resting unresistingly on his breast.

"I shall not be captured," said Herries forcibly, "though it may be that I shall give myself up."

"Mr. Herries----"

"Angus!"

"Well then, Angus, you would not give yourself up?"

The young man sat down again on the broken chair, and drew the slight form of his beloved to his knee.

"Dear," he said gravely, "I have thought over matters in my solitude, and I see how wrong I have been in not facing the worst. This flight of mine almost admits guilt. If I am innocent, people ask themselves, why should I fly?"

"Because appearances were against you," burst out Elspeth. "Because you were in the hands of Inspector Trent, who would not give you a fair trial. Innocent men have been hanged before, for crimes which they did not commit, and if you give yourself up to these policemen who are misled by false evidence, you may be hanged."

"No, dear, I will not be hanged. The God who has given me a pure woman's love in my hour of deep distress will not forsake me in my need. Your love, given unasked, marks the turn of my fortunes; so low as I have sunk, even so high will I rise, and you with me. And come what may, your heart can never prove false to me."

"Never! Never."

"My," said Mrs. Kind with a sigh, "don't he talk lovely. Sweetlips never pattered in this way to me. It's as good as a play, and play it is," she added, raising herself anxiously, "don't forget that you have to save your life, before you can marry."

"We can be married quietly," said Elspeth.

"It ain't so easy to get tied up," retorted Mrs. Kind, wisely. "That doctor now,--his name's in all the papers by this time, and if he wanted a licence, or went to put up the banns, he'd be nabbed as soon as looked at."

"Oh, Angus." Elspeth's eyes filled with tears.

He drew her tighter to his breast.

"Leave it to me, darling. What Mrs. Kind says is perfectly true, but there is a way out of the difficulty. Let me consult Browne and Sweetlips, and----"

"Oh," said Elspeth, starting, "Dr. Browne is here. I left him running after a motor car."

"What for?"

Elspeth explained the episode of the insult, and what the little doctor had said about the cigarette stump. Herries, knowing the theory of Kind, became quite excited, as he guessed that if this clue was followed up it might lead to serious developments, likely to secure his safety.

"But I don't see what a woman can have to do with the murder," he said perplexed.

"Leave it to Sweetlips," said Mrs. Kind, seriously. "He's the chap to find a needle in a haystack."

"Yes, but a woman of fashion----"

"Ho," snorted Rachel, rubbing her nose, "did you ever know a case where there wasn't a woman?" She glanced merrily at Elspeth. "There's two in this affair."

"Three," said Elspeth quickly, "you forget Miss Tedder. By offering this reward, Angus," she blushed as she shyly pronounced the name, "I can see that she wants to hang you. Well then, I will put my wits against hers and save her cousin."

"Save your husband that is to be," whispered Herries, fondly.

Elspeth took hold of the lapels of his poor jacket----

"Do you really mean it: do you really mean it?" she asked, earnestly. "Think of what I am, as Sweetlips told you,--the daughter of Michael Gowrie, who was left in pawn by him, to be a drudge at the 'Marsh Inn.'"

"You are a lady,--the lady of my love, and the sweetest woman in the wide world."

"Well," said Rachel, staring at Elspeth, while this was being whispered into her ears, "if she don't look reglar, slap up, pretty!"

It was true. A lovely pink blush was over-spreading the pale face of the girl, a

smile of ecstasy parted her lips to show perfectly white teeth, and the whole worn weary body seemed to be suddenly rejuvenated by the power of the loving word. It was like the sun on a gloomy day emerging from behind a cloud,--a promise of that hidden loveliness which would reveal itself when she became the wife of the man she had dared so much to save.

Mrs. Kind beckoned to the lovers who wooed so boldly in her presence and smiled.

"Y' don't know that I'm a gipsy of sorts," she said, taking Herries' hand. "Let me read the lines, doctor. I've read Elspeth's before, ain't I, ducky? Lor, I read misery and sorrow, and folks as wished her harm,--all of 'em to skip when the man came."

"The man?" queried Angus, submitting his palm to the sibyl.

"You're the man. I knew it the moment I saw her blushing like a true maid. Aye, here's evil days behind you," she traced the lines with a lean brown finger, "evil folk too, and hardship by land and sea. See the crosses, deary, in the early part of life,--you've had 'em, oh my gentleman, what a time you've had!"

"Jonah's luck," said Herries with a sigh, and to comfort him Elspeth raised his disengaged hand to her lips.

"Aye! But luck of that sort is too bad to last. Hard rain don't last long, my pretty ones. Bad luck to Elspeth, and bad luck to you, my gentleman. Deary," she caught Elspeth's hand, and examined it turn and turn about with Herries' palm, "why, here's the coupling, the cross of marriage."

"Do you call it a cross?" asked Herries laughingly.

"It's the sign I speak of," said Mrs. Kind, simply. "Here, in your hand and her's, on the verge of the criss-cross lines, and all plain sailing before!" she dropped their hands and clapped her own. "Dearie both, the worst is over. You'll win free, my gentleman, and have money galore, and marry the pretty one who held to you in tribulation, as she will in wealth. Good health, good luck, and good hearts, and may the dear Lord have you both in His keeping."

"Amen to that," said Herries solemnly, "but how can you tell that I am to have good fortune?"

"Two 'no's' make a 'yes,' my gentleman. Your bad fortune and hers make one good one past believing, when you marry. Duvel!" Mrs. Kind became more gipsy-like than ever, as she plied the trade peculiar to the gentle Romany. "It's a true dukkeripen, brother," said she, and sank back exhausted with the effort.

"Now, you must not talk more," said Herries, covering her up. "As your doctor, I should not have allowed you to chatter, when your throat is still weak. Elspeth," he turned to the girl, when Mrs. Kind was quiet, "go to the inn, and tell Sweetlips to come to me, along with Browne, if he is there. I want to hear everything up-to-date and arrange my plans."

"Angus," she whispered, imploringly, "you will not give yourself up?"

"Not unless Browne and Sweetlips advise. I place myself in their hands. Good-bye, dear."

"Good-bye!"

Elspeth was just receiving his kiss, when a thundering knock came rattling at the door. The sick woman raised herself, much startled and the lovers sprang apart. "Garryowen" had not been whistled or sang, and the triple signal had not been given. This was some stranger,--perhaps some enemy. Gathering her wits together, Elspeth pointed mutely to the still gaping hiding-place, and Herries lay down without a single word. In a twinkling, she had touched the spring and the flooring hid him from sight. The knock came again.

CHAPTER XII

THE STRANGE WORD

As soon as the noise of the second knock died away sufficiently to permit speech, Elspeth raised her voice crossly, with a glance round to see that nothing telltale was about.

"All right! All right," she said in angry tones, and opening the door. "Who is there? What do you want? Mrs. Kind is ill; don't disturb her."

"It's only me," said Pope Narby, who was standing, long and lean and chilly, on the steps. "I've come for you, Elspeth, as mother wants you, and she says she'll have the hair out of your head if you don't come up sharply. And I want writing-paper for myself. There's none at home, or in the shop, so I thought I'd get it here."

"You might have knocked a little more gently," said Elspeth, relieved to see that Pope had no suspicions. "Poor Mrs. Kind is so ill."

"You startled me rarely, lad," said the sick woman, taking her cue. "And why do you want Elspeth? I can't be left by myself."

"Your husband's at home," explained Pope. "That he isn't," said Mrs. Kind grimly.

"I mean he's at my home, drinking, and talking about the inquest."

"Oh! he is," cried the sick woman, with pretended wrath, "then just you tell him that I'm all alone, and that if he doesn't come back, I'll clip him over the head."

"All right. Come along, Elspeth. Oh wait--the paper?"

Mrs. Kind pointed to a shelf over her head.

"The box is up there, my dearie; the best writing-paper and dirt cheap."

Elspeth reached down the box, and spread out the contents, but Mrs. Kind, delighted to be in her old element, did the bargaining herself. Not that it was much pleasure, as Pope was a fool over money, and gave her what she asked. Of course Mrs. Kind was glad enough to despoil the fool of his cash, but she would have preferred a hard bargainer. However, that pleasure was denied her, and she handed over the paper and took the money. Meantime Elspeth, with her shawl over her head, waited impatiently for Pope, thinking meanwhile of her poor hunted lover, who was being stifled under her feet. She could have knelt and kissed the flooring above his head.

"Come along--come along," she said impatiently. Pope shambled ungraciously out of the caravan, while she closed the door after them both.

"You won't be in such a hurry to get home when you know the tantrum mother's in," he grinned.

Elspeth did not vouchsafe a reply, but walked swiftly across the splashy meadow, and out on to the muddy road. She was determined in her own heart to bear no further insults from Mrs. Narby. The woman who was engaged to marry Angus Herries must not submit again to outrage. And the knowledge that she had won this wonderful love made her feel brave. She was no longer the ill-used drudge, but a self-contained, resolute woman, who could fight the whole world for the sake of her man; aye, fight the Universe itself.

"I say," babbled Pope, as he shambled homeward beside her, "I wish I could get this five hundred pounds, Elspeth."

"Blood money never did anyone good, Pope."

"Yes, but this man is guilty."

"No!" she stopped and pressed her hands against her loudly beating heart, "that, I'll never believe."

"But the verdict of the jury."

"It is a mistaken one. And his own cousin, who should defend him, is the one to offer that iniquitous reward."

"I say," Pope looked at her curiously through the gathering gloom, "you do talk first-rate at times, Elspeth."

"I have been to a good school," she answered shortly.

"You might help me with my poetry," suggested the poet.

"Well, I will, if you'll promise to give up trying to get this reward."

"No, I shan't," snarled the uncouth creature. "If I can get that money I'll be able to publish my poetry. You don't know how my genius longs to spread its wings."

"I know that your genius, as you call it, is perfectly capable of hanging an innocent man to get blood-money," she flamed out.

"Everyone has to look after himself," returned Pope sulkily, "and if this Mr. Herries is not guilty, who is?"

"That man who escaped in Sir Simon's fur coat."

"Mother's got the coat, and intends to keep it from the police if she can," observed Pope complacently. "Dr. Browne just asked to see it before I came to fetch you."

"Is Dr. Browne at the inn?"

"Yes. He came in a quarter of an hour ago, all puffing and blowing and covered with mud. Now he's talking to Sweetlips Kind, who wants to earn the reward. But he shan't, he shan't," cried Pope, clenching his lean, hard fist, "I'll get it. I'm going out to-morrow with some bread and cheese in my pocket, and will not come back until I find the man who killed Sir Simon."

"Then find the man in the fur coat."

"No, it's that Mr. Herries, and I'll ask Armour if he saw him. You know Armour's ill in bed, Elspeth. Inspector Trent went to see him before he left for Tarhaven. Armour sticks to his story of being carried away by men; they were sailors."

"Sailors," echoed Elspeth, stopping short in front of the inn, "how does Armour know that?"

"He saw, just for one moment before they muffled his head, that one had on a pea-jacket with brass buttons. I heard Inspector Trent say to Sweetlips Kind, that he expected they were sailors from Pierside, and that he is going over there to-morrow."

"I don't see what sailors have to do with the matter," said Elspeth half to herself, and now standing directly before the door.

She must have raised her voice unconsciously, for Mrs. Narby heard her words, and flung open the door, with a volley of bad language.

"Come in, come in," yelled the gross landlady. "'Ow do y' do, me fine Duchess, stravaging about win there's work t' do. I'll pull th' bloomin' 'air out of yer 'orrid 'ead."

She made as to do it, but Elspeth slipped under her extended arm, and flew into the tap-room.

"Stop," she said in a commanding voice, which drew every eye to her, as the infuriated Mrs. Narby flung forward to enjoy her favourite pastime. "If you lay a finger on me, I'll give you in charge to the policeman who is watching the dead body upstairs."

The landlady was so amazed at the turning of the worm, that she fell back against the wall and gasped. Dr. Browne, who was talking in undertones to Kind in a corner, looked approvingly at the girl, who was thus defying her bully. Narby turned and stared in surprise, as he was handing a pewter of beer to a yokel, and every man in the tap-room--and it was quite full--waited with bated breath to see what the redoubtable landlady would do. She gasped like a cod-fish and opened her mouth to speak twice and thrice, only to be quelled by the calm gaze of the girl she had tortured for so long.

"I had your permission," went on Elspeth, oblivious of her startled audience, "to visit Mrs. Kind, who is seriously ill, and you did not mention any time for me to return. I have been your slave and your drudge long enough, and to-

morrow I intend to leave, if you drive me to it, I'll leave to-night."

"You--you--slut," shouted Mrs. Narby, almost too furious to speak.

"Stop calling me names. Mr. Narby, while I remain here, I appeal to you for protection."

"She doesn't mean it," said the landlord uneasily. He did not like this sudden revolt, and these outspoken speeches, which would damage the none-too-good reputation of the inn.

"Ho! Don't she," screamed Mrs. Narby, and darting forward, gave Elspeth a swinging slap on the cheek, "an' she means thet too, y' hussy. Git back to yer kennel, y'----"

What she would have said, what she would have done, it is impossible to say, as she had quite lost her head; but while Elspeth, sick with pain and shame, leaned against the wall, Sweetlips Kind caught the virago's arm, and swung her round. She scratched his face with a volley of bad language, and Narby saw that it was time to interfere.

"Liza 'Liza! stop," he said in a low, firm voice.

"Lemme go, lemme git at thet--thet----" rage choked her.

"Elspeth will come this night with me to the caravan, said Kind, and the girl started, half with joy, half with fear. She would have liked to join the vagrant life of the Kinds, which would be better than the dog's existence she was leading at the inn; but then Herries was there, and Kind did not know that now she was engaged to Herries.

"No, no, it's very good of you, but----"

"She sha'n't go," shouted Mrs. Narby, only restrained by her husband's strong arm from falling bodily on Elspeth. "She's mine. Her father lef' her in my charge. She daren't go."

"Daren't," echoed the girl, raising her head dauntlessly. "If that is what you say, Mrs. Narby, I go now. My father left me here to pay off by my work, a

miserable week's lodging. I have slaved for an entire year, and now I am free to leave." She walked to the door.

"Stop her! Stop her!" cried the landlady, thinking--and very rightly--that never again would she get so obedient and willing a slave.

"No one dare stop me," said Elspeth, turning at the door, "I leave your service at this moment."

"Where are you going on this wet night?" asked Narby gruffly.

"That is my business. And when next you get a servant, I advise you to stop your wife from ill-treating her as she has ill-treated me."

"That's hactionable," cried the landlady savagely.

"Make it so, and take me into court. My evidence would do you no good, Mrs. Narby."

The virago saw that she had gone too far, and that the sympathies of the room were with the frail girl, who thus faced her so boldly. She fell back on whimpering. "And arter wot I've done fur 'er. Whoy, 'er mother couldn't 'ave---"

She got no further. With a disdainful look, Elspeth pushed open the door and went out into the rain, which was now falling fast. Mrs. Narby would have followed, but her husband held her back.

"You've done quite enough mischief with your tongue and fist," he said in her ear. "Get into the kitchen, or else I'll choke the life out of you, you she-demon."

Mrs. Narby stared at him, and then went off into a fit of crying and kicking, and grovelling on the floor. Narby lost no time in arguing the point, but picked up the struggling, squealing woman, and half carried, half dragged her into the back parts of the inn. And all this time Pope stared open-mouthed, as much at the daring of Elspeth as at the downfall of his hitherto redoubtable mother. And his feelings were shared by the company in the tap-room, who

had long looked on Mrs. Narby as a model virago, who ought to be brought to her bearings.

"I'd best see after that girl," said Sweetlips in a low voice to the doctor. "She can't be left to wander about these marshes all night."

"What can you do for her?" questioned Browne, following the Cheap-jack to the door.

"She can come with me in the caravan to Colchester. I'm starting for that place to-morrow."

"What, will you give up----?"

"Hush. Don't speak so loud. Of course I'm still on the job; but I want to place a certain person in safety before moving further in the matter."

"I think it would be best for him to give himself up, and stand his trial," said Browne quickly, "especially as he has inherited this huge fortune."

"He hasn't got it yet," replied Sweetlips, grimly, "nor will he, until he clears his character and hangs the assassin of his uncle. Come along," they were hurrying up the village street, through the drizzling rain, in the direction of the caravan, "we'll lose that girl."

"She'll go straight to your wife."

"I daresay she--no, there she is." Kind pointed to a slim, girlish figure, which was gliding slowly before them. "I say, Elspeth, Elspeth!"

The figure stopped and when the two came up, she paused under a villainously bad oil lamp, which cast but a feeble gleam, so dusky was the atmosphere with the rain and swiftly coming night.

"I knew you would come," she panted, not having yet got over her encounter with Mrs. Narby, "and so I went towards the caravan."

"But ain't y' going there, my girl?" questioned Kind, startled.

"No. I can't stop in the caravan, thank you all the same, Sweetlips, you forget that Mr. Herries is there."

"What difference does that make? My missus can play society."

Elsbeth drooped her head under the shawl.

"I am engaged to Mr. Herries."

"What?" shouted Browne, catching her by the arm.

"Speak lower," urged Kind, glancing uneasily around, "you never know who may be eavesdropping."

"But it's impossible," said the little doctor, sinking his voice. "You have only known him for a day or so."

"All the same, he loves me, and I love him."

"Don't be foolish, girl. How can he," Brown was careful not to mention Herries' name, "how can he support you, when he hasn't got a penny? It's sheer madness."

"You forget the fortune," whispered Sweetlips in the doctor's ear.

"You forget your own words. He has to earn that yet."

"Then allow Elspeth to help him to earn it. She's a sharp girl, and already has done him a service. Let the engagement stand until the chap gets out of this hobble. Then you can talk."

"All right," grumbled the doctor, "but it's ridiculous."

Meantime Elspeth, feeling that it was impossible to explain her changed circumstances to the pair, had turned on her heel, and was walking in the opposite direction.

"Where are you going?" asked Kind, gaining on her rapidly with his long stride.

"To Armour, the policeman's," she answered in a fatigued tone. "His wife is my good friend, and will take me in."

"Hum," murmured the Cheap-jack, "perhaps that will be best--for the present at all events. And I want to see Armour myself. Come along, doctor. There's work to be done."

Browne followed at once, as he also was anxious to see the kidnapped policeman, and learn from his own lips exactly what had taken place. But he was not pleased at this fresh entanglement of Herries, since, as he thought, the girl would only hamper a man already in difficulties. However, he guessed that what Elspeth had said was true enough, and that she really was engaged. It is creditable to the doctor's understanding that he comprehended how this change in the girl's circumstances had enabled her to face the "Marsh Inn" bully. "Extraordinary creatures, women," thought this philosopher.

Shortly Elspeth came to a small red-brick cottage standing some little distance from the village street and within a tidy garden, well cultivated. A light burned in the left-hand window, which showed that Armour and his wife were still sitting up. Certainly it was yet early, but Browne had thought that the policeman would have been in bed. However, the whispered information of Elspeth conveyed to his ear that the light shone through the sitting-room window.

"Who is there?" asked Mrs. Armour, opening the door an inch or so.

"I am here," said Elspeth, in a soft voice, "I have had a quarrel with Mrs. Narby, and she has turned me out of the inn, or rather I have given up my situation. Can you put me up for the night?"

"Surely, surely, oh, my poor girl," said the comely woman, taking the shivering, bedraggled girl by the arm, "and who's with ye, Elspeth?"

"Dr. Browne, from Tarhaven, and Sweetlips Kind. They came to see me safely here. Good night, doctor. Good night, Sweetlips."

"No, no," said the Cheap-jack, "I'm coming in to see Armour."

"What about?" asked the wife sharply.

"I'll tell him when I get in."

Mrs. Armour hesitated.

"If it's a doctor you have with you," she said at length, opening the door wide enough for the trio to enter, "perhaps he'll give my man some medicine."

"Certainly," answered Browne briskly, and she led the three into a small sitting-room, crowded with old-fashioned furniture. On the horse-hair sofa lay Armour in plain clothes, a heavy, sullen-looking man, whose head was bound up.

"What's up now?" he asked with the groan of a rebellious Titan.

"Elspeth from the 'Marsh Inn' has come to stop here the night," explained his wife, "and a doctor's here to see you."

"I feel very bad," grumbled the policeman, "my head's aching, where them there villains gave me a clump."

"Let me see it," said the doctor, and having moved the lamp, he began to undo the bandages with deft fingers.

"Come, Elspeth, me and you'll go to the kitchen. You'll be wanting your supper, poor lass. I'm glad ye've come here. Augh, that woman at the inn, I'm fair glad you've left her."

"Good night, Sweetlips," said Elspeth again, and in an utterly worn-out tone, "you'll see me to-morrow."

"Yes. Come along to the caravan and speak with my missus. She's a rare one for managing, is my Rachel."

Mrs. Armour bore off the weary girl, and when the pair were out of the room, Kind turned his attention to the policeman, who had stopped his groans. Browne had bound up his head, and he confessed that the wound felt easier.

"My missus is a good soul," said Armour, "but her fingers is all thumbs, drat her."

He looked as though he expected his visitors to take their leave, but when Browne sat down and Sweetlips followed suit, the policeman half rose from the sofa in astonishment.

"You'll be wanting to see me, gentlemen?"

"Yes," said Kind, making a sign to the doctor to hold his tongue, "I want to ask you about this kidnapping."

"What for?" asked Armour, suspiciously.

"This gentleman," Kind indicated the doctor, "is a friend of Mr. Herries, who is accused falsely of having killed his uncle, Sir Simon. He has asked me to see into the matter."

"But what can a Cheap-jack do?"

"I was not always a Cheap-jack, Armour. Formerly I was in the London detective force."

"Were ye now?" Armour's face relaxed. "Then maybe ye could put me on to earning this bit of money by telling me where the man we want is hanging out."

"I'd rather earn it for myself," said Sweetlips coolly, "but if you'll tell me all about this kidnapping, I may be able to make it worth your while."

"But I don't see what this, has to do with that?"

"Ah, you can't see far, that's a fact," rejoined the Cheap-jack scathingly. "But it's this way. Your kidnapping has to do with the murder. The man who killed Sir Simon climbed in at the window somewhere about midnight."

"I wasn't there then," said Armour swiftly.

"I know that, or you would have seen him getting in. But he had not left by

the time you came, and when you sat down on the bench, you prevented his escape."

"But, Kind," broke in the doctor, "the assassin departed through the tap-room next morning, disguised as his victim."

"That's true enough, but the men who kidnapped Armour may not have known that. Probably they were set to keep the coast clear, and when Armour blocked the way of escape, they rushed him."

"Aye, that they did," said Armour, forgetting all caution in his desire to tell his woes. "I was sitting there with a pipe, quiet-like and they came up,--I can't say how many,--with a dash. One thumped me in the head, and threw a shawl over me, and--"

"Have you the shawl?" asked Kind.

"Here it be." Armour fished under the sofa and drew forth a yellow shawl striped glaringly with scarlet. While Kind examined this, he went on with his story. "They carried I away, where, I nivir knowed, being half insensible-like. When I come to my senses quite I was lying in a muddy ditch, with the shawl still over my head, and bound hand and foot like a parcel of goods. Hours and hours passed and then the porter come and got me free. And I ask you," cried the policeman, "if there was anything in that, as showed I hadn't done my dooty?"

"No," said Browne, to whom the policeman appealed, for Kind was turning over every inch of the shawl. "You were the victim of circumstances. See here, you needn't say that you have told us anything, as I want to assist my friend secretly. Hold your tongue, and I'll give you twenty pounds.

"Well, sir," Armour scratched his head, "seems to me, as I may be chucked the Force, if my superior officer, Inspector Trent, don't cool down. So be it as you'll ask me nothing which will be against my dooty----"

Kind rose, threw down the shawl and interrupted. His eyes sparkled and Browne was sure that he had made a discovery.

"We ask you nothing more," he said, putting on his hat, "but whether you leave the Force or not, you'll get the money. And more, you will be doing a kind thing in helping Dr. Browne to clear his friend's character."

"But my superior officer ses as this Herries is guilty."

"Your superior officer is several kinds of ass."

"That he be," assented Armour vigorously, "he swore as I'd not kept my eyes open. And I ask you, what more could a man do, as was rushed by sailors?"

"You are sure they were sailors."

"Well, one of 'em wore a pea-jacket with brass buttons, as I've seen sailors wear."

"Were they foreigners?" asked Browne quickly.

"They might ha' bin, but I nivir had no time to see their faces, and they nivir did talk to me nohow."

"That's all; good-night," said Sweetlips, walking to the door.

"And you'll bear in mind the twenty pounds," said Armour, letting them out into the tidy garden.

"Yes, yes, come some day to Tarhaven. Any one will tell you where Dr. James Browne lives. I'll give you the money; only hold your confounded tongue."

"Nivir fear, nivir fear," said Armour, and shut the door with a chuckle. They left quite a different man behind to the grumbling, suspicious creature they had found nursing his wounds on the horse-hair sofa.

"Well?" asked Browne, when he and Kind were well on their way to the caravan. "What have you found?"

"Do you remember that name 'Tarabacca,' which the lawyer spied on the envelope directed by Sir Simon in the office."

"Yes. What of that?"

"It's on the shawl."

"On the shawl?"

"Yes. That's a foreign shawl, and a woman's shawl. Comes from Italy or Egypt or Tangiers maybe."

"Kind, you don't think----?"

"Aye, but I do. We're bringing home the crime to that lady in the motor car who insulted you. That insult will cost her dear. She smoked the same kind of cigarette as I found in Mr. Herries' bedroom, and this shawl evidently belongs to her. And the name is the same as that on the envelope addressed secretly by Sir Simon Tedder. We're getting on, doctor. That woman must be found."

"But you don't think that she killed Sir Simon?"

"Why not? I said that a light, nimble person could have climbed the trellis. Why not this lady? However, we'll have a talk to Mr. Herries, and tell him all we have found out. He may know if his uncle was acquainted with this dark lady."

But Herries did not know. They approached the caravan whistling "Garryowen" and gave the signal. Herries was seated by Mrs. Kind's bed, and was more than glad to see his friend. Browne related what he had discovered, and then Kind followed with the story of the policeman's kidnapping. When he mentioned the name on the shawl, the doctor harked back, and explained the episode in Ritson's office, which he had forgotten to tell in detail. Then it was that the accused man started.

"Tarabacca!" he cried, much excited. "Why, that's the name of the steam yacht lying alongside my boat at Pierside."

CHAPTER XIII

A MEXICAN BEAUTY

Early next morning, Sweetlips Kind was talking to Dr. Browne in the consulting-room of the latter at his Tarhaven house. On tracing the connection of the mysterious word "Tarabacca" with the shawl which had to do with Armour's kidnapping, and which consequently was of a piece with the tragic incident of the "Marsh Inn" crime, the Cheap-jack had postponed his departure. Eager as he was to leave the dangerous neighbourhood of Desleigh, where one and all were on the alert to capture Herries, he thought it well to see what sort of crew manned the yacht referred to by the accused man. Beyond the fact that the oddity of the name had struck him, Herries knew nothing. When the Arctic sealer "Nansen" came to Pierside, the yacht was already berthed by the wharf, and Herries had left his ship so immediately, owing to the persecution of the captain, that he had made no enquiries as to the nationality of the strange vessel. Nor, had he remained on board the "Nansen," would he have so enquired, since the "Tarabacca" did not interest him in the slightest. Now, however, that the yacht's name was on the shawl, and a letter had apparently been addressed to someone on board by the dead man, the subject became one of vital importance.

Dr. Browne, very hopeful as to the future, had returned to Tarhaven by a late train from London, that fortunately stopped for a few moments at Desleigh railway station, and had taken leave of Kind with the understanding that the Cheap-jack was to proceed next day to Pierside, for the purpose of making enquiries about the "Tarabacca." The doctor was therefore surprised when Sweetlips arrived, somewhere about nine o'clock in the morning to continue the conversation broken off on the previous night. He appeared to be in a hurry, and lost no time in explaining.

"It's a rum word, is 'Tarabacca'," remarked Kind, when the maid had left the two alone in the severe-looking apartment.

Browne nodded.

"It sounds like an Indian word," said he, judiciously. "Why not an Indiana word," suggested the Cheap-jack.

"Might belong to South America," agreed the doctor. "There's a sort of Peruvian ring about it. Why?"

Kind asked an irrelevant question.

"Do you remember how I said that you had given me a clue, when we met outside the gates of the 'Moated Hall' park?"

"Yes. I could not understand. I can recall nothing likely to----"

"Hold on a bit, doctor, I'm going to explain now. That Kyles cove----"

"Who is engaged to Miss Tedder. Well?"

"Kyles," explained Sweetlips, with his keen eyes on the medical man, "is an adventurer, and is after Miss Tedder's money, I should say."

"He certainly doesn't seem to be crazy about her."

"No! That sort of chap's only crazy about one person--himself. I know--and you know, from Mr. Ritson,--that Sir Simon didn't approve of the engagement."

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Go on."

"When you talked of Kyles defending Mr. Herries," continued Kind, thinking out his case. "I thought it strange that he should go out of his way to help a chap on whom--as you told me, doctor--he had never set eyes. I guessed that there must be some reason for that--a reason connected with the murder."

"Surely you don't think that Kyles has anything to do with the crime?"

"Don't I, just? That's what I'm driving at. He's a sea-captain, and the coves as kidnapped Armour are sailors----"

"Pooh! Pooh! Armour wasn't sure on that point."

"He saw that one was brass-bound," retorted Sweetlips, "and merchant officers usually go about in their swagger togs to get the women after them. I'm certain that the brass-bound cove was officering a relief party of sailors. If my guess is right, that connects Kyles with them."

"I don't quite see----"

"Oh, it's all theory, of course, but we've got to grope in the dark before we fetch the light, doctor. Kyles is a sailor, and those men who captured Armour are sailors. Very good then; the case stands something in this way. Sir Simon's only daughter and heiress is engaged, against the will of her father, to Kyles, and Sir Simon is unexpectedly murdered. Beforehand, evidently expecting to be killed, he wrote a secret letter to someone on board a boat called the 'Tarabacca,' disinheriting his daughter. Tarabacca is, as you think, an Indian word. Suppose we learn that it is an Indiana word, we've connected Kyles, who is in the service of the Republic, closer with the matter. The marked shawl and the secret letter form the connecting links, don't you see?"

"Humph," assented Browne, somewhat struck by this lucid reasoning, "of course it's all theory. However," he crossed to the book-case, "the matter of the name is easily settled. I have an atlas here."

"I doubt if you'll spot it, doctor. However, we can but try."

And the doctor did try. Turning over the pages, until he came to the map of South America, he searched the portion, coloured yellow, to the far south of the Continent, which represented the tiny republic of Indiana. But no name could be found even distantly resembling the one they were in search of.

"Hold on," said Browne, as Sweetlips shook his head with a disappointed air, "I'll turn up the index. Often names that are not set down on the map, are catalogued there." He ran his finger down the page. "Ta,--Tag,--Tap,--Tar,--here you are, Kind. Tarabacca, Map 45, Lat. 44, Long. 73° 6 E," again he

reverted to the map. "Yes. It's certainly in Indiana, for here is the Republic in the latitude referred to. Tarabacca isn't set down here, but as it's in the same latitude, you may depend that it's a town or a lake or a mountain in the Indiana Republic, and the yacht's been named after it."

"Which shows that Kyles is connected with the crime."

"Hold on. That woman I saw in the motor car may have done the deed. It was a woman's shawl, remember, that was used to stifle Armour. She smoked too, and being light, could have climbed the trellis, so that----"

"Yes, yes, but there's usually a woman in every case, and where a woman is a man is certain to be found. Captain Kyles, on the authority of the word, the shawl, and the cigarette, knows this woman and this yacht, therefore, he must have something to do with the crime, as she has. I believe they are accomplices."

"Why not see Captain Kyles, since he is in Tarhaven?"

"What, and have him deny everything? Not me, doctor. I'm not sufficiently sure of my facts, sir. I'll go to Pierside on a selling excursion, and spy round that yacht. If I can get speech with the woman of the Lagonda tri-car, I'll shove the shawl under her eyes----"

"The shawl----?"

"I got it from Armour."

"But he had no right to part with it."

"I daresay," rejoined Kind dryly, "but he fancies that Trent will fire him out of the Force, and expecting money from you, on behalf of Herries, he is willing to do anything to save his own position."

"Well," said Browne, rising and glancing at his watch, "it's a chance that something may come of the matter. If you want me, send along and I'll come if I can."

"No. You make some excuse and call at the 'Moated Hall,' so as to keep an

eye on Kyles and Miss Tedder."

"I don't like spying."

"You'll have to, if you wish to save Mr. Herries. Remember, those two--the girl and the Captain--will do a lot to stop Herries from inheriting the money."

"He doesn't inherit until he learns who killed his uncle."

"Ah well, he'll have to do that to save his own skin, so he has a double motive. So-long, doctor. Keep your eye peeled."

With this somewhat Colonial farewell, the Cheap-jack took his leave, and made for the railway station. Fortune favoured him, for he caught a train to Pierside within ten minutes, and boarded an empty compartment, so that he could think out the complicated case at his leisure. Kind's heart beat the quicker, as he remembered that he was once more on the warpath, man-hunting. He almost regretted, on experiencing the old thrill, that he had given up thief-catching in deference to the prejudices of Rachel. But on reflection he came to the conclusion that it was better to wander a free man in the country, breathing fresh air, than to be tied to an official post in town, following criminals through the miry ways of crime. Besides, in his unofficial exploitation of the present case--which was about as difficult a mystery to unravel as he had ever chanced upon--he had a perfectly free hand. He therefore felt in very good spirits, and hummed a coon-melody, as he turned over in his pack a few feminine articles, which he thought might open the purse of the woman he wished to see. For apart from the case, Kind was naturally anxious to make a trifle of money, if only to pay his expenses.

Pierside is a busy shipping port, thronged with sailors of all nationalities. The streets of the town are narrow, but there is ample space by the waterside, where the great docks are crowded with shipping. Kind shouldered his pack, and strolled easily down to the river banks. At the dock gates he was stopped by an official and forbidden to smoke; also his pack was examined to see that he had no contraband goods about him. This should have been done when he came out and not when he went in, and Sweetlips was rather disgusted at the zeal of the customs official in charge. However, the inspection was a mere matter of form, and was made by the Jack-in-office just to show his authority,

so Sweetlips was speedily on his way to the wharf, where he was told the "Tarabacca" was lying. Very quickly he found her, and stood for a few moments looking at the smart vessel which was berthed immediately alongside. She was a rakish, dissipated-looking craft, gaily painted blue and white, and flew an ensign which he had never seen before. It was a red wheel on white ground, and probably was the totem of the Indiana Republic. The yacht herself was three hundred tons, Lloyd's measurement, schooner-rigged fore and aft, with twin screws. Kind was a landsman, but guessed that this graceful, piratical-looking craft could slip along at a surprising speed, when she wanted to show a pair of clean heels. There was more of the blockade-runner than the cargo boat about her.

Nor did the crew inspire Kind with confidence, as they were as dark and villainous a set of ruffians as ever shipped along with Captain Kidd. Most of them were mixed Spanish-Indian blood, and wore silver earrings and picturesque garbs, with the inevitable sheath-knife belted at the back. But here and there the Cheap-jack saw fair-haired Englishman, and also he espied a red-haired Scotchman, who was certainly the engineer, since he came along with an oil-can in his hand. Finally Kind caught sight of a small motor-launch, and wondered if it had been used to take a portion of this pirate crew down the river, to within kidnapping distance of the "Marsh Inn."

However, he did not take long to conclude his examination, and began a swift patter as he displayed his goods. The pirates crowded to the taffrail, and grinned as his saucy words poured out. They apparently did not understand what he was saying, but the gay tints of his goods attracted them, and he was invited, in dumb show, on board. Here he shortly arrived and spread out his pack, keeping an eye meanwhile on everything that was going on. The crew examined beads and gaudy scarfs and cheap jewellery, and suchlike things, while Kind made his observations. There didn't seem to be much chance of getting information from these men, seeing that they were ignorant of English, and in desperation. Kind hit on an expedient to force his way into the state-room in order to get speech with the lady of the motor car, always provided she was on board. To learn her whereabouts he addressed an English sailor, who was lounging on the bridge overhead.

"Hi!" cried Kind, giving his hat a cock, "Is there a lady on this here ship?"

"What do you want with her?" growled the man, removing his pipe.

"I've got goods to sell."

"She don't want rubbish like that, mate."

"Rubbish be--blessed," cried the Cheap-jack, resolved to make a row, and draw the lady from her shell,--now that he knew she was on board,--rather than lose his chance. "You come down and I'll show you if this is rubbish."

The sailor leaned over the iron railing of the bridge, and jeered.

"You go to--Kingdom come," said he, not using those precise words, "give me any of yer lip, and I'll chuck you into the water."

Before he ended, Kind, active as a cat, was swarming up the steps, and the astonished sailor found himself shortly grappling with an exceedingly active opponent. It was a rash thing to do, as Kind did not know the strength of his antagonist, and moreover ran a chance of being imprisoned for starting trouble. All the same, he ran the risk, and swung and swayed with the now enraged mariner, while the swarthy crew hooted and yelled, and stole all the articles they could find in the pack. As Kind guessed, the noise brought out a man in authority, and also the tall, dark lady who had insulted Browne.

"What's all this?" inquired the officer, looking up at the struggling men.

Kind heard the voice, and saw the lady. With an effort he flung his antagonist on the deck, and leaped like a kangaroo from the bridge down on to the lower deck. The fall was a dangerous one, but Kind managed to alight, like a cat, on his feet and almost beside the lady. Scrambling up he began to explain.

"I came along to see this lady," he said, taking off his hat, and gasping for breath, "and my civil inquiry only met with sauce. I was teaching that pirate there some manners."

"Here, get on, you swab," shouted the officer, advancing.

Sweetlips, whose eyes were on all sides, saw that the sailors were stealing his property, and bounded for his pack. He arrived just in time to knock over a

man, who was seizing the red and yellow shawl which was his passport to an interview with the lady. With this in his hand he ran back, dodging the enraged half-caste he had bowled over.

"Miss,--ma'am," he gasped, flourishing the shawl in the eyes of the lady, "I want to see you,--I've come from Desleigh,--I've----"

The lady interrupted to rattle off a speech to the officer in Spanish, whereupon that gentleman knocked down the half caste, who had drawn his knife and was making for Kind.

"Come here with me," said the lady in English, and swept into the cabin, followed by the Cheap-jack, who did not at all like the looks of his adversary. He had secured his purpose, but at the risk of being knifed when he came ashore.

"Now then," said the lady in excellent English, "have you a message for me?"

"No, ma'am, but I found some of your property, and came to return--"

"My property. What do you mean?"

Kind twisted the gaudy shawl in his hands, and pointed out the name on the border.

"It's the name of your boat, ma'am," said he with pretended humility, "so I thought that it belonged to you."

The woman did not reply at once, but fixed a pair of dark imperious eyes on him, as though she would read what was behind his speech. But the Cheap-jack was not going to be hypnotised by anyone, and let his eyes wander round a spacious and luxuriously furnished cabin.

This unknown lady was evidently rich, for there were evidences of wealth on all sides. The walls of grained wood were panelled with pictures between the port-holes, the doors of the various berths were draped voluminously with rich eastern stuffs; the floor was covered with a carpet of royal colours, and the furniture was upholstered in gaily-tinted silks. The whole was a blaze of

colour, as vividly-hued as a rainbow.

Nor was the lady in her royal beauty unworthy of the place. She was tall, slim, stately, and bore herself in an imperial manner. Her skin was of a deep-olive, and her eyes were dark, large and liquid. What with her beautifully-shaped hands and feet, her haughty face, and refined features, Kind, accustomed to sum up people, guessed that she was a lady of rank, although of what position he could not guess. But as his eyes returned to her lovely face, and he saw the piercing gaze of her eyes, and how she tried to dominate him, he saw that it would be necessary to be on his guard. Again he avoided her intense gaze and glanced ostentatiously at the opposite wall, against which stood a small ebony table, fretted with gold. On this rested several photographs in silver frames. With a start Kind recognised the most prominent one as that of Captain Kyles. The lady saw his start and her eyes followed his.

"Why do you start?" she asked, sharply.

"I saw that gentleman at the inquest at Desleigh," he answered, feeling his way, for he could not quite understand the situation.

"And you saw me there also?" she asked, quickly. "Yes, Madame,--I mean,--yes, ma'am."

"I am neither French nor English. My name is Donna Maria Guzman. You can address me as Señora. Why have you come here?"

"To restore this," replied Kind, displaying the shawl.

"Where did you find it?"

The Cheap-jack thought that it was necessary to lie. If Armour had been abducted by her sailors, it was not likely that she would admit such a breach of the law.

"I picked it up on the road to Desleigh station," said he glibly.

"Ah, yes," she replied, with an air of relief, "I fancy it must have dropped

from my motor car, when I was at the inquest."

So she was lying also. Kind hesitated about speaking further, as he did not quite know what to say. He wished to ask her why she had come to the inquest, and why she had permitted her sailors to abduct Armour. She saved him the trouble of asking the questions by answering at least one of them.

"I went to Desleigh," she said, and Kind thought that the speech was somewhat unnecessary, "to see if the murderer of Sir Simon Tedder would be found."

"Why, ma'am--I mean, Señora?"

"Sir Simon was doing business with me in connection with the Republic of Indiana, through--" she glanced at the portrait.

"Through Captain Kyles?" ventured Sweetlips bluntly.

"What do you know of him?" she questioned, with some asperity.

"I saw him at the inquest."

"He was there by my request. This death of Sir Simon has thrown all my business into confusion. You seem to be a sharp fellow, and I am obliged to you for returning the shawl. It belongs to the ship and was marked to prevent its being lost; these shawls are of Indian manufacture and are somewhat expensive. My maid marked it."

Again Kind wondered why she should make unnecessary explanations to him, seeing that she thought he was merely a hawker, and could not possibly guess that he was employed in detective business. She saw something of his wonderment in his face.

"I daresay you are surprised at my telling you all this?" she said quickly.

"Well, ma'am, I don't see why you should tell me your private business, as I am only a poor cove as gets his living hard."

Señora Guzman sat down, and resting her cheek on her hand, looked at him

thoughtfully.

"You seem to be a sharp fellow," she said again, "and as you have come here rather opportunely, I wish to make use of you."

"Yes, ma'am--I mean Señora."

"I'll pay you well," she continued, "on condition that you hold your tongue."

"I don't talk much, ma'am."

"That's good. Well then, this death of Sir Simon's has thrown all my business into confusion. I said that before. I am the daughter of the President of the Republic of Indiana, and I have come on this boat to buy ships, as it is probable we may engage in war. Captain Kyles commands this boat, and was dealing with Sir Simon. I believe that Sir Simon was murdered by an emissary of a political party at variance with my father, the President, and----'

"Then this chap Herries is innocent," said Kind, with well-affected simplicity.

"Of course he is. I went to see if the inquest would clear his character. It did not. I am sorry for the young man, and I wish to save him if possible. Do you know where he is?"

"No, Señora. He has vanished."

"I thought you might have seen him," she muttered, with her eyes on the carpet and a look of perplexity on her face. "I am placed in a very difficult position."

"I'm only a poor cove, ma'am, and can't help you."

"Yes, you can. Find out where Mr. Herries is, and bring him to me. I will save him."

"Then you know who killed Sir Simon, ma'am?"

"No. I wish I did," she rose and stretched her arms over her head, "but that seems to be a mystery. Still, I can guess this much; that someone from

Indiana killed him. It's a political murder, so as to stop Sir Simon from supplying ships to Indiana."

"But Sir Simon was a jam manufacturer."

"He dealt in other things also. Whenever he saw that he could make money he did business. If he had lived--" she stopped and clenched her hand. "The position is very difficult."

Kind thought so also. She was frank enough with him; much franker than she need have been, especially as she had no guarantee that he would not blab all she had said to others. But her speech about Sir Simon's dealings with the Republic supplied him with a motive for the assassination. Perhaps after all it _was_ a political murder, for the emissary of the Republic, who had dropped the cigarette in Herries' room, might also smoke that especial brand. But why should Herries have been deliberately implicated in the affair? He might find out, if he served this lady's ends, since she also was bent upon saving Herries, and hanging the real culprit. If the murderer was a political adversary, she would certainly be doing a good service to her father.

"What do you wish me to do, Señora?" he asked.

"Search for the real murderer and bring Mr. Herries to me, that is, if you can find his whereabouts. I want to get at the truth of this matter, so as to explain to my father, who will certainly blame me for what has taken place."

"But why should you think that I am able to help you?" asked the Cheap-jack with open suspicion.

Donna Maria laughed.

"Oh, I am accustomed to judge men," she said in a light tone, "and your ruse to get speech with me was very clever."

Kind was taken aback.

"Do you think that I----?"

"My friend, I am perfectly certain that you quarrelled with those sailors to

bring me on deck," she responded, "and that being the case, I see that you are a man of resource. Serve me, and I pay you well. And," she added, bending towards him with a fierce look, "I do not fear your talking. If I employ you, I employ others also, and if you talk, a knife thrust will soon silence you."

"This is England, and not lawless Indiana," retorted Kind.

"All the same, you have had your warning," replied Señora Guzman in a careless tone. "Here," she took out a gold net purse, and produced from it a couple of sovereigns, "this is for bringing back the shawl. I will pay you well, if you will keep your eyes open, and find this missing man. I can do nothing until he tells me what really took place on that night."

Kind felt inclined to explain that Herries was perfectly ignorant of what had taken place, but he did not wish to let this very vehement lady know his real position, and therefore accepted her gratuity with thanks. But before withdrawing he wished to learn one thing,--was Donna Maria in love with Kyles? He believed she was from the glances she threw occasionally at the photograph. If she did love the buccaneer, did she know that he was engaged to Miss Maud Tedder? If she did not, here would be a chance of putting--as the saying is--a spoke in Captain Kyles' wheel. Sweetlips did not doubt but what Captain Kyles had something to do with the crime, although to be sure, his doubts were founded upon uncertain evidence. He put the matter to an immediate test.

"Will I report to Captain Kyles, Señora?" he asked, with simplicity.

"No. Certainly not. Why should you report to Captain Kyles?" she asked quickly, and with sudden suspicion.

"Well, ma'am, since he is in command of this----"

"He is the captain, but the political business of Indiana is in my hands," said she haughtily, "you know what you have to do, go and do it. But if you talk,--" she looked so significantly at him that Kind, although not over-imaginative, shivered. It was ill-work dealing with this tiger-cat. At first sight, it seemed as though she had trusted a man unknown to her, very rashly, but now that he saw she was prepared to stick at nothing, to secure any

necessary silence, he became aware that there was method in her rashness. All the same he had not yet learned if she loved Kyles, and ventured again to feel his way.

"Well, Señora, I daresay the Captain will be glad enough, not to be bothered with me while he's better employed."

"What do you mean?" asked Donna Maria, abruptly, and her eyes narrowed like those of a cat.

"There was a cove at Desleigh," went on Kind, watching her face, "a chap as is a doctor and a friend of Mr. Herries at that, Dr. Browne he is, and I did hear him say that the dead man's daughter is engaged to marry----"

The lady flew across the room, and grasped Kind's arm fiercely.

"Not to--to----" she could not proceed.

"To Captain Kyles, ma'am."

"It's a lie," she muttered, and her face went white, while her lips tightened and her eyes flashed fire. "Do you mean to say that anyone--anyone--" she clasped her throat as though she were choking, "that anyone dares to--to report this--this engagement?"

"Dr. Browne says Miss Tedder is to marry the Captain, Señora."

Donna Maria's hands clenched themselves, and she spoke more to herself than to her companion.

"That would account for--for--but no. He would not be such a villain. Besides, there's Manco Capac's treasure, and he loves me,--I am certain he loves me. The treasure will tempt him, and--" here she became aware that Kind was listening eagerly, and stopped abruptly to ask a question. "Will Miss Tedder be rich?" she demanded, calming herself with difficulty.

"Yes," replied Kind promptly, and lying advisedly, "she inherits fifty thousand a year from her father."

Señora Guzman passed a lace handkerchief across her mouth.

"It's a great deal of money. She is pretty too,--a doll though; not like----" she glanced in the near mirror at her splendid face, and drew herself up proudly. "Oh," she flung the handkerchief across the room, "it's impossible,--quite impossible. Here," she turned on him energetically, "you are one who wanders about the country. I saw you at the inquest and was told that you so wandered. That is why I have been so frank. You may chance on Mr. Herries, bring him to me!"

"But why--why----?"

"If I find you trustworthy I will explain. Now go." Kind went, and was glad to go, for his head was whirling.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

Sweetlips Kind returned to Desleigh with his head whirling. He could not quite understand Señora Guzman; and Herries, when the conversation was reported to him, likewise expressed his inability to comprehend. The two men talked the matter over earnestly, and tried to arrive at some conclusion, but the whole matter was so enigmatical that they could decide upon no course. Finally they concluded that, notwithstanding the danger of the neighbourhood to Herries, it would be best to wait for a few days, and see what action Donna Maria intended to take.

"There's nothing like waiting," said Sweetlips, "if this Spanish lady,--or rather this Mexican, as I believe she's a Creole,--if she has anything to do with the murder, it is on account of Captain Kyles, and should she think him false to her, which he certainly is, she will make trouble."

"Do you believe that she sent the sailors to kidnap Armour?" asked Herries, who was sorely puzzled, and could see no light.

"Of course she did, since she lied about the shawl. But they may have been sent to kidnap a political person who was menacing Sir Simon and made a mistake in collaring the policeman."

"But his uniform----"

"Pooh. The night was dark and foggy, Mr. Herries, and Armour wore a great coat, which did not look very official. Besides, these greasers--foreigners, remember--wouldn't know a policeman from a civilian, let alone the fact that they may have thought the political person might have disguised himself to get at his prey."

"Why do you say 'his prey?'"

"Because I am inclined to believe that the murder is a political one, after all. Sir Simon evidently was mixing himself up with the politics of the Indiana Republic to make money over the sale of ships. The man he expected was an emissary of the Republic, who got in at the window----"

"How would he know the particular window?"

"You forget the signal of the red handkerchief, Mr. Herries. With a candle behind it, that would show very plainly. Well, then, this political person got into the bedroom and killed Sir Simon. Afterwards he went out in the morning disguised as his victim."

"Why did he wait until daylight, and run such a risk."

"Because he would have run a bigger risk by leaving immediately he had killed his man. The sailors from the 'Tarabacca' were outside, and if he had

fallen into their hands he might have been killed himself. Señora Guzman is not a woman to stick at a trifle."

"Armour, whom they thought was their man, was not killed."

"Quite so, but probably they learned their mistake, and so left the wrong man in the ditch. Then perhaps they returned to watch the inn, hoping that the real man might come out. He evidently saw them waiting, and so remained until he could escape in the morning."

Herries fingered his chin.

"All very feasible," said he wearily, "but why should I have been implicated?"

"Ah! We'll never learn that until we chance upon the assassin."

"And how will we find him?"

"Ah!" Kind shook his head. "You have me there. Señora Guzman knows."

"Are you sure?" demanded Herries, sitting up.

"As sure as anyone can be with so puzzling a woman. Señora Guzman must certainly know the members of the political party opposed to her father. One or more of those members may have come to England to thwart her mission of buying battle-ships, and so may have tampered with Sir Simon. Such a person this lady may know, and that was why she attended the inquest."

"Then why will she not accuse the right man and save me?"

"She will do so, I really believe, if you will go to her."

Herries shivered.

"No," he said quickly, "I can't trust her. She might give me up to the police."

"Well, she might and she might not. I don't pretend to understand. But the best thing to do will be to wait developments here. Kyles is still at 'Moated

Hall' with Miss Tedder----"

"Yes, and they know the truth about the will by this time."

"Hum," murmured Kind, caressing his chin, "I expect so, if the funeral has taken place. Sir Simon was to be buried to-day, I fancy."

"Will you make sure, and learn what has taken place? Get Browne to see Ritson."

Kind nodded.

"I'll go to Tarhaven to-morrow. Then Elspeth is at Armour's, and can remain there for a time. As soon as we know what Señora Guzman intends to do, we can go to Colchester in this here caravan, and you'll be safe. Trent can hunt about as he likes. He'll never think of looking here for you."

"Ah," said Herries, glancing towards the bed, where Mrs. Kind was placidly sleeping, "that reminds me. Elspeth brought me a local Tarhaven newspaper," he produced it from his pocket. "See," he indicated an advertisement, "read that."

Kind did so. It was a paragraph offering a reward of fifty pounds for the discovery of Michael Gowrie, and a full description of his somewhat noticeable personality was given. If found, he was to be brought to the Tarhaven Police Station.

"Ha!" said Kind, laying the paper aside, "Trent is not such a fool as I expected. He knows that Gowrie, who slept in the tap-room, may be able to give evidence as to what took place on that night."

"Why,--if he slept in the tap-room, and the crime took place up the stairs? You know how well-built the walls of the inn are. Any row overhead would not be overheard by a sleeping man."

"That is, if Mr. Gowrie was sleeping," said Kind dryly. "That old cove's a blackguard, and knows more than we think. Didn't you miss some money from your pockets?"

"Yes, but Gowrie----"

"Took it. Of course he did. He knew that you had money, and that you would be sound asleep, worn out with your tramp. He, therefore, when he fancied you were in deep slumber, must have gone up the stairs and turned out your pockets. If he did so, he might have overheard a noise or voices in Sir Simon's room. I know enough of Gowrie to be sure that he would listen. What he overheard may have warned him to make himself scarce. At any rate Trent is well-advised to search for him. I never knew that Trent had so much sense."

Here the conversation ended for the time being. Herries remained in his hiding-place, and Kind strolled round the neighbourhood selling goods, and keeping his eyes open. Armour, contrary to his expectation, was not dismissed, and Elspeth stopped with him and his wife, paying visits ostensibly to Mrs. Kind, but really to Herries, at the caravan. The lovers grew fonder of one another every day, and Elspeth urged Herries to leave the neighbourhood, lest he should be captured. But this he would not do, as he wanted to find out how Maud Tedder took the news that she had been disinherited, and also he desired to learn what difference her disinheriting would make to Kyles' affections. If he was after the money solely, he would probably break the engagement, and return to Señora Guzman, and the "Tarabacca." If, however, he really loved the girl, he would undoubtedly try and get Herries hanged in order that she should get the fortune. But Kind could learn nothing, as after the funeral and the reading of the will, Ritson had gone to Paris for a few days, and Miss Tedder went up to London, together with Mrs. Mountford and the Captain. Without doubt they had gone to see if the will would "hold water," as the saying is, and were taking counsel's opinion on the matter. At least that was Sweetlips' surmise.

The "Marsh Inn" had settled down to its old ways. Mrs. Narby procured a slip of a girl in place of Elspeth, and treated her just as badly. Once or twice she met with her former slave in the village and scowled viciously, but she neither spoke to her, nor made any assault, which Elspeth quite expected her to do, seeing what a virago the landlady was. Perhaps the fact that Elspeth boarded at Armour's had to do with Mrs. Narby's meekness, for the woman and her husband were highly suspicious characters, and were suspected by

more than one person of smuggling goods. At the back of the inn was a waterway, known as the Red Creek, from the colour of the mud on its shores, and here, it was reported, boats used to come up from the river laden with contraband goods. Armour had often watched but as yet had not been able to implicate Mr. and Mrs. Narby in wrongdoing. All the same, the couple kept quiet, and did not cross the policeman's path lest ill should come of their doing so. It was certain, therefore, that Mrs. Narby's avoidance of Elspeth, lay in the fact that she was under Armour's roof. And she was very glad of the refuge.

Meanwhile Señora Guzman made no move either to see Sweetlips, or to seek out the political assassin. Perhaps she was waiting until such time as Kind would produce Herries, and then, when the accused man was in her presence, she might have made up her mind to speak out. Several times, the two men discussed the advisability of trusting the Mexican lady, but Elspeth always insisted that her lover should remain where he was until her father should be found.

The girl had got it into her head that Mr. Gowrie would be able to produce evidence likely to save Herries from the scaffold, and was certain that her father would appear before long. But although she had written twice or thrice to the address he had given her in London, the old man never replied, and never appeared. It would really seem, as Kind sometimes thought, that the old scamp was himself the guilty party, and had murdered Sir Simon for the sake of the money.

The papers had been full of the crime, but now that Sir Simon was safely buried, and no trace could be found of his assassin, as Herries was believed to be, the interest in the case died away to a great extent. It was revived somewhat by the advertisements about Michael Gowrie, for Trent, not finding the local papers of sufficiently wide circulation, had placed notices of the reward in the London journals. Every paper in the metropolis seemed to contain an inquiry for Michael Gowrie, so that Herries began to think that it was not so much Trent who was seeking for the man, as Maud Tedder, guided by the advice of Captain Kyles. These two wanted the money and by the will, if Herries died, the girl would inherit. It was therefore probable, that, thinking Gowrie would be able to substantiate the guilt of Herries, Miss

Tedder had offered a reward likely to bring the old man on the scene. But as the days went by, and no Gowrie appeared, it seemed as though the truth would never be made manifest by reason of the absence of the chief witness. And Herries was growing very weary of his confinement.

One evening, a couple of weeks after the burial of Sir Simon Tedder, when the weather was still damp and dreary, Kind suggested for the hundredth time the advisability, as he put it, of Herries facing the music; in other words, he really thought that the young man should give himself up. Mrs. Kind had now quite recovered, and had gone to the "Marsh Inn" to do some sewing for Mrs. Narby. The accused man was seated in the gap of the hiding-place, ready to lie down and be covered up, as soon as any suspicious knock came to the door. Kind himself, smoking a short clay pipe, guarded the door, and Elspeth, in cloak and hat, sat on the bed. The girl looked ever so much better, in spite of her anxiety, as the improved food she was enjoying at Mrs. Armour's, and her freedom from being struck and knocked about, enabled her to put on flesh. She was really becoming rarely beautiful, and no doubt the love which she had gained was helping her to become more of a woman and less of a drudge. She looked very different to the pale-faced, miserable creature whom Herries had helped on that memorable evening, when he had first set foot in that unlucky hotel.

"The case stands this way," said Kind, after a pause, and using his little finger as a stopper. "We can't do anything as matters are now. I have seen Ritson, and he says so."

"Sweetlips, surely you have not told the lawyer that Angus is here?"

"Not such a fool, my dear. But Ritson returned from Paris to-day, and I saw him by chance in the street. We went to his office, and I asked him, on, Dr. Browne's behalf, as Mr. Herries' friend, mind you, how matters stood."

"Well?" asked Herries anxiously.

"Well!" echoed the Cheap-jack, "he said that Miss Tedder was mad to find that she had been disinherited, and was still in London with Mrs. Mountford and the Captain, seeing if the will could be upset."

"Has she any money?" demanded Elspeth. "Oh, yes. Her father left her one thousand a year to get along on."

"And she is using that to ruin me," said Herries bitterly.

"You can't blame her," retorted Kind quickly, "one thousand a year is a drop from fifty thousand. However, she and her lover and Mrs. Mountford are in London, so that disposes of them for the present. Ritson is holding the property, until such time as Herries turns up to claim it."

"I can't claim it until I learn who killed my uncle."

"Quite so, and you can learn that from Señora Guzman."

"Is she still at Pierside?"

"Of course. I sneaked along there the other day and learned that the 'Tarabacca' was still alongside the wharf. I didn't go down to the docks as I thought that greaser I knocked down might knife me. Oh, she's there, right enough, and keeps on board most of the time."

"I wonder she doesn't go to London to see Captain Kyles."

"I wonder also, seeing that she believes, as is really the case, that Kyles is engaged to Miss Tedder. But perhaps she's got something up her sleeve."

"What can it be?" mused Elspeth.

"Well," said Kind, after a pause, "I really think she is waiting until I bring Herries to her. You see," she went on, without heeding the exclamation of the girl, "she wants to have a yarn with Herries to see how she stands."

"In what way?" asked Herries, puzzled.

"Well," drawled Kind, again filling his pipe, "if Señora Guzman knew that you get the money if the real assassin of Sir Simon is discovered, she would make it her business to tell who he is, because in that way she would keep Miss Tedder out of the money, and Kyles, whom she loves, from marrying Miss Tedder. So, if you'll take my advice, Mr. Herries, you'll slip along to

Pierside to-morrow and see this lady. It's to her interest not to split on you."

"It sounds like it I confess."

"No, no," said Elspeth, getting off the bed and looking very anxious, "it would be wrong to tempt Providence in that way. Better wait until my father appears. He must have heard something when he was sleeping in the tap-room, and perhaps he'll know the truth."

"Señora Guzman knows the truth also, and she is at hand, while your father isn't," retorted the Cheap-jack.

"Are you sure she knows the truth?"

"Certain," replied Kind positively, "she hinted to me that the murder was a political one, and if that is the case, which, mind you, I am inclined to believe, she will probably know the assassin. Her father occupies a difficult position as President of that Republic."

"Hold on," said Herries quickly, "I found out something about the Indiana Republic from some of those old newspapers which your wife gave me. Have you read them?"

"No. Since giving up thief-catching I have given up reading the newspapers, which don't interest me. Rachel doesn't read them either. But we buy up old newspapers to tie up the goods in, and sell them also as waste paper. Well?"

"Well, then, Mrs. Kind gave me a few dozen of those old papers to wile away the time. I found some of a few months ago--nine or ten months to be exact--which gave an account of a revolution in Indiana. President Guzman was deposed, and fled with his daughter and Captain Kyles, whom, it seems, commanded the Navy."

"Humph," said Kind, "in that case, the yarn of buying these war-ships is all rubbish."

"No. I don't see that. The President and his daughter may procured money, and have come to get ships under the advice of Captain Kyles, so as to

replace the President over the Republic."

"Might be,--the yacht certainly looked like money. But from what you say I should think that Kyles will marry Miss Tedder. It's better to get fifty thousand a year in England, than marry the daughter of a deposed ruler. If Guzman were still the President, I should say his daughter would get the Captain; but as matters stand, I think Kyles is making for the Tedder cash, and he'll marry the girl."

"He won't get the money, however," said Elspeth quickly.

"He will, unless Mr. Herries joins forces with Señora Guzman, and learns the truth. It's all politics, and she alone can put us on the track of the real assassin. See her, Mr. Herries--and at once."

"No, no, wait till my father comes," cried Elspeth. At that moment, by one of those odd coincidences, which often occur in life, a trembling knock came to the door. In a moment Herries was lying full length, and Elspeth had replaced the boards. While she put a chair over the hiding-place and sat down shaking with nervous fear, Kind spoke gruffly through the door.

"Who's there?" demanded the Cheap-jack.

"Eh, laddie, lat me come ben," whimpered a voice, quaveringly.

"My father," cried Elspeth, jumping up.

Kind opened the door exultingly.

"Enter, Mr. Gowrie," said he jubilantly, "you're just in time."

CHAPTER XV

A FRIEND IN NEED

Elsbeth sprang forward to welcome her father. As she had confessed once or twice to Herries, she had no great love for him, since he had not treated her as he should have done. All the same he was her father, and the sole relation she had in the world, so, when she beheld him stagger into the caravan, looking more or less a wreck, all the woman's heart of her went out to the old reprobate. On his side also, Gowrie seemed glad to meet his deserted child, and patted her hand, as he sank into the chair vacated by Kind.

Neither the Cheap-jack, nor the girl thought of telling the new-corner that Herries was stretched at full length under his gouty feet, as they feared lest the greed of money should lead Mr. Gowrie into betraying the young man. Herries likewise, recognising the voice, and hearing Kind's boisterous welcome, knew that the long-sought-for witness was seated overhead, but he also declined to trust himself to so slippery a gentleman. He therefore lay still and stiff, listening to the conversation, anxious only to hear if his former tutor could throw light on the subject of the murder.

"Weel, weel," muttered Gowrie, while his daughter and Kind stared at him in silence, "it's a braw welcome ye've given the auld mon. Mae ain flesh an' bluid's kinder nor the warld I'm thenking. Aye, aye, and there'll be whusky aboot maybe."

Sweetlips, seeing that the old creature was more or less exhausted, poured him out a glass of Glenlivet, and while Gowrie smacked his lips over the unaccustomed luxury,--for that it was, since he appeared to be as poor as the proverbial church mouse,--Elsbeth stared at the parent she was ordered to love, honour and obey. He did not seem to be the sort of father to whom the text applied. His hand shook, as he sipped the strong drink, and his white head quivered as though he had the palsy. The fringe of silvery hair round his bald head gave him a patriarchal appearance, and his beard was one Aaron might have envied, so long and venerable had it grown. His clothes were still dirty and disreputable, and his face was still inflamed with drink. On the

whole the Rev. Michael Gowrie looked like a man with whom the world had gone badly, and Elspeth shuddered, when she reflected that this wreck had the right to call her his daughter. However, she was sorry for him, so old and weak did he look, and tended to him silently.

"Will you have some food?"

"Nae, nae, my lassie. It's the gude barley-bree that's needed. A bite an hoor or twa later, wud dae me nae haim, I'm theenking, but we'll dae wi' the whusky at preesent. Aye, aye, this is a hoose o' refuge, Elspeth. Ye mauna turn yer pur auld faither oot into the confleect o' the elements. Ice, snaw, an' rain, all praisin' Providence, forebye, it's but rain, ye ken."

"Where do you come from?" asked Kind impatiently, as he had no patience with these maunderings.

"Ye may weel ask that. I've been walking up an' doon the arth like Satan in Holy Writ, but wi' less success, I'm theenking. Nae siller in ma pocket, and a price,--as ye may say,--on the heid o' me."

"You know that you are wanted then," said Elspeth with eagerness.

"Aye, but no for daeing wrang, dear. Losh me," he chuckled, being revived by the drink, "there's fame for ye, me being asked for in a' the papers o' the three kingdoms.

"How is it you never turned up before?" asked Kind.

"Weel!" said Gowrie, winking one eye and holding out his glass to be replenished, "I wisnae very sure it wud be wise tae gang tae those in authority. The reward wudnae gang into ma pockets. I lay low in Great Babylon, the which ye ken is London, and got ma bite an sup fra the few shullings I got----"

"From Mr. Herries' pockets," finished Elspeth. "Father, you acted shamefully, robbing Angus."

"Angus is it," snapped the old man, ignoring the accusation, "and for why dae

ye, ma ain child, ca' him Angus?"

"That's my business," retorted the girl, flushing. Gowrie watched her cunningly.

"Aye, aye, young life and young luve, ma dearie. Weel, and shall nae a wumon depart fra her faither and be one wi' her husband an'----"

"I never said that!" cried the girl angrily.

"Hoots, lassie, I'm nae blind, foreby yon limmer at the inn tauld me ye'd taken a gait o' yer own. An' me," cried Gowrie, raising his voice in indignation, "coming tae the inn for a bite and a sup, wi' nae siller tae pay, believing my ain child wud wark off the bill."

"She's had enough of that," said Kind roughly, "she was quite right to leave. She is stopping with Armour the policeman, and goes with me when we leave this place."

"And wi' Herries?"

"We don't know where he is," said Kind smartly, seeing that Elspeth hesitated to tell the white fib.

"An' hoo, then, can ye luve him?" demanded Gowrie cunningly.

"I loved him when he slept at the inn," returned the girl, "he helped with the bucket; the first person who was ever kind to me."

"Eh, Romeo and Juliet, o' Wully Shakespeare," chuckled Gowrie, "the bard wisnae sae far wrang in his gab o' luve at first sight. Wull yon lad marry ye, Elspeth, dae ye theenk?"

"What makes you think that we are engaged?" she asked evasively.

"My lassie," said the old man chuckling, "I ken the waiys o' wumon, none better. In the Patmos in the weelderness, where I wis hiding, I read the papers, and saw aboot yon escape. Thinks I, Elspeth hes mair to do wi' this nor meets the eye. Didnae I see the blink of yer een when Herries wis

chatting in the tap-room. He couldnae ha' escaped by himsel. Nae, nae, where there's a mon, there a wumon, sae I joost pit twa and twa together. Aye, he's yer mon, lassie."

Elsbeth glanced at Kind, and he at her. The old man had guessed all that had taken place by shrewd observation, and they dreaded lest this preternatural cunning (for so it seemed) should lead him to guess that Herries was quaking under his feet. But his next observation reassured them in some measure.

"I'm ganging tae save the lad," said Gowrie, finishing his glass.

"What?" cried his daughter, and Herries suppressed a gasp with difficulty. The remark was like a gleam of light in a clouded heaven.

"Aye," pursued Gowrie, leisurely, "ye taunt me, yer ain faither, wi' taking a few bit shullings fra the laddie's pocket. It wis the best thing that happened tae him, that same, for by daeing what I did, I can save the lad. And who's he, my ain pupil, to grudge his auld tutor a bit of siller?"

Kind glanced nervously at the floor. He knew that Herries was overhearing every word the old reprobate uttered, and dreaded lest he should reveal himself prematurely. But Herries held his peace until he learned more of Mr. Gowrie's intentions. He did not trust him an inch until he could see how the old man proposed to benefit by saving him.

Elsbeth, knowing her father of old, had similar thoughts in her brain, and spoke her mind pretty freely. What the reprobate had guessed she confessed, thinking, that if he knew Herries was her lover, he would be more inclined to save him. Sweetlips remained silent, as he was anxious to let Gowrie talk, so as to learn exactly what he had up his sleeve.

"Father," said the girl, laying her hands on Gowrie's shoulders, "can you really save Angus?"

"Yes," said the reverend gentleman, in his best English, "if he will be guided by me."

"And what do you expect to get out of this?"

"Ma ain child," said the patriarch, relapsing into Scotch, "dae ye nae theenk but what a mon micht dae good wi'out conseedering himsel'?"

"You wouldn't," rejoined Elspeth curtly.

Gowrie wiped a tear from his inflamed eye with a ragged handkerchief, and raised his face to heaven.

"Ma ain child," said he in a pathetic tone, "Aye, it's a Lear I am, nae less."

"Look here, father," said Elspeth, placing her hands on her hips and speaking almost as sourly as Mrs. Narby, whose favourite attitude this was. "It's no use your talking like this. You took me from that excellent school, where my godfather was educating me, and turned me into Mrs. Narby's drudge, just that you might have a place to go to, in the 'Marsh Inn,' without paying. I was a child when you last saw me, and did what I was told. But love, the love of a good man, has changed me into a woman. I have become engaged to Angus, and I helped him to escape. He's far away from here, and in a place where you won't find him. I have seen him several times since he got away from the inn, and we are engaged to be married."

"It warrums ma hairt tae hear ye say so, lassie," mumbled Gowrie, in a thankful voice. "Aye, aye, ye'll be able tae gie yer auld faither a warrum seat by the hearth."

"We haven't got a hearth," said Elspeth bluntly.

"Aye, but ye'll hae a braw ane, I doot not," said Gowrie cunningly, and watched the effect of his remark out of the corner of his wicked old eye.

It was Kind who replied, as he was beginning to have an inkling of why Mr. Gowrie had put in so opportune an appearance.

"I don't know if you guessed that Elspeth had a hand in Mr. Herries' escape," said he, looking steadily at his visitor, "but you came down here to see if you could force her to become engaged to Mr. Herries."

"There's nae force required," chuckled Gowrie.

"You didn't know that. God has brought these two unlucky people together, I verily believe, so that they may be happy in the long run. You guessed,--at least I can't think how you could know in any way,--you guessed that Elspeth saved Mr. Herries from immediate arrest, and probably, as you say, you saw, when Herries came to the inn that Elspeth liked him--"

"Loved him--loved him. Dinna use weak worrds."

"Well then, loved him. You thought to come here and see if Elspeth would marry him, and----"

"I went to the inn," cried Gowrie, speaking English, and in a most indignant manner. "Mrs. Narby promised to give me house-room always, so long as Elspeth worked for her. And I found that Elspeth had insulted that most excellent lady, and I was turned out of my Patmos,--my refuge in the wilderness. Mrs. Narby sent me here, to your house on wheels, saying she was here."

"Well then, I am here. What do you want?"

"Dae ye ken I'm yer faither?" demanded Gowrie wrathfully.

"Only too well," she replied bitterly, "had you not been my father, I should never have slaved for Mrs. Narby. But I agree with Sweetlips, you came here with some scheme in your head. What is it?"

"I know," said Sweetlips, interposing contemptuously. "He intended to get you to find Herries, and ask him to marry you out of gratitude."

"I should never have done that," cried the girl flushing.

"There is no need to, as things have turned out," retorted Kind bluntly, "but your father here wants you to marry Mr. Herries."

"Aye, aye," mumbled Gowrie, "I'm gey auld, and ma child,--weeckedly as she talks to her puir auld faither, must nae be left wi'oot a protector, when I'm in ma lang hame, the which is the grave."

"You have no idea of going to your long home for years," said Kind, coolly.

"You lay low and did not come forward to save Mr. Herries until you saw that it would be to your advantage."

"As how?" asked Gowrie politely, but his face grew red.

"You saw in the newspapers that Herries inherited his uncle's money."

"On condeetions, mind ye," chuckled Gowrie.

"So that is why you have come?" asked Elspeth, angrily.

Gowrie rose to his full height, which was tall enough nearly to touch the roof of the caravan, and thrust one hand into the breast of his ragged frock-coat in quite a Napoleonic attitude.

"That," he said in his grand mellow voice, and now quite restored to his native impudence by the whisky, "that is my reason. Whether I guessed that you had assisted Herries to escape or not, matters little. I may have guessed from your betraying eyes at the inn that you had fallen in love with him at once, or I may not. Let that pass. But I am a good father, and it went to my heart to think that one of my blood should slave at a poor inn, when she should be occupying a lady's position, seeing that she,--I allude to you, Elspeth,--is a lady born and bred. I therefore said, when I saw that Herries was likely to become a millionaire, I said to myself that it would be as well to be his father-in-law. And I charge you, Elspeth, as you are my daughter, to marry this man, and keep your father in comfort in his old age. 'Honour thy father and thy mother' says the Book of books, and do not----"

This episode of the devil quoting scripture to gain his own ends was cut short by a choking laugh, which came from under Mr. Gowrie's feet. The old man jumped up, as though a bomb was about to explode, and Elspeth began to explain.

"It's the dog," she said in a hurried tone. "It's the----"

"No, no," cried Herries' voice from below, and Gowrie, whose nerves were weak with drink, jumped again. "Let me out. I'll trust him."

"Whaur the deil have ye pit the mon?" inquired Gowrie, affrightedly.

Kind shrugged his shoulders, and lifted the flooring, after he had swept Gowrie to one side. He did not think it was wise of Herries to reveal himself to so untrustworthy a personage; but the mischief had been done, and shortly Herries, red in the face from suppressed laughter, sat up in the gap, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"I couldn't help it," he gasped looking from Elspeth to Kind, and from Kind to his old tutor, "to hear that fraud talk about the Bible was too much for me."

"Ma ain laddie," cried Gowrie, not at all taken aback, and recovering the colour of his shiny skin, which had vanished in his recent alarm, "here's one who will help you."

"I know that one is here who won't betray me," said Herries rising and taking a seat, "guard the door, Kind. Elspeth, don't look so alarmed; it's to your father's advantage to hold his tongue. I should not have revealed myself, else."

"Eh," said Gowrie lifting his eyes to heaven, "ma ain pupil taks me for a Judas."

"You're quite right," said Herries dryly, "you'd sell me within the hour, if you thought you'd make money. But I am of more value to you alive than dead, or the rope would be round my neck."

"If my father did that--" gasped Elspeth, clenching her fists.

"Pooh, pooh," interrupted Kind, seeing from the brightness of Herries' eye, and the resolution of his look, that he was quite master of the situation, "let the Guv'nor speak."

"The Governor?" queried Herries, smiling.

"Yes. I see you've made up your mind to act, so there's no chance of my guiding you any further. And I'm glad of it, Guv'nor," added the Cheap-jack, heartily, "you have plenty of resolution, and only need to exercise it. Now

then, we're tiled in all right, so fire ahead and find out what this old----"

"I'm the Rev. Michael Gowrie, saving your presence," said that gentleman in an aggrieved tone.

"You are whatever pays you best," retorted Kind. "Here, have some more whisky, and answer the Guv'nor's questions straight, or I'll wring that blessed old neck of yours."

"Elspeth!"

"I agree with Sweetlips, father," said the girl with resolution. "If you don't act straightly, I'll accuse you myself of having murdered Sir Simon, even though you are my own father."

"I," gasped Gowrie turning pale, all but his nose, which everlastingly gleamed a bright crimson, "I murder----?"

"It looks like it," put in Herries, who had been watching the old trickster, "you've run your head into the noose, Mr. Gowrie."

"I'm--I'm--innocent, damn ye."

"Very good. Then explain what took place on that night."

"I'll no dae that, until I see ye marrit tae my dochter, she-deil as she has been tae her auld faither."

"But how can I marry her in my present position?"

"Eh, ye can leave yon tae me, Angus. I'll ca ye Angus, seence ye're tae be bane o' ma bane and flesh o' ma flesh, as it micht be. When I can ca' my dochter Mistress Herries, and have the promise of the pair o' ye tae gie me enough tae leeve like gentry, I'll save the life o' ye,--aye, that I wull."

"And tell us who killed Sir Simon."

"Nae," said Gowrie with real regret, "I canna dae that, for I dinna ken wha committed the weecked deed."

"That's a lie," cried Kind.

"It's the truth, sir," said Gowrie in his best English. "For all I know Herries here may have killed the man."

"You said that you could save me."

"I did, and I can," said Gowrie, rather disconcerted, "but only if you marry Elspeth."

"I don't require your command to marry her," said Herries, taking the girl in his arms. "I love your daughter with all my heart and soul, as a good true woman. I'll marry whenever I am free."

"Ye'll mairry before that," said Gowrie sharply.

"Can't you trust me?" asked Herries angrily.

"I trust nae one."

"He judges all by himself," said Kind. "Well then, tell us how the marriage can take place. You know that Mr. Herries is being searched for, and if he gets the banns put up, or procures a special license, he will be arrested."

"I know that," snapped Gowrie with a leer, "and I want him to be arrested."

"What!" cried Elspeth, placing herself before her father with a look of dismay, "would you betray him?"

"No, no," said Herries, beginning to see the drift of the old man's plot, "Mr. Gowrie wants to earn the five hundred pounds reward from my cousin."

"Aye, I do that, and save you from being hanged also."

"I don't understand," said Elspeth in bewilderment.

"I do," said Kind, quickly, for he also saw what was meant. "I'll take Mr. Herries to some less dangerous neighbourhood, where he will not be arrested so immediately,--say to some midland town, where the news of the murder

will scarcely have penetrated. Mr. Herries' name will not be so known there, and then I'll get a special license, and you can marry him, Elspeth."

"That's it--that's it," cried Gowrie exultingly. "Meanwhile I go to Miss Tedder and say that the marriage will take place on a certain day in a certain town. She'll tell the police, and you, Angus, will be arrested. I'll thus get the reward, which we'll employ to hunt down the true assassin, and place you in command of the fifty thousand a year," he smacked his lips.

"But Angus may be hanged," cried Elspeth terrified, and clinging to her lover.

"Lassie," said Gowrie solemnly, "not a hair of the head of him will be hurt. I can exonerate him entirely."

"But how. I don't see----"

"Neither do I," said Herries, looking hard at Gowrie. "All the same, I'll trust my future father-in-law, as I am quite sure that he has more use for fifty thousand a year than for five hundred all told." The reprobate rubbed his dirty hands together and chuckled.

"I'll hae some mair o' the Glenlivet," said he gaily. "Aye, ye neednae stint pouring oot the gude drink. This is a joyful occasion. I've gotten mae dochter a gude doonsettin', and wull save a desarving laddie fra the rope o' doom, deil tak' them as wove the same."

"Will you trust him?" asked Kind aside to Herries, while Gowrie sipped his whisky joyously.

"Yes," answered Herries, in the same tone. "He's a clever old sinner, and has some scheme in his head whereby to save me. The money I'll inherit will make it worth his while. Gowrie," he said, raising his voice, "if you pull me through I'll settle one thousand a year on you. Honour bright."

"I'll dae it--I'll dae it," the old gentleman smacked his leg. "Losh me, there's a power of drink in a thoosand a year. Lave it tae me, laddie, and I'll be a faither tae ye. Bless ye, mae bairns, hoo happy ye mak me auld hairt."

"Oh, take him away," cried Herries, disgusted with the man.

"No, no," said Kind imperatively, "when he goes it will be with Elspeth. If he's alone he may get drinking and let out that you are here."

"Nae when a thoosand a year's tae be got," said Gowrie joyously, and in his glee began to sing a Scotch ballad in a cracked voice--

"The day may daw, the cock may craw,
But aye we'll taste the barley bree.'

"Aye, Robbie Burns, Robbie Burns, weel did ye ken the joys o' life."

CHAPTER XVI

MR. GOWRIE'S PLOTTING

"Have you found him; have you really, really found him?"

"Aye! He's rin tae earth like a tod, young leddy."

"Oh!" Maud Tedder clapped her hands, and a bright light came into her tired-looking eyes. "I'm so glad--I'm so delighted. Now he's caught the law will hang him for killing poor pa, and I'll--" she was about to add that she would inherit the money, but thought it wiser not to reveal her private business too minutely, and ended differently, "I'll have done my duty," said Maud Tedder virtuously.

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," boomed Mrs. Mountford.

The three, two ladies and one gentleman, were seated in the drawing-room of "Moated Hall," enjoying a most interesting conversation. Until Herries fulfilled the conditions of the will, and came forward to claim his inheritance, Mr. Ritson, as the executor, permitted Miss Tedder to dwell in her old home. She had only lately returned from London, in company with Mrs. Mountford, and her jaded looks may be accounted for by the fact that it had been found impossible to upset the will of the late knight. Also there was another reason

for Maud's drawn face and lack of colour, but this she did not impart to Mr. Michael Gowrie.

The old reprobate sat comfortably in the most comfortable chair which his eagle eye could have chosen when he entered the room, and he was here with the intention of carrying out the little plot entered into between himself and Kind and Herries. Ritson was also cognisant of the scheme to have Herries arrested after the marriage ceremony, as Kind and Gowrie had called to inform him that Herries was ready to give himself up.

At that interview with the lawyer, a long conversation had taken place, and Ritson had been made acquainted with all that had happened from the time that Angus had set foot in the "Marsh Inn." He could throw no light on the darkness of the case, even after hearing the facts, but approved of Herries surrendering himself to the law, as, until he stood his trial, or at least until he appeared before the magistrate, nothing, in Mr. Ritson's opinion, could be done. He had therefore supplied Gowrie with a trifle of money to procure some new clothes, and pay a proper visit to the disinherited heiress. In the meantime, Herries, still hiding in the caravan, had departed with Kind and Elspeth, chaperoned by Rachel, to a quiet midland town, whereto the details of the crime had not yet penetrated with sufficient publicity to make the name of Herries notorious. Thus all chance of immediate arrest was avoided.

And not only had Ritson, in the interests of his client, the accused man, financed Gowrie, but he had provided the money to procure a special license for the solemnisation of the marriage. It must be confessed that there was some difficulty over the procuring of this latter, or at all events, after it had been procured. The clerk had given the license readily enough, as he never thought that a hunted man would seek to marry. But afterwards it crossed his mind that Angus Herries was wanted by the police in connection with the "Marsh Inn" murder, and he had forthwith informed Scotland Yard. But a description of the man who had procured the license--it was Kind--led to nothing, and as the license was given, it was probable that the marriage would take place. The only thing to do was to keep a look-out throughout England for the church where the ceremony was likely to be performed. Inspector Trent was communicated with, and came up to London to make personal enquiries, but he could learn nothing likely to trace the man who had

taken out the license. This was the more difficult, as Kind had disguised himself to procure the same, But the fact remained that Angus Herries, who stood in the shadow of the gallows, was so little impressed by his terrible position that he intended to marry. Trent, who was wanting in imagination, could not understand.

Gowrie had also interviewed Trent at Tarhaven, while Kind was getting the license, and told a very straightforward story. He had been asleep in the tap-room, he said, and had departed at seven in the morning according to his intention, as told to the landlady on the previous night. He had heard nothing, and had seen nothing, and would have come forward before only he had been travelling in the midlands for the last few weeks, and had not seen any paper likely to inform him that he was being asked for. Having told all he knew, that is, all he chose to appear to know, Mr. Gowrie left the Tarhaven police-office stating that he would hold himself at the disposition of the police, and would be found at any time at the "Marsh Inn," where he had again induced Mrs. Narby to take him in. In the face of this plausible story, Inspector Trent, whose intellect was none of the brightest, did not see how he could arrest Gowrie, and the old reprobate won clear of a rather difficult position.

So here he was, in the very citadel of the enemy, arrayed in a brand-new broad-cloth suit, with a new tall hat, and a pair of new black gloves, to say nothing of highly polished boots, looking as neat as a new pin, and enjoying himself immensely; and no wonder, since he was telling lies by the yard. Gowrie should certainly have been a novelist, as he had a most lavish imagination, and should have put into print what he uttered by tongue. At the present moment, in his endeavours to entrap Maud Tedder into parting with five hundred pounds, he was wasting marketable stuff in a most prodigal fashion. At the same time, he was keeping a look-out for Captain Kyles, but as yet that buccaneer had not appeared on the scene. The reason of this non-appearance, Gowrie learned later.

"Aye, young leddy, he'll hang as high as Haman, I doot not. And wit ye say, me'em," this to Mrs. Mountford, "is tae be fund in Deuteronomy or the Beuk o' Leviticus, I no mind the which."

"I am glad to see, sir, that you read your Bible."

"It's bread an' life to me," said the sage, lifting his eyes; that is, he lifted one in appeal to heaven and kept the other on Maud, who was pacing the long room in a state of high excitement. She already saw the fortune within her grasp, and was quite prepared to hang her cousin, so that she might secure her rightful inheritance.

"And then he'll come back,--he'll come back," she murmured aloud.

"Eh, what's yon?" inquired Gowrie. "Wha wull come back, young leddy?"

"Captain----," she began unthinkingly, then, warned by an ostentatious cough from the watchful Mrs. Mountford, she stopped short. "I was talking to myself," she said haughtily.

"Hoots, I ken that, but we tell tae oorsel's muckle that we wudna tell tae ithers, ye ken."

"Language," groaned Mrs. Mountford, who looked more like an undertaker's lady than ever, "was given us to conceal our thoughts."

"Aye, aye, me'em. Ye'll have been takin' a wee bit look at the end o' the Dictionary. Jameson's for me," cried the enthusiastic Scotchman, "and nane o' yer Johnson's an' Webster's."

Maud shook her head impatiently and came to sit by the old man for the purpose of gaining information.

"You have merely told us that you have found Mr. Herries," she said, looking at him with her pale blue eyes, and in an inquisitive manner. "Where is he?"

"Aye, yen's a lang story," replied Gowrie folding his hands and settling himself comfortably, "an' maybe a glass of sherry wine wud help me to tell it mair lifelike."

Anxious only to hear the truth, Maud crossed to the bell, and touched the ivory button, but Mrs. Mountford groaned.

"What did Lemuel's mother say to him concerning strong drink?" she inquired.

But Gowrie, for business purposes, knew his Bible as well as she did, if not better.

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts," he quoted.

"Likewise, 'It is not for kings to drink strong wine,'" she snapped.

"Aye, but I'm nae king ye ken, me'em," retorted the old scamp, then added under his breath, "Deil tak' the wurnon, she a perfect Lamentations o' Jeremy the prophet."

Mrs. Mountford worked no more in the cause of temperance, but sat glooming like a thunderstorm in her corner, while Gowrie tasted with approval the hot yellow wine, which had been brought almost immediately. When he had finished two glasses, he began to relate a perfectly mythical story, but none the less interesting, because it was invented out of his own clever head.

"I'm a mon o' letters," he began.

"Would you mind talking English?" interrupted Maud.

"Nae, nae, young leddy, ye canna get the pow'r in English that ye can in homely Scotch. An' I'm like an Eastern story-teller, aboot tae babble o' strange maitters."

"I'll hear them in English, which I know you can speak," said Maud, who was as obstinate as Gowrie himself, "or I won't listen at all."

"Then ye'll nae find the mon ye want."

"Oh yes. I'll tell Inspector Trent that you know where he is."

Gowrie did not relish this speech, as Trent entertained some suspicions of his honesty, notwithstanding the plausible story he had related. Also, he might lose the reward. Therefore he made a virtue of necessity, and turned his glib tongue to English.

"I am a man of letters, Miss Tedder," he said smoothly, "and have fallen on evil days. To be precise, I have not earned that reputation which my talents deserve, consequently my emoluments are not large. At one time I was tutor to Angus Herries, your unfortunate cousin, but evil-speaking people drove me from the metropolis of the North to wander on the earth."

"Proceed," said Mrs. Mountford heavily, and thinking, from the looks of the narrator, that strong drink had much to do with his wandering on the face of the earth.

"I have wandered far and wide," said this modern Ulysses, "and the records of my travels may be found in various journals. I have been but badly paid for the same," said the sage sighing, "and it behoves me to gain money in some other way," he cast a cunning look at Miss Tedder. "I hear there is a reward offered for the man who can find Angus Herries?"

"Yes! I am not rich," said Maud coolly, "but I'll willingly pay five hundred pounds, which I can do through Mr. Ritson, the lawyer, as soon as Mr. Herries is in gaol."

"Aye," murmured Gowrie, maintaining a bland face, "a sprat tae catch a mack'ril."

"What's that?" asked Maud, hearing indistinctly.

"Naething--a blessing--a blessing. But to continue," he added, reverting to English, "I chanced upon the 'Marsh Inn' while I wandered, and there I have stopped frequently. Indeed, my daughter, Elspeth, remained at the inn, as a companion to the landlady."

"I was told about her," said Miss Tedder abruptly, "she was a servant, I believe."

"Nae, nae, a companion, young leddy. But that's neither here nor there, ye ken. Weel--I mean, well, young lady, I stopped at the inn on the night your father was murdered, and----"

"We know all about that, sir," boomed Mrs. Mountford, "Inspector Trent

informed us of what you had told him. In the interests of justice, he is keeping Miss Tedder advised of all matters likely to lead to a detection of her father's murderer."

"Then I need not go over the same ground again," said Gowrie readily, and laughing in his sleeve at the way in which he was deceiving these women, who doubtless thought themselves extremely clever, "sufficient it is to say, that I was asleep all the night, and departed early in the morning ignorant that a crime had been committed. When I returned many days later, I found that my daughter, whom I had left in the charge of Mrs. Narby----"

"As a servant," interpolated Maud spitefully.

"As a companion," persisted Gowrie obstinately. "I found that she had fled with Angus Herries!"

"With my cousin," Maud rose excitedly, "did she know where he was?"

"No," lied the reprobate skilfully, "she saw him at the inn, and then he escaped. Afterwards she received a letter from him, written from a Buckinghamshire village, asking her to join him."

"And why?" asked Mrs. Mountford curiously.

"Because, it seems, the two loved one another."

"Absurd," cried Maud, her small face working with anger, "why, she only saw him once."

"Quite long enough to enable her to love him, and he to love her," said Gowrie, rather pleased to witness this disgust.

"But it's impossible, Angus loved me," she insisted, and a look of wounded pride passed over her face.

"So he told me," responded Gowrie dryly, "but that was two years ago. He said that he never really loved until he met Elspeth."

"Oh, did he?" cried Miss Tedder in disgust. "Then she won't have him for

long. He'll be in gaol before many hours pass."

"I hope so," said Gowrie, playing his part extremely well. "I do not want my child to become the bride of a criminal."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Exactly what I say, Miss Tedder. When I found that my daughter had fled to Herries in Buckinghamshire----"

"How did you know she was there?"

"I found a letter waiting for me at a London address, telling me that she was going to marry Herries."

"Why was not the letter waiting at the inn?"

It was not, for the simple reason that Gowrie was too clever to give himself away. Mrs. Narby certainly would not depose that such a letter was waiting at the inn, therefore he placed the address at a safe distance where the police could not find it.

"I have a home in London, to which my child always writes," said he evasively, "and she wrote to me there, after I had found the inn empty of my jewel."

"Oh, go on," said Maud, impatient of this high-flown language.

"I then went to Buckinghamshire----"

"To what village do you say?"

"I'll not tell you that until I have your promise in writing to pay me the five hundred."

"You shall have it before you leave this room. But you will only get the money if Herries, I mean my cousin, is arrested."

"I ask no more," said Gowrie rubbing his hands and chuckling. "If Inspector

Trent will come with me we can interrupt the marriage ceremony, which takes place to-morrow in the village church."

"So soon. And the village?"

"Wait till I have your handwriting," said Gowrie, smartly, "but to proceed with the epic. I went to this village, and saw Herries, and my daughter. He told me that he was innocent, and that he had procured a special license to marry my child. I objected, as I wanted him first to clear his name. He says he cannot do that----"

"And no wonder," said Miss Tedder scornfully, "seeing that he is guilty of the crime."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Of course I do. Would I want him hanged if I did not believe him guilty?"

"Weel," said Gowrie scratching his head, and applying himself again to a now nearly empty decanter, "wumen are kittle cattle."

"Not Miss Tedder," chimed in Mrs. Mountford, "she is not one to bear false witness."

"Well, then, to make a long story short," said Gowrie beginning to feel weary, and finding there was no chance of further strong drink, "my pride objected to my daughter wedding a criminal, and I came to ask you, Miss Tedder, to pay me the reward and come with me to Inspector Trent. To-morrow we can go to this village, and arrest this man. And heaven grant," added Gowrie piously, "that we may be in time to prevent the marriage."

"Whether Angus is married or not matters very little," said his amiable cousin. "I want him tried by jury."

"Weel," chuckled Gowrie becoming Scotch again, now that his story was ended. "Ye canna have him tried ony ither way, ye ken. But are ye sure that the mon is guilty?"

"Certain. He was at the inn, and so was my father."

"I wis there also, yet I'm innocent," said Gowrie, dryly.

"You had no reason to kill my father, Angus had."

"And what may that be?"

"He knew that he would inherit the money if my father died."

"How did he know that?"

"Captain Kyles told me that he knew."

"An' hoo did Captain Kyles ken?"

"You had better ask him," snapped Maud, who seemed to regret having admitted as much, and who had been frowned upon by Mrs. Mountford.

"Is he in the hoose?"

"No. He is in London."

"Nae, nae," chuckled the old man, prepared to throw a bombshell, "I ken weel where he is; a chield ca'd Sweetlips Kind tauld me, having been to the bit ship of him."

"To the 'Tarabacca?'"

"Aye,--at Pierside. The Captain's on board her, wi' the leddy he's gaun tae marry."

Maud jumped up wrathfully.

"He's engaged to me," she cried, and her baby face became convulsed with anger.

"Nae, nae, young leddy, Kind tell't me, he wis tae be the joe o' a Mexican lady,---o'----"

"Of Donna Maria Guzman," said Miss Tedder angrily; "that is untrue, Captain Kyles is to be my husband. Donna Maria is simply the daughter of the ex-President of Indiana, and came in the yacht to Pierside to do business with my father, and----"

"Maud, Maud," warned Mrs. Mountford, rising quickly, "do not say more than is wise."

"I shall say what I think,--that is,--no matter. But it's a lie, a lie, Mr. Gowrie. Captain Kyles is engaged to me."

"Aye," said Gowrie presumably to himself, "Angus Herries wull be glad. He wantit tae see ye marrit an' oot o' his way."

Maud uttered a cry of anger, which was precisely what Gowrie wanted her to do, since his object in making the speech was to inflame her against her cousin, as perhaps, as he thought, in her rage she might let out what she knew of the crime. But Mrs. Mountford laid her hand on the girl's arm as she was about to burst forth into furious speech, and after a moment's struggle with herself Miss Tedder rushed from the room followed by her governess.

Left alone, Gowrie rang the bell, and ordered another decanter of sherry, which was brought, since the servant fancied that Miss Tedder must have left instructions. It never struck the man that Gowrie would have the impudence to give an order on his own authority. But then he did not know the sage. Gowrie sipped the sherry, and chuckled over the success of his plot. But he was puzzled to think why Maud should be so angered against Angus Herries.

"A wumon scorned, I'm theenking," said Gowrie, meditatively, "she's wants tae marry the Captain, and yet hae her cousin deeing for her luve. But ye canna hae yer cake and eat it, young madam; nae, nae, I ken fine ye canna. I doot this Captain's playing the deil wi' ye, as ye played the jade wi' Herries. Weel, Herries wull marry my child, and the Captain his Mexican fly-away, and ye'll be left greeting, the which is nae mair nor ye deserve."

His meditations were interrupted by the return of Mrs. Mountford with a sheet of note-paper. On this Miss Tedder had written a promise that she would pay Michael Gowrie five hundred pounds when Herries was safe in

gaol.

"I'm obleeged tae ye, me'em," said the sage, folding up the precious document, "awa' wi' this tae the poleece station, and invite yon Jack-in-office tae gang wi' me tae the salubrious village o' Anderfield in Bucks."

"Is that the name of the village, sir?"

"Aye. That's the name. Noo I hae the promise o' the siller, ye may ken the place where the marriage wull tak place. An' noo," he caught up his brand new silk hat, "I mau' be ganging ma ways."

"One moment," said Mrs. Mountford, laying her hand on his arm, "are you sure that Captain Kyles is engaged to this Mexican lady?"

"I am as sure as sure, me'em."

"Then he's a villain," cried Mrs. Mountford heavily, "for he told Miss Tedder that he loved her alone. But he had better take care, for Maud can--she can--"

"Can what?" asked Gowrie, struck by the significance of her tone.

"She can ruin him," said Mrs. Mountford coldly.

"The deil she can."

"If Captain Kyles marries this Donna Maria," said Mrs. Mountford in a quiet and deadly tone, "you tell Mr. Herries that I can save him."

Gowrie was so astonished by this speech that he would have asked for further information. But Mrs. Mountford, conscious perhaps that she had said too much, pushed him out of the room, and shortly he was hurrying towards the police-station as fast as his wicked old legs could carry him, sorely puzzled as to her meaning.

"Maybe the Captain killed the auld mon," thought Gowrie, "but for why? Hoots! there's a deal o' deevilry in this case. Yon lassie wi' the bairn's face kens mair aboot the death o' her faither nor she'll say. But if this Don Giovanny--and that Kyles is, no less--plays her false, a' the fat wull be on the

fire. Weel, the mair necessity for me tae hurry up wi' the arrest, and get the siller."

Meanwhile, Maud Tedder was shut up in her room, lying on her bed and raging as only a woman scorned can rage. Of late she had noted, and especially since the death of her father, that Kyles was not so attentive as he had been. Now she learned that he was engaged to Donna Maria Guzman, when he had explicitly stated to her that he did not care for that lady. Apparently it was the money he was after, and this thought made the jealous heart of Maud burn within her. She loved Kyles, and would have sacrificed a thousand cousins to make him her husband. That could be done, she thought, if she recovered her fortune by getting Herries hanged. And if he was arrested he certainly would be hanged, therefore she was quite willing to give half a year's income to bring about this result.

All that day and the next she lay in bed, denying herself to everyone, longing for news. Late in the afternoon of the day following Gowrie's visit, she received a wire from Anderfield, sent by the old man.

"Herries arrested," ran the wire, "he was already married."

"Married," said Maud to herself, smiling cruelly, "his honeymoon will be spent in gaol, and will end on the gallows."

CHAPTER XVII

MAUD'S INHERITANCE

There was a lull in the political and social worlds when Herries was captured. The newspapers had said all that they could say regarding past events, and nothing especial was happening worth prattling about. The "Marsh Inn" case, with its strong element of mystery and its spice of romance, proved to be a godsend in the way of "copy." Consequently, hordes of eager reporters poured into Tarhaven, whither Inspector Trent had conducted his prisoner after the arrest at Anderfield in Bucks. The facts that Herries was Sir Simon's nephew--for the late knight was no unimportant figure in the commercial-millionaire world--that he had inherited fifty thousand a year, and that he had been taken by the police, when issuing from the village church immediately after his marriage, made the whole case immensely interesting. Also the mystery of the murder lifted it out of the category of ordinary crime. It was well-known that the prisoner declared himself to be innocent, and everyone wondered what possible defence he could make.

Trent himself did not know, as, by the advice of shrewd-headed Kind, the young man preserved an irritating silence, and the Rev. Michael Gowrie, wishing to make a dramatic announcement at a dramatic moment, kept his own counsel. That Herries might be exonerated never entered the Inspector's head for one moment, and he gathered together all procurable evidence so as to secure the committal of the prisoner by the local magistrate. And as various hints--which might have been traced to Gowrie--were given to the public that strange revelations might be expected, everyone was on tip-toe with excitement. Sir Simon had been a great magnate in Tarhaven, and it was natural that his death should arouse the deepest interest. The more so, as it was now commonly reported that, far from explaining the facts of the death and the motive for what looked like a purposeless crime, the evidence at the magisterial trial would probably deepen the mystery.

In their frantic efforts to get at the truth, and narrate highly-coloured tales to their readers, several reporters attempted to interview Mrs. Herries, formerly Miss Elspeth Gowrie. By the advice of Sweetlips, the girl saw one of these enterprising young journalists who belonged to a half-penny paper with the very largest circulation in the world. Kind instructed her to tell the truth, even to the concealment in the caravan, as he thought that, if public sympathy could be awakened for the lovers, Herries would stand a better chance of acquittal. There was some risk in being thus explicit, as the Cheap-jack ran a

deadly chance of being arrested as an accomplice after the fact. Were Herries condemned he would probably be so arrested, and Elspeth along with him. But before instructing Elspeth, Sweetlips had privately interviewed the old Scotch tutor, and from him had extracted the evidence which, as he averred, would save Herries from the gallows at the eleventh hour. Elspeth herself did not know what this evidence could be, but the fact that Kind was willing to risk his liberty on the strength of it, made her very cheerful, as it pointed to the certain discharge of Angus.

When the unvarnished tale came out in *_The Morning Planet_*, it made an undeniable sensation, and Elspeth became the heroine of the hour. The sudden love of the girl, the way in which she had proved that love by rescuing the man she believed to be innocent from the hands of the prejudiced police, the strange wooing in the caravan, and the saving of Rachel Kind from a terrible death by the timely arrival of Herries,--all these things smacked of romance, and people now began to believe, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, that Angus Herries was innocent. No man so loved could be guilty--no scoundrel could awaken such devotion in the heart of a timid, unformed girl. One and all, the women, high and low, of the three kingdoms ranged themselves on the side of Mrs. Herries, and not a few men followed their lead, as was natural. Kind's belief proved to be right. After the publication of the statement in *_The Morning Planet_*, the case became more interesting than ever, and everyone sympathised with the unlucky married pair.

Dr. Browne invited Gowrie and his daughter to stop at his house, and his servants were occupied to the very day of the trial in keeping away people from the door. And when Elspeth walked abroad she was pointed at, snapped, admired, and discussed in a way, which showed that her heroic conduct,--as *_The Morning Planet_* called it,--had won her a warm place in the heart of the public. In several papers her portrait appeared, she was asked to write an account of her early life, there was some talk of getting up a subscription on her behalf, since it was known that she was horribly poor,--and in every way, people showed their sympathy. Mrs. Herries was the lioness of the hour, and had she been single would undoubtedly have received many offers of marriage. As it was, her devotion to her unfortunate husband made her the talk of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Elspeth did not like this publicity, as she was retiring by nature, but she bore it all for the sake of Angus. Undoubtedly it would aid him in his defence, and probably would help to save his life. To do that she would have sacrificed herself ten times over and in a much more terrible way. But further sacrifice was needless, Herries was now,--so to speak,--under the protection of the British public, and everyone was certain that he would have a fair trial. Many even went so far as to say that he would be acquitted, but Inspector Trent laughed these prophets to scorn. Herries was guilty,--the evidence proved that he was guilty,--and in assisting him to escape, both his wife and the Cheap-jack had thwarted the ends of justice. When the prisoner was committed for trial, said Trent, he would see about arresting Kind, as an accomplice after the fact. But even Trent did not dare to hint that Elspeth might be arrested. To put her in prison would have provoked a storm from the public which no one in authority would risk.

One person was intensely disgusted at the elevation of young Mrs. Herries into a heroine, and that was Maud Tedder. On hearing of the arrest of her cousin, she had expressed great joy, and in his condemnation she saw the chance of recovering her father's property. Not only did she want the money, but she also desired to re-capture Captain Bruce Kyles; a wary bird, only to be lived by golden grain. After he had heard the will read, and had discovered that it could not be upset, he had returned to the "Tarabacca" at Pierside, and beyond a few cold notes had refrained from paying her any attention. In effect he showed that, now she was poor he did not intend to marry her, and after Gowrie's hint, Maud was certain that the Captain was engaged to Señora Guzman. She had been made a catspaw of, and if Herries was not hanged and Kyles re-captured to be her husband, she had fully made up her spiteful mind to revenge herself. However, since there were difficulties in the way, she called to see Elspeth and propose a compromise. It might be, as Maud argued, that Angus would not be condemned, especially after the statement of The Morning Planet, therefore, it was worth while to gain half, if not the whole fortune.

Mrs. Herries was alone in the doctor's drawing-room, a very masculine-looking apartment, unworthy of the name. Browne was absent, seeing his patients. Kind, who usually haunted the house, was taking Rachel round Tarhaven to buy goods for the caravan, and the Reverend Michael Gowrie

was where he often was, in the nearest public-house, drinking at other people's expense, and advertising himself as the father of the famous Mrs. Angus Herries. The old man managed to procure many cheap drinks in this way, but no one ever got out of him, even in his most convivial moments, what evidence he proposed to give in order to save his son-in-law.

Elsbeth remained within doors for a certain reason. After hearing Kind's account of his visit to the "Tarabacca," she became certain that Señora Guzman was in possession of facts which might help to prove the innocence of her husband. Since Sir Simon had written that mysterious letter to someone on the yacht, why not to this Captain Kidd in petticoats? Then there was the hint of the treasure--Manco Capac's treasure--which Kind professed himself unable to understand. And Kyles himself might know something. By awakening the jealousy of the Mexican beauty, the truth might be arrived at concerning the kidnapping of Armour, and that, as Elspeth argued, was in some way connected with the death of Sir Simon Tedder. After all, as Señora Guzman had hinted to Kind, it might be simply a political crime, in which case, Donna Maria would have the less hesitation in telling the plain facts of the assassination. Taking all these facts into consideration, Mrs. Herries had written to Señora Guzman asking her to call at Tarhaven and have a chat, and the Mexican lady had graciously assented to the request. When Miss Tedder's card was brought in Elspeth saw in her arrival much more than a mere chance. Providence had brought the two women who loved Bruce Kyles into contact, and the possible quarrel between the two might result in the truth becoming known. Of course Elspeth was groping in the dark, as she did not yet see what Maud, or Señora Guzman, or Bruce Kyles, could have to do with the murder; but that they had something to do with the death of the millionaire she was very certain; and therefore was ready to take every advantage of Miss Tedder's visit.

Maud came alone, as she did not wish even Mrs. Mountford to hear what she had to say to the woman who had married her cousin. When she entered the room, and Elspeth arose to receive her, she stopped short in surprise. Was this frail, delicate-looking girl with the white face and the pathetic eyes the heroine about whom such a fuss was being made? She did not look as though she could plan anything, much less carry out a daring scheme; yet it was owing to her that Herries had escaped at a critical moment. But Maud,

judging by the flesh and not by the spirit, looked at the shrinking girl contemptuously, and promised herself an easy victory. She sat down with an insolent air, and stared hard at her rival.

On her side, Elspeth was eager to see Maud, knowing that Angus had once loved her. Mrs. Herries admitted the doll-like prettiness of the millionaire's daughter, but could not understand how a man like her husband could have loved so soulless a being. Miss Tedder was beautifully dressed, and looked extremely pretty; but she certainly was not a girl to awaken passion of any sort in a man. In a way, Elspeth was as contemptuous of Maud as Maud was of her, and so the two commenced their interview with a mutual misunderstanding.

"I am Angus Herries' cousin," said Miss Tedder sharply, sitting bolt upright, and keeping her hands in her muff; then when Elspeth simply nodded, she added, "And you are his wife?"

Elspeth bowed again.

"Why have you come here?" she asked quietly.

The Dresden-china beauty laughed.

"To see the woman who has taken my leavings," she said insolently.

"You see her," replied Mrs. Herries calmly. "Well?"

This behaviour disconcerted Maud. She would have preferred Elspeth to have risen in a royal rage, but the girl was perfectly calm, and would supply no fuel for burning.

"I don't think much of you," she snapped, with a hard stare.

"Really? Did you come to tell me this?"

"Partly, and also to congratulate you that Angus will be hanged."

Elspeth started and clasped her hands tightly to prevent herself getting into a passion.

"Why do you think that is a matter of congratulation?" she demanded, in a choked voice.

"Because he's a beast," burst out Maud, losing her temper in the face of this coolness, "he was once engaged to me and treated me shamefully."

"No, he did not. He treated you only too kindly."

"What do you know about it?"

"All that Angus could tell me."

"Ah. He had to make his own case good."

"There was no need to with me," said Elspeth coldly, but a spot of vivid red burned on each cheek. "I know Angus well."

"But not so well as I do," cried Miss Tedder, anxious to break down her companion's composure. "Angus made me love him, and then left me all alone. He broke my heart," this with a truly effective sob.

"Rubbish," said Elspeth, rising quickly. "Say that to a man and not to another woman. Angus had a passing fancy for you, and you threw him over at the bidding of your father."

"He had more than a fancy. He adored me."

"Then why did he leave you?"

"Papa would not let me marry him; but if Angus had remained true to me, I should have remained true to him."

"Instead of taking up with Captain Bruce Kyles, I suppose," sneered Elspeth, resolved to sting in her turn.

Maud started to her feet in a fury.

"How dare you talk to me like this? You who are no better than a servant, and who will soon be a murderer's widow."

"No," cried Mrs. Herries imperatively, and facing the other girl boldly, "I intend to save my husband's life."

"You can't do it without me."

"You," Elspeth turned like a tigress on her visitor, "what do you know about it?"

Maud felt rather afraid when this fragile girl flashed out in this way.

"I know that Angus is guilty," she said obstinately.

"Then how can you save him?"

"I can get some one to give evidence that he is innocent."

"Who?"

"I'll tell you--on conditions."

"Oh, on conditions. And what are they?"

"My father," explained Maud calmly, "left all his money, save a miserable thousand a year, to Angus. That is not fair."

"I can offer no opinion on that point," rejoined Elspeth, in an equally cool manner. "The will was none of my making. But if you wanted to inherit the money, you should have given up this Captain Kyles, as your father wished."

"I won't and I didn't. I would rather lose every penny than give up Bruce."

"It seems to me that you have lost every penny," said Mrs. Herries rather cruelly, "but you have got your lover."

"No, I haven't," cried Maud, her eyes very bright and her cheeks very red; then suddenly broke down, "Oh, Elspeth, do help me, or I'll lose him altogether. He won't marry me unless I have the money, and I haven't got it."

But Elspeth was not going to yield to a few crocodile tears.

"You can get the money when Angus is hanged," she retorted.

Maud dried her eyes viciously.

"Very well," she cried, with a stamp, "you're a hard-hearted girl and a beast. I hate and detest you. I came here to save your husband, but now he can hang."

"Very good. Now you can go."

But this was not what Miss Tedder wanted.

"See here," she said, becoming business-like, and speaking in a hard voice, "if you and Angus will promise to give me half the income, I'll save him."

"Can you?"

"You asked that before. Yes, I can."

Elsbeth recalled what the other had said a few moments previously.

"By getting someone to declare his innocence," she repeated.

"No," said Maud, coming closer and whispering, "by getting someone to plead guilty to the crime."

"What is the name of this someone?"

"I shan't tell you."

"You shall, you must."

"No! If you and Angus sign a paper saying that I am to have half the money, then I'll save him."

"By denouncing the real criminal?"

"Oh, I didn't say I knew about that."

"You do. I believe you know the truth; and wish to get Angus hanged simply

to get this horrible money," and before Maud could evade her she caught the girl by her wrist, "you'll tell me the name of the assassin before you leave this room."

"Leave me alone," cried Miss Tedder in a cold fury, "how dare you?"

In answer Elspeth gave the wrist such a twist that Maud screamed aloud with pain.

"Tell me--tell me."

"You're hurting me. Ow! Ow!"

"Cry away," taunted Elspeth, "I intend to have the truth."

Maud set her teeth and tried to wriggle free. But she might as well have attempted to extricate herself from a blacksmith's vice.

"Oh, you are hurting me!"

"I'll break your wrist before I've done. Speak," and Elspeth shook her as a terrier does a rat.

"No," Maud fastened her teeth in Elspeth's wrist and received a box on the ears. Then she burst out crying and dropped to the floor with Mrs. Herries still holding to her prey. "Oh, you are cruel."

Elspeth shook her again, and went on shaking as she spoke. "Tell me--tell me."

"I'm not sure," whimpered Miss Tedder, now really frightened of the other's blazing eyes. "I can prove nothing."

"You must let me judge of that. Who killed Sir Simon?"

"Will you give me half the money if I tell you?"

"You must ask Angus that. I don't dispose of his property."

Maud began to scream. But it was all of no use. She had ventured into the lion's den.

"How ill-bred you are," she sobbed.

"Ah," said Elspeth contemptuously, "you thought to come here and taunt me, you thought to find a weakling; but you see," with another vigorous shake, "my love for Angus makes me strong. I'm afraid of nothing, when he is in danger. You rejoiced to hear that he was arrested. Very good, then you shall be the one to release him. Now then, out with it,--out with it," and again came the shaking until Maud was quite sick. She was terribly afraid of this reckless girl, who dared to lay hands on her. There was nothing for it, but to tell the truth so far as she knew it.

"Señora Guzman murdered my father," she cried, grovelling.

Mrs. Herries was so surprised that she released her hold, and stepped back a pace to see if Maud was speaking truly.

"How do you know?"

"Papa wrote a letter to her saying that he would disinherit me if I didn't give up Bruce, and asked her to meet him at the 'Marsh Inn' to see if she could take Bruce away from me."

"It might be true," murmured Elspeth, recalling that Señora Guzman smoked the brand of cigarette found in Herries' room. "But why did she kill your father?"

"He took a lot of money with him, and she wanted it to fit out an expedition to find Manco Capac's treasure."

"Who told you this?"

"Bruce. He fears her and loves me. There," Maud rose, and smoothed her skirts, "I've told you the truth. But you can prove nothing without me. Give me half the money and----"

"You shall have half the money if you save Angus," said Elspeth.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SURPRISING DEFENCE

Elsbeth lost no time in relating to Kind all that she had heard from Maud, and also confessed that she had promised the girl half her father's fortune if she saved Angus. Sweetlips was rather annoyed that such a promise had been extorted,--which it really had been,--as Miss Tedder certainly did not deserve one single penny.

"However," said the Cheap-jack, "YOU made the promise, and not Mr. Herries, therefore if he refuses, Miss Tedder can say nothing."

"Angus will do what I want," replied the girl, quickly.

"I know that, but you won't want him to reward iniquity, and--"

"Oh, Maud is not so bad as that."

"She's about as bad as they make 'em," grumbled the ex-detective grimly. "To get that money she is quite willing to see her cousin hanged, and is only hedging at the last moment, as she fears lest your father should save him."

"Do you think my father really can?"

"Yes. I know what he is going to say, and it will settle the matter. Therefore Miss Tedder, not having saved Mr. Herries, can expect nothing. Moreover,

the fortune will not be your husband's until he discovers the criminal. Oh, there are many reasons why your forced promise to Miss Tedder need not be kept."

"But if she is right in saying that Señora Guzman is the guilty person, she will have done everything towards getting the fortune for Angus."

"So that she may secure half of it, if he is not hanged. And if he escapes, it will be no thanks to her."

"Do you think she is telling the truth?"

"I really can't say," murmured Kind, nursing his chin. "Of course she is jealous of Señora Guzman, and would do anything to get her out of the way. It seems to me that Captain Bruce Kyles is trifling with both these women. Tell me again exactly what Miss Tedder said."

Elsbeth thought for a moment.

"She said that her father wrote the letter, which Mr. Ritson mentioned to you, to Señora Guzman, asking her to come to the 'Marsh Inn.' She came, and Sir Simon proposed to pay her enough money to fit out some expedition, on condition that she,--the Señora that is,--took Captain Bruce Kyles away from England,--removed him from Maud's path in fact."

"Humph. I remember Señora Guzman's reference to an expedition in search of some treasure. It might be, that her real reason in coming to England was to get funds. But if this Mexican lady loves Kyles, and Sir Simon was willing to pay her for loving him, why did she murder him?"

"To get the money, Maud says."

"But she could have got the money in any case," argued Kind, who was much perplexed by the present aspect of the affair. "Why commit a useless crime? I don't believe she did it."

"But you remember," Elspeth reminded him, "you remember that you found the stump of a Tangerian cigarette on the floor of----"

"Yes, yes,--and Señora Guzman smokes that brand. But other people may smoke the same sort of cigarettes,--for instance Captain Kyles," and Sweetlips looked keenly at Elspeth.

"Do you think that he----?"

"No. Mrs. Mountford, whom I have seen, told me that Captain Kyles was with Maud Tedder on the night of the murder. He could not be in two places at once, could he? But then that kidnapping--the crew of the 'Tarabacca' certainly kidnapped Armour under the impression that he was some spy,--that looks as though their mistress was in the hotel at the time, and they were removing danger from her path. And again, Señora Guzman could easily swarm up those light trellis spars under the window of the bedroom."

"In petticoats?"

"Pooh. A daring woman like that is quite capable of assuming a sailor's dress to carry out her object."

"Then you think she was there--that she is guilty?"

"I think, on the authority of the cigarette stump, that she was in the hotel, but I don't say that she is guilty. She did not kill Sir Simon, for I can see no motive for her committing the crime."

"Nevertheless," urged Elspeth, "as the cigarette stump was found in my husband's bedroom she must have been there."

"Well," drawled the Cheap-jack, with his eyes on the ground, "as I said, other people may have smoked such a brand;--one of the officers on board, for instance. Kyles is innocent, and I am not prepared to say that Señora Guzman is guilty. But she certainly might have implicated your husband in the crime by placing the razor on his bed and hiding the pocket-book under it. The best thing to do will be to question her, and inform her of Miss Tedder's accusation. I thought she was coming to see you?"

"So she was,--yesterday, and I expected to see her about the time Maud called. However, she never came."

"Humph. She will be at the trial, no doubt. You will see her to-day. Then I'll question her. Oh, by the way," Kind came back after taking a few steps towards the door, "I have found out from Trent, who is a fool and can't keep his own counsel, that Sir Simon drew two thousand pounds from his bank the day previous to his death--that is, two hundred in gold and the rest in notes. Trent learned this from Ritson, who should have told me by the way, and he heard it from the bank manager. So you see that the money which the landlady and her son saw Sir Simon handling and which filled the blue pocket-book amounted to that sum. Now, if we can trace the notes we'll lay hands on the criminal."

"Have any of the notes been presented?"

"Not yet. However, the manager has the numbers. Trent makes this statement at the hearing to-day before the magistrate. I must get off there. And you?"

"I'm coming with my father in half-an-hour."

"You'll come back with your husband to this place shortly," said Kind, in an encouraging tone.

"Oh, Sweetlips, do you really think so."

"I am absolutely certain of it," and he departed, leaving Mrs. Herries much up-lifted by the good news. She was certain that the Cheap-jack spoke the truth, for there was that in his manner which inspired confidence.

Elsbeth dressed herself very simply to accompany her father to the hearing before the magistrate, and indeed, even had she been minded to dress more expensively, she could not have done so. Her frock and hat, her boots and gloves were all presents from Rachel Kind, in return for the nursing, and were of the plainest and cheapest description. Dr. Browne, in his impulsive generosity, had wished to give his friend's wife a dress, but this Elspeth refused, as she preferred to be indebted to no one. And Browne honoured her for the refusal. He was beginning to have a better opinion of women since he had known Elspeth Herries.

But if the daughter was plainly dressed, the father was resplendent, as the old

scamp had no scruples in taking money from whomsoever was fool enough to give it to him. He was arrayed in purple and fine linen, and looked highly prosperous. Gowrie was aware that he was the most important figure at the trial, after the prisoner, and resolved to take every advantage of the publicity which was, as he said himself, thrust upon him. For years, as he also said, he had been hiding his light under a bushel, but now there was a chance of his shining brilliantly, and he arranged to stick his candle in the most conspicuous position. The shrewd old man saw every opportunity of making money, and although he hoped that his son-in-law, when freed and in possession of the property, would remunerate him for his services, still he did not neglect the chance of making a few shillings on his own account. And finally, Gowrie dearly loved publicity and praise. His progress along the streets with Elspeth was like that of a king leading a princess to the altar. His daughter wanted a cab, but this Gowrie refused.

"Haud up yer held, ma bairn," said he in his grand mellow voice, "an' dinna leuk sae white. This is a gran' day in the annals o' ma hoose, an' I gang forth, like David, tae succour the sick, and tae----" here Mr. Gowrie, who had been taking various drinks, became somewhat incoherent, and Elspeth was glad when he held his tongue, since everyone in the street knew who he was, and who she was from the old man's loud talking. He was really a dreadful person to have for a father. All the same he held the fate of her husband in his hands.

There was a crowd outside the building in which the trial was to take place, but a very few people were admitted into the court itself. This was done by order of the presiding magistrate, who knew that the sympathy of the public was with the prisoner, and who did not wish for any manifestations during the proceedings. Trent had assured him that Herries would undoubtedly be convicted on the evidence, and the magistrate, believing this, guessed that when the young man was committed to take his trial at the next Essex sessions, there would be a tumult. Therefore, when Elspeth and her father entered the court, they found that few were present. But outside could be heard the murmur of the mob, who were eagerly waiting to see what would happen.

The proceedings were very much the same as they had been at the "Marsh Inn" inquest. Trent made similar statements to those he had made before, but

supplemented them by adding that Sir Simon had in his possession on the night he was murdered the sum of two thousand pounds in gold and notes. He stated that the numbers of the notes were in his possession, but that as yet none of them had been presented. He detailed all that had taken place at the inn on the night the crime had been committed,--the arrival of Sir Simon to meet his unknown visitor, the subsequent arrival of Herries, who said,--and perhaps wrongly, as Trent suggested,--that he did not know that his uncle was in the house. Then came the relation of Narby's discovery of the dead body, and the evidence found in Herries' room. In fact Inspector Trent made out a very good case against the prisoner, and it really looked as though nothing could prevent the accused man being committed for trial at the Chelmsford sessions.

The same witnesses as had appeared at the inquest were called: Mrs. Narby, her husband, her son, and Elspeth. No new facts were elicited, and the witnesses, with the exception of Elspeth, stated that they were certain the prisoner was guilty. Browne was examined and gave evidence as to his examination of the dead body and mentioned the probable hour of death. It was all rather dull, as everything had appeared before in the papers. Herries, seated in the dock, gazed straight before him with a calm face, and every now and then stole a glance at Elspeth to gain confidence. She was seated with clasped hands in agony, as the evidence was given. In the face of it all, how could she hope that her husband would escape.

Trent, recalled by the magistrate, explained that he had not been able to find the man who had passed through the tap-room arrayed in Sir Simon's fur coat, but mentioned that the coat itself had been discovered. The magistrate, who seemed to be an open-minded man, thought that this was a favourable sign for the prisoner, as the missing man might possibly be, and very probably was, the assassin. But the lawyer who appeared for the prosecution pointed out that the razor and the empty pocket-book had been found in Herries' room. He dared the defence to explain how these came to be in the room of the prisoner.

It was at this point that Michael Gowrie was called, and then all present listened attentively, as this was the most important witness of the lot, and assuredly,--according to common report,--would be able to save the prisoner.

The young lawyer who was acting for Herries asked Gowrie a few questions relative to his position, and the reason he had been at the "Marsh Inn" on the night in question. Then he asked him to tell his story. This Gowrie did in his best English and very earnestly. He knew that too much was at stake to commit himself to the Scotch dialect, which would not be half understood by those present.

Gowrie's statement, made with considerable impudence, was to the effect that Herries, on retiring to bed, was so excited by his misfortunes that it was probable he would not sleep. Sorry for the young man, Gowrie bethought himself of a small bottle of laudanum which he possessed. He considered it his duty to give Herries a dose, so that he might sleep.

"That was a dangerous thing to do," said the magistrate, rebukingly.

"It was, sir,--it was," replied the witness, "but Herries might have gone off his head had he not obtained the needful rest. I deemed it my duty as his old tutor and sincere well-wisher to drop a small quantity of the soothing drug into the whisky which I took up to him. Therefore, sir, I would point out, that as the prisoner was under the influence of the drug, he certainly could not have risen in the night to kill the deceased."

"Is there any evidence other than yours, to show that this drug was given?" asked the magistrate, looking grave.

Gowrie mentioned Pope Narby, the son of the landlady, and the woman herself. Both of these witnesses were recalled, and Pope stated that he certainly saw Gowrie drop the laudanum into the whisky,--to make the prisoner sleep as he had stated. Mrs. Narby gave evidence as to the administration of the drugged liquor, and how readily the prisoner had fallen into a deep slumber. Browne was recalled, and stated that while under the influence of such a dose of laudanum, the prisoner certainly could not have committed the crime, and then Gowrie reiterated his statement with added proofs that the drug was so administered.

Elsbeth listened with joy, believing every word of her father's story. Herries believed it also, but knew perfectly well that the drug had been administered by Gowrie, not to make him sleep, since he was already weary, but to enable

the old scamp to rob him. He was on the point of stating this, but thought that if he did so, Gowrie would probably deny the charge, and such an accusation would complicate matters. He therefore held his peace, and waited to see what would come of this important piece of evidence.

The magistrate consulted with another official, and Trent was recalled. The counsel for the prosecution questioned him and Gowrie and the Narbys minutely, but after all, in the end, there was no doubt in the minds of anyone that the laudanum had been so administered, and that Herries, under the soporific influence, could not have left his bed to commit the crime. After some delay, the magistrate therefore did what he was forced to do--he acquitted Herries, who left the court a free man, much to the joy of Elspeth. When the late prisoner appeared outside the court, the news of his acquittal and the reason of it had already preceded him, and he was welcomed by the large crowd with great joy. With his wife Herries hurried to a cab, intending to drive to Browne's house, and many a hand was stretched out to greet him. Undoubtedly everyone was pleased that the young man had been proved guiltless, and Elspeth, with the tears streaming down her face, could do nothing but gaze into the eyes of her husband, who was thus at large again.

Followed by shouting crowds, the cab drove to Dr. Browne's abode, but Gowrie remained behind as the hero of the hour, and submitted, not unwillingly, to the questioning of many reporters, who were anxious to hear more. He related what he had said in the court, and protested again and again that his only reason for giving the laudanum was to make his son-in-law sleep. As there was no reason, on the face of it, why he should not be believed, everyone thought that the old man spoke the truth, and for once Gowrie enjoyed the sensation of being the lion of the hour.

But Herries, much as he was indebted to his father-in-law, was not quite satisfied. When Gowrie returned to Browne's house, the young man drew him aside and questioned him closely.

"You robbed me of money," said Herries abruptly.

"Only a few shillings, laddie," chuckled Gowrie, "ye wudna hae me tak awa ma ain character."

"And you gave me the drug so that you might rob me in safety?"

"Aye," Gowrie rubbed his hands, "joost sae. An' a lucky nicht it wis for ye that I did pit the drug intae yon gless."

"You are a scoundrel, Gowrie."

"Eh! This tae yer paw-in-law, an' tae the mon wha saved yer life!"

"You wouldn't have saved my life if I had not married Elspeth," was Herries' dry retort.

"Weel, maybe I wudnae hae pit maesel tae sic trouble. Hoots, mon, a few shullin' against yer ain neck. It's gey cheap."

The old fellow was so shameless that Herries could say nothing. He stopped rebuking a man who could not feel the force of a rebuke, and went on another tack.

"When you came up to rob me, did you see or hear anything?"

"Aye, but I winna tell ye what I saw."

"You want to make more money out of it, I expect. Well, if you don't tell me, I'll inform the police, and you----"

"Nae, nae, laddie. Dinna dae that. I'll tell ye. I saw a wumon in the paussage. Aye, I dinna ken wha she wis, but I saw a petticoat."

"You SAW her?"

"Dinna pin me tae a word, my manny. It wis dark, ye ken, when I wis paying ye a veesit, an'----"

"About what time was this. After twelve, or before it?"

"It wis nearer one o'clock in the morn," said Gowrie, after some hesitation. "I wanted tae gie the drug time tae dae its marciful work. I wis sleepin' in the tap-room, ye ken, aye, and a weary bed I hed, laddie. When the clock--deil

tak it for keeping me awake--struck the haulf-hour, I joost slipped off mae shoon, and crept up tae see ye sleepin' like a bairn."

"Had you a light?"

"Nae, nae, I wis nane sae dafty. A' the hoose, es I thocht, wis in slumber, and I didnae care tae wauken the puir weary folk. I kenned the lie o' the hoose weel enow, and joost crept up the stairs tae yer room. The door wisnae closed. I saw tae that when I ganged up wi' yon limmer, the Narby wumon. I came in lamb-like, nae wishful to disturb ye, and then I struck a match. Ye were sleeping like a bairn," added Gowrie pathetically, "an' I thanked my gude thocht for makin' ye sleep. Aye, I wis a faither tae ye on that nicht, laddie."

"Well? Well?" questioned Herries impatiently.

"Weel, weel," reiterated Gowrie testily, "I turned oot the pockets of yer troosers, and fund less nor I expected. But I wis thankful for sma' marcies, and departed wi' the few shullin's, the which," protested Mr. Gowrie, "was scarce the price o' the beneficent drug I gie ye tae mak ye sleep."

"To enable you to rob me you mean? Well, you saw----?"

"Naethin'. But I heard the swish o' a wumon's dress departing doon the stairs. There, I'll tell ye nae mair. I dinna ken wha the female was. Maybe the landlady?"

"Or Señora Guzman," replied Herries, much perplexed.

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. MOUNTFORD'S ACCUSATION

That same evening, after dinner, Angus and Elspeth sat side by side in the severe-looking drawing-room. Their host had been called out unexpectedly, after the usual custom of patients, who appear to fall ill at the most awkward moments. But in this instance the young couple were rather glad that Browne had departed, as they wished to have a quiet and confidential talk about their position and their future. Hitherto, owing to the attentions of various friends, this had been impossible.

Herries looked extremely well in spite of his late exciting experiences,--a very different man to the haggard tramp who had arrived at the "Marsh Inn," or hotel, as many of the papers called it. Mrs. Kind had fed him well during his sojourn in the caravan, and while detained in the Tarhaven prison he had been treated kindly. But he still wore the threadbare blue serge suit, although Browne had supplied him with clean linen, a luxury which Herries much appreciated.

Elspeth was different also. In every way she was improved, as her face had filled out, and her figure looked less fragile, and her eyes were less like those of a hunted deer. Good food and a happy love--for happy it was in spite of untoward circumstances--had done much to improve the miserable little drudge of the inn. Hand in hand the lovers sat, for they were more lovers than ever, and the marriage bond was yet new to them. There was only one electric lamp alight and that was at the end of the rather large room, therefore Mr. and Mrs. Herries sat in comparative twilight. After all the storm and stress of the last few weeks, they felt extremely happy and like weary sailors who had reached a safe port. Elspeth made some such remark, but Angus laughed as he kissed her.

"You dear, silly darling," said the young man, slipping his arm round her waist, "we are not in port yet; there is a long voyage before us, and a stormy one, before we are safely berthed."

"What do you mean, dear? You are safe."

"My life is and my liberty, but you forget, Elspeth, that I am as poor and friendless as ever."

"Not friendless, since you have me."

He pressed her to his breast.

"I count you as more than a friend, as my wife."

"Well then, there is Dr. Browne----"

"He's a trump."

"And Sweetlips Kind."

"The best fellow in the world, save Browne."

"And my father."

Here Herries' eulogies came to a stand-still. He screwed up his face and shook his head.

"I am not so sure that we can call your father a friend, Elspeth."

"Oh, Angus, when he saved your life."

"My dear, I am well aware of that, but his reason was simply a pecuniary one. He told me plainly that he would not have put himself out had I not married you."

"Ah," said Elspeth somewhat bitterly, "he is only too glad to get rid of me. I have always been an encumbrance to him."

"Well, at least, you are now with someone who appreciates you," said Angus, kissing her.

"Do you really mean that, Angus? Do you really love me?"

"Darling, is there any need to tell you?"

"Every need," she said vehemently, and with a suspicion of tears in her voice, "I have been so lonely all my life. No one has ever loved me. I have been kicked about from pillar to post, neglected, starved, beaten, scorned. Oh, dearest heart," she looked up passionately into his face, "can you wonder that I want you to tell me again and again how much you love me."

"I love you,--I love you,--I love you. There, will that do?"

"Again! Again!" she hid her face in his breast, and he bent over her till his lips touched her soft hair.

"I love you with all my heart and soul, you are the one woman in the wide world to me."

"And I am the only woman, not Maud."

"Maud!" he snapped his fingers, "pouf."

"Ah," said Elspeth jealously, "but you loved her,--you would have married her."

"I loved her in the usual way a shallow young man loves. She was pretty and coquettish when I was with her in Edinburgh, and her exterior drew me. I loved her merely for her beauty, never for her heart and beautiful nature, as I love you, dearest. It required months of misery to deepen my nature and make me appreciate a true woman, such as you are. Ours is one of those rare marriages that is made in heaven. Never be jealous of Maud Tedder, my own love; you alone possess my heart."

"I know it, I feel it. All the same,--" she paused.

"All the same----?"

"I want you to tell me again that you love me."

"I love you, little donkey."

Elspeth threw her arms round his neck, and brought his lips down to her own.

"I am a donkey--all the same, I am a woman who wants to be loved. I _am_ loved," this triumphantly, "but oh, how delicious it is to love and to be loved, Angus."

"Elspeth!"

They clasped hands and looked deep into one another's eyes; then the reaction came and both burst out laughing.

"We are like a couple of children," said Herries, smiling, "merry children."

"Why not? We have been sad for so long."

"And foolish children."

"Ah, my own, we have been too wise in the misery of the world. Look at your years of sorrow; look at my years of trouble. We have both been unlucky."

"Mr. and Mrs. Jonah," said Angus, with a shrug, "well, darling, I think two bad lucks make one good one. Since we have been married the luck has changed."

"In what way?"

"I am free from a terrible charge, and you are my wife. Henceforth I truly believe that we will be the happiest and most fortunate couple in the wide world. Two negatives make an affirmative, so why shouldn't your bad luck and mine, when joined, as they now are, make one superlatively good one? What do you think?"

"I think the same as you. Everything will go well now."

"Hurrah," Angus shook her hands vigorously, "let us build castles in the air, and perhaps they will turn into bricks and mortar."

Elspeth caught his spirit, and laughed also.

"Well, then, we will learn who killed your uncle, and then you will get fifty thousand a year, upon which," she gave him a comical look, "we can manage

to exist."

"With due economy," said Herries gravely, "but we must not forget, my dearest, that should this great fortune come to us, we will have to hold it in trust for less fortunate people. There are many male and female Jonahs about, who will have to be helped."

"I quite agree with you; but we must get the money first. Now that you are free, Angus, you can search for yourself."

"I intend to; but in what direction can I search?"

Elsbeth thought for a few moments.

"I fancy it would be best for you to return to the 'Marsh Inn,' and question Mrs. Narby."

"Do you think that she knows the truth?"

"I can't be sure; but she is an observant woman, and if you promise her a reward she would tell you of anything suspicious she might have seen."

"That's true," then Angus burst into laughter, "I wonder if she'll be civil."

"Of course. She must have seen in the papers that you have inherited this money, and if you make it worth her while----"

"But I can't until I find out who killed my uncle. Only when the true assassin is discovered will I be able to inherit."

"Make it worth Mrs. Narby's while and she will assist you," insisted Elspeth. "I am quite sure that the secret of the crime is to be discovered at the 'Marsh Inn.'"

"Perhaps Mrs. Narby herself killed my uncle."

"Why do you think that?" asked Mrs. Herries, quite startled.

"Your father acknowledged that when he went up the stairs after midnight, to

empty my pockets while I was lying in that drugged sleep, he heard the swish of a woman's gown in the darkness, going down the stairs. That looks as though Mrs. Narby----"

"No," exclaimed Elspeth vehemently, and rising to gesticulate, "I really don't think that Mrs. Narby, bad as she is, would commit such a crime."

"She might have done so to get that two thousand pounds, and then have placed the pocket-book in my room to----"

"No, no, she would rob, and scold, and do many things, but at heart she is a coward and would never risk her neck."

"Well, then, perhaps the woman who went down the stairs was Señora Guzman."

"I don't see how she could have got into the inn."

"Neither do I," said Herries, scratching his head in perplexity, "and I don't see either why she should have killed my uncle. Say that she wanted this two thousand in order to fit out an expedition to hunt for this Peruvian treasure, my uncle was ready to give it to her, provided she removed Kyles from Maud's path."

"Yet Maud accuses her," said Elspeth, equally perplexed.

Angus shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course. Maud is a jealous rival and would hang Señora Guzman at once if she could manage to do it. It was strange that Señora Guzman was not at the trial to-day."

"Why should she have come?"

"Well, you see, she told Kind that the crime was--as she verily believed--a political one, and so she might have been present in order to save me, seeing that she must know that I am innocent, and did not know what your father was about to say."

"The best thing will be to see her."

"I intend to. I'll go along to Pierside to-morrow, and board that yacht. And," added Herries emphatically, "I don't leave it until I learn all she knows."

"Do you think Captain Kyles----?"

"No. Mrs. Mountford said that he was with Maud at the 'Moated Hall' on the night of the murder. I believe," said Herries, walking up and down the room, "that your father knows more than he will admit. He was sleeping in the tap-room, and anyone who went up the stairs would have to pass through it----"

"Oh, no, Angus----"

"Well, I don't exactly mean that. But your father--who admits to having been kept awake by the clock--would have heard anyone who went up the stairs. Also, he might have heard anything that went on outside the house."

"What went on there?"

"Armour was kidnapped, and the man whom Sir Simon was to see climbed in at the window, where stood the candle with the red handkerchief before it as a signal. Depend upon it your father knows."

"Where is he now?" asked Elspeth. "We might ask him."

"Pooh. He'll say only so much as suits his book. He went an hour ago to see Maud and claim his reward."

"What reward?"

"You know. The five hundred pounds that she offered for my apprehension. He caught me, so he can claim it. The payment will make a large hole in Maud's reduced income of one thousand a year."

"I promised, if she saved you, Angus, that she should have half the fortune of her father."

"I know, but you are released from that promise. Maud did not save me. Your

father did that. Unless I see some very strong reason I won't give Maud a penny."

"We must forgive our enemies," rebuked Elspeth.

"Quite so, but Maud sought my life to further her love-chase. I daresay in the end I'll help her, but she must suffer a trifle for her wickedness. Hullo, who is this. Browne come back?"

As Herries spoke the door opened, and a bulky gentleman entered, with a bulky lady behind him. Then a voice spoke, which was easily recognised, and a hand turned on the full glare of the electrics.

"Settin' in the twilight like turtle dooves," said Mr. Gowrie, "blind tae th' warld as ye micht say. Aye, young luvie,--young luvie." While the old tutor ran on in this jocular manner, the bulky lady advanced. She was clothed in black, and wore a large picture hat trimmed with large ostrich feathers. Her advance was like that of a tragedy queen, and she waved Gowrie aside, when he attempted to speak.

"Man," she said, grandly, "let me introduce myself. Mrs. Herries!" she bowed. "Mr. Herries!" she repeated the performance. "I am Mrs. Mountford, the companion of Miss Maud Tedder."

"Yes," said Angus rather coldly, "and may I ask why you have come here, Mrs. Mountford?"

"To appeal to you on behalf of your cousin. She has been wrongfully dispossessed by her father, and--"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Mountford, but I am unable to enter into this question at present. Until I discover who killed my uncle, I am not in possession of the property."

"And what if I can help you to discover the assassin?"

"What! You know----?"

"I know nothing, but I have grave suspicions."

"Of whom?"

Mrs. Mountford did not reply immediately. She sank into a chair, and arranged herself like a queen. Gowrie stood beside her with folded hands and looked at her majestic form satirically. Elspeth sat beside Angus, and waited to hear what this formidable looking dame had to say.

"I came here with Mr. Gowrie," said the ex-governess, "as he has had some difficulty with Miss Tedder."

"Deeficulty do ye ca' it, wumon!" cried Gowrie, who could keep silence no longer. "She's nae mair nor a Jeezebel, a Scarlet Wumon o' Babylon, takin' ma hardly earned siller frae me. Deeficulty says she, aye, and rank cheatin', swindling, embeezling, thieving----"

"Hush," Mrs. Mountford waved her hand, as though rebuking a rebellious subject, "be silent. Mr. Herries, this man----"

"Gentlemon, ye bauld limmer. Aye, an a meenister foreby."

"He came to see Miss Tedder to claim his reward for having betrayed your hiding-place."

"He has certainly earned it," said Herries, coolly.

"Miss Tedder refuses to encourage this Judas-like conduct, since she did not wish to pay the reward unless you were convicted."

"And hanged," ended Angus, laughing. "Why don't you finish the sentence, Mrs. Mountford? I am quite aware that my cousin was only too anxious to have my neck stretched provided she got the money."

Elspeth would have burst into indignant speech, but Herries laid a reproving hand on her arm. Gowrie grumbled.

"Judas ye ca' me, ye jade o' Nineveh, yon great city, and a' for askin' for ma ain."

"You betrayed your son-in-law," said Mrs. Mountford.

"Aye, kenning weel I cud save the laddie's neck."

"So Miss Tedder guessed, and so she will not pay the reward."

"I'll county-court the hizzy. Aye, she'll pay doon the siller, or jailed she shall be for a bleezin' slut o' Tophet."

"Mr. Herries," the lady in black appealed to Angus, "I must really ask you to stop this man talking."

"Well, Mrs. Mountford, you can hardly expect me to do that, when you come here calmly to regret that I was not hanged."

"Send her away," said Elspeth angrily.

"Peace," said Mrs. Mountford, with severity; then addressed herself to Herries. "Believe me, I regret that Maud should have conducted herself in such a way. But love is a short madness, as the Latin Grammar says, and Miss Tedder is in love with Captain Kyles. He, I truly believe, loves her for the money she once had, and will not return to her side unless she recovers her fortune."

"I see," said Angus coolly, "and you come here to ask me to give up the fortune so that she may marry Kyles. I must say that is an impertinent request."

"Hear me out, Mr. Herries. I love Maud. She has her faults, and she has, I admit, behaved badly. All the same she has her good points, and you must remember that she was, so to speak, under the thumb of this adventurer Kyles. Maud only wished you hanged to save him."

"But Kyles wanted to save me," said Herries, puzzled, "at least, Dr. Browne told me."

"Ah, that was acting on Captain Kyles' part," said Mrs. Mountford contemptuously. "He wanted to see you hanged, so that the question of the assassination should be settled. Maud was quite willing that this should be so,

provided she married him. Ah, Mr. Herries, you must forgive Maud. She loves so much."

"Even to hanging me; a nice foundation for a marriage, I must say."

"It is infamous, talking in this way," cried Elspeth, who was white with indignation.

"What can ye expect frae a wumon wha wull nae dischairge her lawful indebtedness? The fair sex, they ca' ye, the unfair limmers ye are, the hail clamjamfarry. Adaam wis respectable beside Eve, the cutty, wi' her stolen fruit, and nae clothing."

Herries began to laugh. The extreme humour of Mrs. Mountford, although quite unconscious, appealed to him, and the indignation of Gowrie was not less amusing. Everyone had his or her own axe to grind, as the saying goes, and each was ready to sacrifice everyone and anyone to get what he or she wanted. It was a Gilbert and Sullivan opera without music.

"Come, Mrs. Mountford," said Angus, suddenly becoming serious, "tell me what you want."

"I want you to have Captain Kyles arrested."

"Why?"

"Because I am quite sure that he murdered Sir Simon."

"Impossible. I understood that you declared he was with Maud at the Hall on the night of the murder."

"I said that at Maud's request," confessed Mrs. Mountford, with a blush. "Indeed, I have given in too much to her, and for doing so I ask your pardon, Mr. Herries."

"You would have let him be hanged," cried Elspeth indignantly.

"No, indeed, no, Mrs. Herries. Had Maud persisted in her mad intention of incriminating your husband, I should have come forward at the trial to

denounce the real murderer--Captain Kyles."

"Can you prove that he is guilty?" asked Angus quickly.

"I can prove nothing. But I know that Sir Simon wrote a letter to Captain Kyles at Mr. Ritson's office, asking for a meeting at the 'Marsh Inn,' and telling him that he had disinherited Maud, because she insisted upon marrying him."

"But Maud herself said that the letter was written to Señora Guzman," put in Elspeth.

"Alas, that is merely jealousy, Maud knows that Captain Kyles will marry Señora Guzman, failing herself, and so wishes to remove a rival from her path. All love, Mrs. Herries, all love."

"Humph," said Angus, "I must say that Maud has a very pretty way of getting rid of people. She was willing to hang me; she is willing to hang Señora Guzman; and all to marry the man who killed her father. A nice person, upon my word."

"A cutty--a slut--a jade!" said Gowrie wrathfully. "Maud doesn't know that Captain Kyles killed her father," said Mrs. Mountford, "but she knew, as I do, that he was at the inn on the night of the crime."

"He was the gentleman expected by Sir Simon?"

"On the authority of the letter, which Captain Kyles showed to Maud, and about which Maud spoke to me--yes."

"Then my cousin must have a shrewd idea that Kyles is guilty," said Herries. "However, we can talk of the ethics of Maud later. Where is Captain Kyles now? At the Hall?"

"No. He is at the 'Marsh Inn,' stopping there, in fact. He wrote to Maud saying that he was putting up there for a week."

"Did he explain his reason?"

"No. He simply said that he was there, and would see her before he returned to the 'Tarabacca,' which is still at Pierside."

"With Señora Guzman on board?"

"I suppose so. But I want you, Mr. Herries, to have Captain Kyles arrested and his guilt proved. Then you can give Maud a sum of money, and I'll take her to the Colonies, there to begin a new life."

"I shall certainly see Kyles, and have him arrested if possible," said Herries, "but I am not quite certain about giving Maud money. In the first place I am penniless myself----"

"You will be rich when Captain Kyles is condemned."

"Not sufficiently so to pay Maud an income for behaving in so wicked a way. I wonder you have the face to ask me, Mrs. Mountford."

"I love her in spite of her faults," pleaded the ex-governess; and then her dignity broke down and she began to cry. "I know she is wicked and has been led astray by Captain Kyles, but I brought her up from the cradle and am attached to----"

"An' muckle creedit does the lassie dae ye," cried Gowrie angrily.

"Mr. Herries," said Mrs. Mountford wiping her eyes and taking no notice of the tutor, "what will you do?"

"Nothing at present. I am sorry, Mrs. Mountford, for I recognise your good heart, but Maud is too bad. Later we can speak of this. You can go, Mrs. Mountford."

The ex-governess, with all her stiffness taken out of her, rose and walked limply to the door. Without a word, she vanished, and the three left alone, stared at one another. Gowrie opened his mouth. Elspeth would have spoken, but Herries, master of the situation, held up his hand.

"Not a word from either of you," he said, "Gowrie, you must take up your quarters at the 'Marsh Inn,' and let me know what Kyles is up to."

"Why not yersel', laddie?"

"He would suspect me, he won't suspect you. You can go to-morrow."

"And what will you do, Angus?" asked Elspeth. "I'll go to Pierside and interview Señora Guzman."

"Do you believe that Captain Kyles is guilty, Angus?"

"No, your father heard a woman moving about in the darkness. I would not be surprised to learn that the woman was Mrs. Mountford herself. I can account in no other way for her preposterous behaviour."

CHAPTER XX

AT THE "MARSH INN"

The Rev. Michael Gowrie was not averse to visiting the "Marsh Inn" again, as he was well known there, and posed as a fireside king. Certainly Mrs. Narby had refused to receive him again, after the desertion of Elspeth, but now that she knew Gowrie was the father-in-law of a wealthy man, she would probably change her tune. Moreover, the old tutor saw that it was necessary to discover the assassin of Sir Simon, if the money was to be fingered by himself. For if Herries did not fulfil the conditions of the will, and bring the murderer to justice, he could not inherit the fortune, in which case Mr. Gowrie would not reap the reward he hoped to gain, for letting Elspeth marry the man. The golden apple which Gowrie longed to pluck was

yet beyond his reach.

Therefore he returned to the "Marsh Inn" the next day, and was sourly welcomed by the landlady. Indeed, she still showed a disposition to keep him out of doors, but Gowrie having five pounds in his purse,--he had procured the same from Browne for business purposes,--flashed his gold in her eyes, and spoke largely.

"Ye can gie me the best bedroom an' the parlour," said he, with the air of a millionaire. "And see that the cooking be gude, and the drink plentiful. The lean days are gane, and noo come in the fat years o' merry-making. An about time, I'm theenking."

Mrs. Narby was still sore that Elspeth should have defied her, and departed. Also she was not pleased that her former drudge should have married a man worth fifty thousand a year. Ritson, while informing the Press that Herries had got the money, had, for obvious reasons suppressed the fact that he had a duty to perform before getting the cash. Therefore Mrs. Narby was extremely jealous of Elspeth, and nothing would have given her greater pleasure than to have scratched her face, and pulled her hair. But Mrs. Herries was beyond the reach of her malice, and the father of Mrs. Herries had money galore. It was worth while to transfer that money from his pocket into hers. She therefore smoothed her sour face, and softened her raucous voice, which was as hoarse as the note of a starling. In her desire to propitiate Gowrie she even curtsied.

"I am very glad t' see you, sir," croaked Mrs. Narby, with a greedy eye on the gold which Gowrie held in his hand, "jes like ole times, ain't it, you an' me? An' ow's yer daughter, me dear friend?"

"Revellin' in silks an' satins an jewels of price," replied Gowrie carelessly, "there's naethin' ower gude for the lassie."

"Ho!" yelled Mrs. Narby almost suffocated with rage, "it is a chainge, Mr. Gowrie, ain't it? I thought she'd be a gallows widder!"

"Ye're nae paid tae theenk," retorted Gowrie with his grand air, "gae spin, ye jade, and bring me th' flowin' bowl,--th' which Tommy Moore sang about."

"Y' must pay me a'ead."

"An' hoo muckle for the bedroom an' the' parlour?"

"There ain't no parlour. Captin' Kyles 'as thet, and th' bedroom es the old gent wos a-murdered in. But y' kin 'ave the room es yer son-in-law slep' in. Boar' an' lodgin'," added Mrs. Narby glibly, "two quid a week, in advance."

"Hoots! Ye're demented, woman. Twa pun', says she, the deil tak her for a greedy glede. Nae, nae, ye'll nae pairt a Scotchmon frae his siller sae easily. I'll gie ye haulf-a-croon a nicht for ma room and pay ma victuals as I gang."

"Captin' Kyles guy me three quid," said Mrs. Narby sullenly.

"The mair fule he. Weel, tak it or e'en leave it. I'm nae verra carein' tae stap in a butt an' a ben o' this sort. I joost cam' here tae show ye I wisnae prood or puffed up by mae prosperity, for th' sake o' auld lang syne, as ye micht pit it, and nae lee."

"You can stop at that price by the daiy," said Mrs. Narby, after some reflection, "but there's a lot of fellers come 'ere to stop 'cos of thet there murder. If I gets a better lodger, out y' goes."

This just suited Gowrie, as he knew that Mrs. Narby was bluffing. No one would stop at the "Marsh Inn" while the season was so wet, notwithstanding the attraction of the murder. What Captain Kyles was doing in such a damp locality he could not think, unless indeed the Captain was trying to hide his tracks in the affair of the murder, always supposing that he was guilty. Gowrie was not sure of this, in spite of Mrs. Mountford's accusation. Nor did he believe the rash statement of Herries that Mrs. Mountford herself had committed the crime. But if she was innocent and Kyles was not guilty, who had killed the old man? This was what Gowrie wished to learn, and he soon saw that he had set himself a very difficult task.

"Weel," said he, when Mrs. Narby gave her decision, "we'll close on those terrums. I'll tack ma room by the nicht an' ma board by the day. There's haulf-a-croon in advaunce, an' dinna waste it. Where's yon gowk o' a Pope?"

"My son's in Londing, and I'll thenk y' not t' call 'im names," said Mrs. Narby hotly. "He's a genius, and 'ave gone to git 'is poetry inter print, so there."

"An' wha's gain' tae publish his doggrel?"

"'Imself!" snapped the landlady sulkily.

"An' where's the siller comin' frae?"

Mrs. Narby put her arms akimbo in her favourite attitude and stormed in her old style.

"I guve it 'im, d'y' see," she cried furiously, "y' think I can't do wot I likes with m' own? Me an' Narby 'ave come in for a legacy, and we're a-goin' t' giv h'up th' inn an' go t' th' Staits, where Narby wos reared. Pope's comin' too, arter he 'as 'is verse brought h'out. So there, an' I don' want any of yer sauce, though yer are the father-in-lawr of thet cove es murdered Sir Simon, es I believe he did."

"Wumon!"

"Don't call me naines, or I'll scretch th' h'eyes h'out o' yer 'ead; an' there's Allus callin' in the kitching," and Mrs. Narby hurried away, leaving Gowrie full of thought.

He obtained a glass of whisky from Alice, the miserable maid-of-all-work, who had stepped into Elspeth's place, and sat down on the tap-room settle to smoke and think. Outside the rain was falling heavily, and there was the usual grey mist over the marshes. But the room was warm, and the fire burned brightly. Mr. Gowrie approved of the whisky, and the pipe soothed his nerves, which had been rather upset by Mrs. Narby's sudden wrath. With his glass in his gouty old hand, and his pipe in his mouth, he sat staring at the driftwood fire, thinking a lot, after the fashion of the celebrated parrot.

Two things struck him as strange. First, that Mrs. Narby should have so suddenly lost her temper with a man whom she apparently desired to propitiate; and second, that she--or Narby--should have so unexpectedly inherited a legacy. If she really had money it was quite natural that she should

have let Pope go to London to publish his poetry, for the virago adored her son, even though she did not understand his writing. But where had Mrs. Narby got that money? Gowrie, in his frequent visits, had learned a lot about Narby's past life in the States; but he had never heard that the Anglo-American expected a legacy. Indeed, Mrs. Narby, on one occasion, had said that neither herself nor her husband were bothered with relatives. It was queer that the money should come to them so suddenly, and from an unknown source. Equally queer that the pair should decide to seek America and give up the inn. Certainly the inn had been doing better business than ever, since the murder, owing to the morbid curiosity of visitors, so it was odd, to say the least of it, that at such a moment, a money-making concern should be given up.

"Aye!" meditated Gowrie, sipping his drink, "I mind now. Th' auld mon hed siller wi' him, es yon lawyer body tauld Kind. Twa thoosand. Aye! A couple o' hundreds in gold, an' one thoosand eight hundred in notes, Bank o' England, nae doot. Hoots! they wudnae gang wi' only twa hundred in gold, an' they darenae cash the notes. Aye! The ways o' transgressors are haird."

These thoughts revealed plainly that Mr. Gowrie suspected Mrs. Narby of having killed Sir Simon, either with or without the connivance of her husband, in order to get the money. The gold she had used to send Pope to London, and doubtless had supplied him with a sum to publish his verse; but the notes, owing to the warning of the numbers being kept having been given in the newspapers, had not been presented. The desire to go at once to the States was thus explained. Mrs. Narby, and possibly her husband, were flying from justice. Gowrie was certain that she had killed the old man, as he remembered the swish of a woman's dress which he had heard in the darkness. There was a sound about that which a keen-eared man like himself could not mistake.

"And then she knew that Herries was drugged," thought Gowrie, "and so implicated him in the crime by placing the razor on his quilt and smearing his sleeve with blood. Then she found the pocket-book under the bed, where no doubt she placed it. Those who hide, find. I see now that she is guilty--the money carried by Sir Simon was too tempting for her. She must have hidden the notes somewhere. If I could only find them, I would soon have her in

charge."

This being Gowrie's belief, he made up his mind to stop at the inn until he could unearth the notes, and meanwhile he kept a jealous watch on Mrs. Narby's every action. She became aware of his scrutiny, and--strange to say in so masculine a woman--became panic-struck. It was with the greatest difficulty that she preserved her composure towards him. During the afternoon, and when it was growing dark, she broke down entirely.

"Why do you 'ave yer h'eye on me?" she inquired angrily, "I ain't got 'orns a-growin' h'out of me 'ead, 'ave I?"

"Nae, nae, but ye mind me of a sister o' mine, lang syne deid. She wos a sweet lassie."

"Rats," retorted Mrs. Narby, going about her duties as usual, but she bridled all the same, being open to a compliment in spite of her resemblance to the witches in Macbeth. But after she had shown that she knew his eye was on her, Gowrie became much more circumspect, and several times later when Mrs. Narby looked, she found that he was not staring in her direction. Consequently she recovered her spirits and nerve. But Gowrie was on her trail, as she had, to his mind, given herself entirely away.

Gowrie sat, genial and warm in the tap-room, talking to anyone who came in, and enjoying himself thoroughly. Alice, the maid, served the yokels with beer, and Mrs. Narby tore in and out of the room, to keep an eye on what was doing. But for the most part she remained in the back parts of the house, and Gowrie noticed that her dress was wet, and her boots muddy as though she had been out in the rain. More, he noted that the mud she left on the tap-room floor was red, and remembered that there was earth of this peculiar hue down by the creek which ran past the bottom of the back garden attached to the "Marsh Inn." Wondering what could take her down there, and suspecting from her uneasy glances that she had something to conceal, Gowrie resolved to take the first opportunity to spy on her footsteps. But she gave him no chance for quite a long time, and then, when the opportunity did occur, he was momentarily withdrawn from his purpose by the entrance of Captain Bruce Kyles, who strode bluffly into the tap-room, looking more like a buccaneer than ever.

"Aye, Captain," said Gowrie genially, "it's you, is it?"

Kyles stared at the fiery-faced old man with narrowing eyes.

"I don't think I've met you before," he remarked. "Maybe, but there's mair knows Tom Fool, nor Tom Fool knows, ye ken."

Kyles shrugged his shoulders and was passing on to the parlour, when the next remark of Gowrie arrested his steps.

"Aye, ye'll be a freend o' Miss Tedder,--Maud they ca' her, like the bonny wench in Tennyson's poem, th' which canna compare wi' Robbie Burns."

The Captain wheeled round sharply, and brought his heels together with a click. Plainly he was startled by this speech, and not pleased, as was evident from the flaming glance he sent in Gowrie's direction.

"I _have_ seen you before," he said abruptly.

"Aye," said Gowrie placidly, but making a shot in the dark, "at mirk midnight, when the fiends o' gory bluid were abroad in this very inn nae sae lang ago."

"What the devil do you mean? I never stopped at this inn before."

"Then where did ye see me, sir?"

"In the Court during the trial of young Herries."

"Eh, then ye were there?"

"I was,--though I don't see what it is to you."

"Weel, weel, I wis leukin' for ye, but didnae see ye."

"What did you want with me?" asked Kyles, fiercely.

"Joost tae hae a crack."

"What about?"

"Hoots, it's a lang story, and I'm gey dry."

This was an intimation that the Captain should replenish Mr. Gowrie's empty glass, but Kyles did not take the hint. Instead of answering, he stared gloomily at the old man, and seemed to be thinking deeply. Presently his face cleared, and he stopped pulling his long black moustache.

"Later on you can come to my parlour and have a talk," he said, brightly, "just now I have to see to something before I sit down to my dinner."

"Aye," murmured the old scamp to himself, when Kyles vanished once more into the night. "It's a guilty conscience I'm theenking. I wunner noo, if the mon wis in the inn, as Mistress Mountford says. She's got a liar's eye, has yon limmer, and yet yon hint o' a meetin' at midnicht seemed tae startle the black-avised laddie. Will ye walk intae mae parlour, says he. Maybe I will, but ye'll nae devour me, ye spider. Dods, but there's mair in this nor talk I'm of opeenion. Hech, but I'll pit mae best fut foremaist, and get on the windy side o' the man. He's nae gangin' tae get the upper hand o' Michael Gowrie, Maister o' Arts. I'll joost bide ma time."

This he did, and while waiting for the return of the buccaneer he partook largely of whisky, so that in an hour he was in a gloriously talkative mood. Kyles did not return, and Gowrie fancied that the buccaneer, conscience-stricken, had levanted. This being his belief, he waited for another hour, and then, when it was close upon seven o'clock, he rose and stretched himself.

"I'll joost tak a dander roond," he informed the casual guests, who had dropped in to drink and talk.

"Aye, there's nae mair fervid admirer o' the warks of Nature nor me. But I doot if ye puir tillers o' the soil wud unnerstan' the grand thochts which come tae me when gazing at the glorious firmament. There's a Wully Shakespeare spoiled in me, I doot. Aye, the drink, the drink. Auld Nick's broth tae catch unwary mortals."

With this final speech, which was Greek to the staring countrymen, he

strolled forth by the front door into the street to look at the glorious firmament of which he had spoken. But the same was veiled by mists, and the night was extremely dark. No one was about the wet roads, not even Armour, the policeman; so Gowrie had every opportunity of doing that which he intended to do, which was to stroll down to the Red Creek, and see, if possible, what Mrs. Narby had been doing there.

It may seem strange that Gowrie should have been so suspicious of the landlady, for she had given him little reason to doubt her. But after his chat with Herries, and her mention of the legacy, and her panic in dodging his eye, he really thought that she had something to conceal. Then again the red mud on her boots perplexed him and aroused his curiosity. How he proposed to see anything in the dark, it was hard to say, as he certainly could not trace the footsteps of the landlady, when the night was so gloomy. However, he climbed over the low fence, which parted the garden into which Herries had dropped, from the road and walked round to the back of the house. The luck held good, for the first thing he saw was a lantern dancing like a will-o'-the-wisp at the lower ends of the grounds, and just where the creek was, as he knew very well.

"It's the wumon hersel'," murmured the spy, feeling his wicked old heart beating loudly, "and what's she digging like a ghoul for?"

He saw that she was digging, for on creeping nearer, the feeble light of the lantern showed Mrs. Narby delving with a spade on the near shore of the creek. So absorbed was she in her work, that she did not hear the ponderous footsteps of Gowrie. He dropped to the earth near the hedge, and watched, while the rain fell upon him and made him shiver despite the whisky he had been drinking. Here he heard the lapping of the water, and also, strange to say, a muffled beating, some distance away in the fog, which sounded like a giant heart throbbing. Mrs. Narby appeared to hear a noise also, for suddenly, it would seem, she was stricken again with a panic fear, and flinging down her spade, she hurried back to the inn, leaving the lantern on the ground. But at the back door she hesitated; then returned hastily and removed the light, blowing it out as she went towards the house. Gowrie wondered at these strange and guilty proceedings.

"Aye, she's the guilty limmer wha did the deed o' darkness," said he, heaving

up his huge body from the mud. "Noo, I wonner what's she's hiding in the bosom of the univarsal mother. It surely canna be her ain son that she's murdered," he shivered at the thought, then dismissed it. "Nae, nae, it's her ill-gotten gains, the notes, I'm of opeenion. We'll hae a leuk."

The throbbing had stopped, the door of the inn was closed, and there was no sign of anyone lurking in the darkness. Gowrie stole forward, trying to find the place where Mrs. Narby had been digging. Suddenly he stumbled over a pile of fresh-turned earth, and came down on his hands. If the notes were hereabouts they would certainly be in a box, and with this idea in his head, he groped with his hands in the hole. For some time he was unsuccessful, and his hands became caked with mud. Again and again he raked the earth, but could feel nothing but the red, moist clay. The rain still continued to fall, and he was soaked to the skin. All the same, he continued searching, breathing heavily, and occasionally muttering to himself in words which certainly did not invoke blessings on Mrs. Narby's head.

Unexpectedly a thin beam of electric light shot over his head, and, as he started in terror, it was lowered, until he knelt in a stream of radiance. It came, as he could dimly see, from a boat on the low waters of the creek, which was moving inshore. From the deck he certainly could be seen easily, and as he was about to rise and fly, he heard an exclamation of surprise and a fierce oath. All at once, a man, followed by two others, sprang from the boat, and made for the shore. Unnerved with whisky and by this strange experience, Gowrie rose to make for the inn, but stumbled and fell again. The next moment he was in the grasp of strong rough hands, and in his terror--natural enough under the circumstances--he fainted.

CHAPTER XXI

ON BOARD THE YACHT

Being old and enfeebled by incessant doses of whisky, Gowrie remained unconscious for a long time. How many hours had passed since he had been seized in the back garden of the "Marsh Inn," he did not know, but when he opened his eyes and came to himself he found that he was in a luxuriously furnished room. Later, when his brain became clearer, and he was better able to take in his surroundings, he perceived, by the decorations of the place, and from a certain heaving sensation that he was in the state room of a vessel. From the ornate decorations and costly furniture, it looked more like a boudoir than a cabin. Then he remembered what Kind had reported concerning the splendours of the "Tarabacca," and realised, with some dismay, that he was on board that very boat. This belief was confirmed, when he beheld seated before him Captain Bruce Kyles in a gold-laced uniform.

As Gowrie struggled into a sitting position,--he had been dropped unconscious on the divan running round the cabin,--Kyles, whose brilliant black eyes were fixed mockingly on him, laughed in a provoking manner. He pointed to a bottle of whisky and a glass, which stood on the table.

"Take a drink, Mr. Gowrie," said the Captain, encouragingly, "and don't look so terrified. I mean to do you no harm."

"Nae harrum," quavered the old man, trying to steady his shaken nerves, "are ye nae ashamed tae treat me sae? What the deil dae ye mean?"

"Many things, Mr. Gowrie, and I would point out to you that blustering will not improve the situation. You are in my power."

"Aye, but this is a law-abiding country, and----"

"Oh," Captain Kyles shrugged his shoulders, "the law has no power on board this craft. I am the law."

"Ye're a Scotchmon, and thereby a subject o' His Mawjesty Edward First o' Scotland, for never wull I ca' him Seeventh o' yon kingdom. And as a subject

o' Edward o' Scotland aforesaid, I command ye tae pit me ashore, and pay me siller for moral damages."

"Like old Kruger. Eh?" said Kyles, pleasantly, "you're an old rip, Mr. Gowrie, and I'm going to bring you to book."

"In the name of your King----"

"I haven't got one. I'm Scotch by birth and name, cosmopolitan by choice. I was the admiral of the Indiana navy, but since the revolution, I am a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"Aye," Gowrie unconsciously stretched for the drink, and filled himself a full glass, "we're beginning tae unnerstan the seetuation, my mon. Yer a gipsy o' sorts."

"A gipsy of the sea."

"An' a black-hearted villain at that."

"You'll find me so if you don't keep a civil tongue in your head, Mr. Gowrie. Permit me to remind you that you are drinking my whisky, and therefore cannot afford to vilify your host."

"I'm here against ma wull."

"Yes. And here you will stop until you give me certain information regarding the murder of Sir Simon Tedder."

"I ken naethin'," said the old man sullenly.

"Aye, but ye ken muckle," mocked Kyles, "I can talk the Scottice tongue as well as you, sir. You said at the 'Marsh Inn' that you wanted to have a crack, so I brought you here to have it."

"Then ye kidnapped me wi' intention?"

Captain Kyles nodded carelessly, produced a cigarette and swung back in his chair as he lighted it.

"From what you hinted at the inn, I saw that you were poking your nose into matters which do not concern you."

"Aye, but ma son-in-law----"

"Quite so, Mr. Gowrie. You are playing his hand, and I am swinging on my own hook. When I left the tap-room on business promising to return, I intended to bring the motor-launch up the creek, and collar you. She was lying in the river on the other side of the station, having brought me from this ship."

"And am I at Pierside near the wharf?" asked Gowrie, thinking he could escape if he was in touch with Mother Earth.

"No. You are on board my yacht, and she is swinging at anchor off Tarhaven. If you go on deck you'll be able to see the lights of the town a quarter of a mile away."

"I'll gie the alarrum," and Gowrie rose unsteadily. Kyles made a long arm and pushed him back on to the divan.

"Sit tight," said Kyles, "and drink your whisky. You'll need it before I've done with you."

"Ye mean tae do an auld mon harrum?"

"Not unless the old man is obstinate. See here," Kyles flung away the cigarette and placing his arms on the table talked coldly and slowly, "after the hint you gave me at the inn, I intended to kidnap you. Failing anything else I would have rushed the inn, but you saved me the trouble by coming to dig in the garden. Now then, Mr. Gowrie, from what I have gathered at the inquest and the trial, and from sources which you need not be told about, I always thought you were a proper old scoundrel. When we spoke in the inn I knew you at once although it suited my book to pretend ignorance. I have long wanted to get a hold of you to hear exactly what you saw and heard in the tap-room on the night of Sir Simon's murder. But," added the Captain with emphasis, "I did not think to find in you the assassin of that old man."

Gowrie's remaining gray hairs rose straight on end, and he gasped.

"Me! Mel Is it o' me ye talk?"

"Of you,--of your very own self, as the children say," retorted Kyles coolly. "Look over there."

Gowrie, quite bewildered with the accusation brought against him, glanced towards the end of the cabin, which was in semi-darkness. Kyles leaning back, switched on an electric, and then the prisoner, as he truly was, saw a black tin box of no great size, covered with moist red earth.

"You were digging that up," said the Captain. "After your crime you buried it on the shore of the Red Creek, and returned to the inn, when you thought that all was safe, so as to get the notes."

"Notes!" screeched Gowrie rising in great excitement.

"As if you didn't know," replied the Captain contemptuously. "Yes, the notes to the value of one thousand eight hundred pounds, which you thieved from the pocket-book of Sir Simon, after you had cut his throat."

"That's a lee,--a lee. I'll hae ye in court for libel, nae less."

"Pooh! If you didn't hide the notes, how came you to be digging them up? After you fainted I had you bundled on board the launch, and then searched for myself. I found that box very speedily, and on opening it on the way back here, I discovered the notes. But the gold is gone."

"The gold."

"Two hundred pounds worth. What have you done with it?"

"Naething. I hadnae one shullin' o' they sovereigns."

Kyles rose, and stood over the shrinking old man menacing and dark; and with a fierce expression on his swart face.

"Mr. Gowrie," he said very distinctly, "no one knows that you have been

kidnapped, as no one saw the launch come up the creek. And I dare swear that you didn't tell anyone, when you came to look up your cache. You are here, in my power, and there's nothing whatever to prevent me from dropping you overboard, with a shot at your heels."

Gowrie, now truly frightened, grovelled with a cry of alarm.

"Nae, nae, dinna dae that. I ken naethin' aboot the siller. I never saw yon box until the noo, and I have nae set eyes on they notes."

"You liar."

"It's the truth. Ye ca' me a murderer. What then dae ye ca' Mistress Narby, wha acted the pairt o' Jael."

"Mrs. Narby?" ejaculated Kyles, with a start and a frown.

"Aye," mumbled Gowrie, "she brocht forth butter in a lordly dish, an gie him milk tae drink, foreby it wis a chop an' beer. Then the limmer, for want o' a hammer an' a nail, cut the auld mon's windpipe."

"Is this true?" Kyles seized Gowrie by the throat fiercely.

"Augh, augh," choked the tutor, grasping at the hands which clutched him, "ask her yersel!"

Captain Kyles loosened his grip, and walked up and down the long cabin, while Gowrie drank more liquor to restore his courage. And truly he needed all the courage he possessed, for the position he was in, terrified him not a little. Kyles was evidently a lawless man, and as no one knew that he, Gowrie, had been kidnapped, he could be put away in the manner described by the Captain, very easily. Fondling the glass, and looking as dismal as a sick monkey, Gowrie shivered and quailed at every glance of the Captain's fierce eyes. Finally after a short silence Kyles returned to the side of the table opposite to Gowrie.

"See here," said he, striking the table with his closed fist, "these notes, and that gold belong to me."

"Aye. I ken you wis expected by Sir Simon on that nicht."

"How do you know that?"

"The lawyer body told Sweetlips Kind how Sir Simon had written a letter to you on the 'Tarabacca,' the which is this boat."

"But how did Ritson know that the letter was addressed to me?"

"It's a lang story."

"Then you tell it, or by Heaven, over the side you go. I have too much at stake to waste time on your babbling, Mr. Gowrie. I am aware that Herries is free, as he deserved to be, for he is innocent. But he and that Cheap-jack, and the lawyer, and the doctor, all think that I am guilty, and should they discover certain things, I may be arrested."

"Then ye are guilty?" asked Gowrie, shrinking.

"No. Would I have accused you were I guilty? Would the notes have been buried in that back garden were I guilty? Use a little common-sense, man, and tell me what Herries and Co. are doing. I'm not going to be laid by the heels if I can help it, and I want that money," he pointed to the box.

"Ye have it,--ye have it."

"And much good it will do me. If it was in gold I would put you in a boat and steam away south at once, but those are notes, Mr. Gowrie, and the number of every note is in the possession of the police. Did I present those notes, I would be----"

"But ye can defend yourself."

"I'm not so sure of that. There are certain circumstances----"

"Then ye were in the inn on that night?"

"Are you here to question me?" said Kyles fiercely. "Just you tell me what is doing in this case, so that I know where I stand, or prepare to be thrown

overboard."

"If I tell ye all, will ye let me go?"

"I might or I might not. But if you speak the truth your life is safe. Until I leave these dangerous coasts I may have to keep you prisoner, but you will be well treated. Come now," Kyles rapped on the table, "tell me all."

Thus compelled, Gowrie, shivering with dread, related all that he knew concerning the case, from the time of Herries' arrest, down to his digging in the garden in search of what Mrs. Narby had hidden. The Captain kept his sinister eyes on the wrinkled old face before him, and made sure that the tutor was speaking the truth. Gowrie never considered that he might be betraying Herries to the enemy. All he wanted was to save his life, and escape from the gaze of those eyes which probed into his guilty old soul. When he ended the Captain flung himself back in the chair and laughed.

"You old villain," said he sneeringly, "no wonder I intend to keep you a prisoner."

"What?" cried Gowrie in dismay.

"For the time being. You have been so ready to betray your son-in-law, that you would have no hesitation in betraying me. You will stop here."

"For how long, Captain Kyles?"

"Until the murderer of Sir Simon is arrested."

"Mistress Narby?"

"Perhaps. It looks as though the woman was guilty, and yet----" his brows wrinkled themselves perplexedly, and he shook his head, "I do not quite see how to----" here he fell into a brown study.

"See to do what?" ventured Gowrie.

Kyles turned and smiled.

"That is my business. Do you think Mr. Herries would come and see me on board this boat, if I asked him?"

"I'll tack the message ma ain sel," said Gowrie eagerly.

"I dare say you would," replied the Captain dryly, "But it doesn't suit my book to let you go on shore; you might make capital out of this kidnapping."

"I swear----"

"I wouldn't were I you. It will do no good. Answer me a few questions, Mr. Gowrie. Where is Mrs. Narby?"

"At the inn."

"And her husband,--her son?"

"Pope's in London getting his poetry published, but I don't know where the husband is."

"Humph. I notice, Mr. Gowrie, that you waver between Scotch and English according to the state of your feelings. I assure you that now I know what I know, you are quite safe. Take another drink."

Kyles pushed the bottle in the old man's direction.

"And what's more, if I get this money," he glanced towards the box, "I'll pay you well for the fright that you have had."

"But hoo can ye get the siller?" asked Gowrie reassured, and again filling his glass.

"Herries will give me the equivalent of those notes."

"He canna, Captain."

"What, with fifty thousand a year?"

"He does nae come in for the siller until he finds the murderer o' his uncle."

"Well," said Kyles, coolly, "I may be able to help him there."

"Eh mon, dive ye ken wha killed the auld mon?"

"I do," said Kyles, nodding decisively.

"And who?"--Gowrie was devoured by curiosity.

"No, no, Mr. Gowrie. It is not yet the time to play my hand. You are of opinion that Mrs. Narby is guilty. Perhaps I struck the blow----"

"You," Gowrie almost shrieked, "and ye own it."

"I would if I wanted to," rejoined Kyles calmly, "only let me get the two thousand, which Sir Simon was about to pay me, and which by an accursed accident slipped through my fingers, and I don't mind confessing anything."

"But the police----?"

"They can't arrest me on board this boat, and when once steam is up, the 'Tarabacca' will show a clean pair of heels, until she drops anchor in South American waters."

"But there may be an extradition treaty between Indiana Republic and Great Britain."

"There is. But I'm not going back to Indiana. The President Señor Guzman, who was my friend, has been kicked out, and his enemy is in power. Of all his wealth and mine, this yacht only remains. I came to England to get money."

"And nae tae purchase war-ships."

"Pooh, that was a blind. However, to make a long story short, Señor Guzman is waiting for me and his daughter in a certain spot in South America which does not concern you. From that place we start out to find the treasure of Manco Capac. But to do so, I wanted money, and two thousand is the least I can do with. Indeed," said Kyles biting his fingers, "I fancy I'll ask Herries to double the sum. He can easily spare it out of fifty thousand a year."

"When he gets the siller."

"He'll get it right enough, after an interview with me," said Kyles carelessly, "and now we'll retire, Mr. Gowrie, and I'll inform you of my plans to bring Herries on board to-morrow."

"But I thocht he wis on board," said Gowrie perplexed. "When he sent me tae spy oot the land at the 'Marsh Inn,' he wis ganging tae Pierside to see Señora Guzman. Miss Tedder accuses her o' the crime."

"The devil she does. Then I can tell you it's a lie," cried Kyles, his dark face flushing, "Señora Guzman has nothing to do with these things. As to Herries,-I daresay he went to Pierside, but this boat left there early this morning. However, that makes things easier. Señora Guzman will invite him on board, and explain that she is entirely innocent."

"And will you confess your guilt, Captain?"

"I never said that I was guilty," retorted Kyles dryly, "don't jump to conclusions, Gowrie. Miss Tedder accuses Señora Guzman."

"Aye, and Mistress Mountford accuses you."

"Indeed. And you accuse Mrs. Narby. There's a devilish lot of females in this case. Well, Mr. Gowrie, and which person do you think guilty?"

"Mrs. Narby."

"Then you exonerate me."

"Weel," said Gowrie perplexedly, "ye speak sae queerly----"

"Quite so," said Kyles, cutting him short, "you evidently know nothing, Mr. Gowrie."

"I tauld ye sae," said the sage triumphantly.

"Did you see anything, when you slept in the tap-room?"

"Naething," said Gowrie in a brazen manner.

"And when you went upstairs, as you confessed at the trial?"

"I didnae confess that. I said that I drugged Herries' drink tae give him a sleep."

"Humph. I should scarcely think that you were so philanthropic. But you were up the stairs."

"Hoo d'y' ken?" asked Gowrie swiftly.

"Ah, that's my secret. I know more about your movements on that night than you think."

"Then you were at the inn; ye climbed in at the window."

"Perhaps," Kyles thought for a moment and then laughed. "Did you hear anything?"

"Weel, I heard the swish o' a wumon's dress in the darkness o' the stairs. It sounded as going doon."

"Ah. So you were up the stairs and in Herries' room. Robbing him of his few shillings."

"Hoo d'y' ken?" asked Gowrie once more. "I believe that you are the guilty person."

"Don't put all your money on that, Mr. Gowrie, you might lose. However, you'll know all in good time, say when I get that four thousand pounds, by exchanging those notes with Herries."

"There's no two thoosand yonder."

"No, I intend to have double as I said. Come now, you write a note to Herries asking him to come to-morrow evening to the 'Marsh Inn.' I'll meet him there and arrange matters."

"But he'll nae come."

"He will if you write the letter to trap him. Come now."

And Mr. Michael Gowrie had to do what he was told.

"But ye'll gang tae the Pit of Tophet for this," said Mr. Gowrie viciously.

CHAPTER XXII

ANOTHER MYSTERY

As guessed by Captain Kyles, Herries' visit to Pierside had been unproductive of result. On arriving there, he found that the yacht had left for an unknown destination, and returned to Tarhaven quite certain that Señora Guzman, and the buccaneer had left England for good. This was a great disappointment to the young man, as he did not see how the mystery of Sir Simon's death was to be explained without getting the evidence of the Mexican lady. He came back to tell Browne and to consult with Sweetlips Kind.

The doctor recommended patience, and a visit to the "Marsh Inn," so as to see what Gowrie was doing. Browne quite believed that the pair connected with the "Tarabacca" knew much; but he felt certain that Gowrie knew more than he chose to tell. Herries and Browne argued over the matter until a late hour, and resumed their talk, when they met at breakfast. Then Browne departed to see his patients and Herries went to look for Kind.

But the Cheap-jack was not at the humble little place where he and his wife

had put up during the trial since they had left the caravan at Anderfield in Buckinghamshire, and Herries thought that they also had gone, leaving him to his own devices. Perhaps they thought that they had done enough in return for his saving of Mrs. Kind's life, and he could not blame them for looking after their own affairs. For some time Herries contemplated walking to the "Moated Hall," and see what Maud had to say, but, on reflection, he decided to wait for the return of Gowrie from the inn. It might be that something important was transpiring there.

Elsbeth met him at the door of the doctor's house when he came back to luncheon, having practically wasted a morning.

"Angus," she said eagerly, "here are two letters,--one is in papa's writing and the other has been written by Sweetlips."

Herries went into the drawing-room and opened the letters. The one from Kind was merely a short intimation that he had met Captain Kyles early that very morning, and from certain facts which he had learned from him, he had gone to London on business. "I'll be back in a couple of days," ended the note, "and then will call and tell you all about it."

"Good," said Herries, throwing this aside, "then Kyles is still in England."

"And in Tarhaven," said Elspeth, who had been reading over his shoulder, "I should not be at all surprised, Angus, if he had anchored the 'Tarabacca' in this port."

"Nor should I. However we can easily ascertain that fact. Meanwhile let us see what your father has been doing," and he opened the second letter. While he read it, his wife glanced at the envelope, "I see that your father asks me to come to the 'Marsh Inn' this afternoon," said the young man, rapidly reading the few lines, "he has,--so he says,--discovered something important."

"Strange," murmured Elspeth to herself, and taking no notice.

"What is strange?"

"This envelope has not the Desleigh post-mark on it."

Herries examined the envelope in his turn.

"It must have been posted in Tarhaven,--it has that post-mark on it at all events. I expect your father sent it here by hand to be posted."

"No, there is a stamp on the envelope. If papa intended to send it to you by hand, he would not have wasted a stamp."

They both thought this strange, and tried to puzzle out the reason but could arrive at no conclusion.

"I'll ask your father what it means when I see him," said Herries, placing both letters in his pocket. "What train can I catch, Elspeth?"

An examination of the time table showed that he could not get a train to Desleigh for an hour, so meanwhile, Angus ate some luncheon and possessed his soul in patience.

"I don't like your going to the 'Marsh Inn,' after what has occurred, Angus," said Elspeth, uneasily, "Mrs. Narby will make herself disagreeable."

Herries laughed scornfully.

"What does that matter? I am not afraid of Mrs. Narby, or of a dozen like her. Besides, I have an idea of how to tame that virago."

"In what way?"

"I'll tell her that I intend to bring an action against her for telling lies about me."

"But can you?"

"Perhaps I cannot, but the threat will serve to keep Mrs. Narby's tongue quiet. By the way, Elspeth, I must look up Armour, while I am at Desleigh, and ask if he has moved in the matter of his kidnapping by the Tarabacca sailors."

"Oh," said Elspeth suddenly, "I knew that I had something to tell you, Angus. Dr. Browne's housekeeper has lived in Tarhaven for the last twenty years and

knows everyone."

"Really, dear," the young man laughed, "that information doesn't give me any pleasure."

"No, but listen. She was a servant at your uncle's place for some time, and says that Mrs. Armour was a servant there also."

Herries shrugged his shoulders.

"That is quite possible. All the same, I don't think that it matters much. What do you mean?"

"Well," said Mrs. Herries thoughtfully, "Mrs. Armour knows Maud very well,--she was her nurse for some time, I believe. I wonder if Armour was kidnapped because his wife had been Maud's nurse."

"My dear," Herries took her in his arms, "you see a bird in every bush, as this case has got on your nerves. I don't see the least connection between Armour's kidnapping, and Mrs. Armour's early employment. I agree with Señora Guzman, and believe that the kidnapping was a political affair."

"In what way?"

"Well, you see, Señora Guzman is the daughter of the ex-President of Indiana, and with Kyles, as the commander of their tin-pot navy, she came home to get war-ships, so as to regain possession of the Republic if possible. Naturally the new President not wanting a civil war, must have sent emissaries to thwart this scheme. Sir Simon was mixed up in it, and possibly these emissaries would keep an eye on him. One might have followed him to the 'Marsh Inn,' and Kyles, who was no doubt going to meet Sir Simon there on political business, must have told his sailors to get rid of any suspicious-looking person from Indiana. Consequently, Armour, by taking up his position near the inn, laid himself open to suspicion, and was promptly removed."

"It might be so, but then you know the meeting was to bribe Captain Kyles to leave Maud."

"Kyles would not give his sailors the true reason," replied Herries, leaving the table. "Good-bye, Elspeth, I'm off."

"Do take care of yourself, darling," she pleaded. "Of course," he kissed her, "but you need have no fear; the luck has changed since our marriage."

Elspeth felt that this was so, as she stood watching him from the window. Assuredly, her heart was light enough, and she had no premonition of evil. Perhaps after all, their separate bad lucks had combined to form one good one, as Herries fancifully imagined. Yet she dreaded to think that anything should happen to destroy the new and wonderful life which was now hers, and went to her room to pray earnestly that Angus might be successful in his mission.

But what was his mission? Angus did not know very well himself as the train steamed towards Desleigh. It seemed to him that he could do very little towards elucidating the mystery of his uncle's death. He was ignorant of all things, since he had been asleep during the commission of the crime. But Gowrie might have learned something, and Herries privately suspected that Gowrie had been wide awake all that eventful night. Also, since he had been wandering over the house, he might have chanced on some suspicious circumstances. At all events, the old man had evidently found out something, when he sent so peremptory a note. It was, therefore, with great surprise that Herries, on arriving at the inn, was met with the news that Gowrie was not within.

"Where is he?" he asked the new maid, Alice, who gave him this information in the well-known tap-room.

"I can't tell you, sir," she replied, timidly. "He went out last night just before dinner, and never came back."

"Strange," Herries recalled the omitted Desleigh post-mark, and felt uneasy. "Can I see Mrs. Narby?"

"Missus have gone to London to see her son."

"And the landlord?"

"He's in London, too, seeing about selling the inn," said Alice, glibly.

"Selling the inn?"

"Yes, sir. Master and Missus are going to America."

"The deuce they are," murmured Herries rather perplexed, "Now what does that mean? I wish I could find Gowrie. I wonder if he has been kidnapped also," he added smiling, and little knew how near he was to the truth. "Well, I'd better utilize the time at my disposal and call on Armour," and he turned away.

The next words of Alice arrested him.

"Please, sir, won't you see the lady, sir? She's in the parlour waiting for you."

"A lady. Who is she?"

"Oh, the most beautiful lady you ever set eyes on. She came here an hour ago, and said that she wanted to see you, sir."

"Mr. Herries?"

"Yes, sir, and I know you're Mr. Herries, 'cos I saw you when you was arrested for----"

"There--there," interrupted the young man wincing, for he did not like to be reminded of that ugly episode. "Take me to the lady. I expect it's Señora Guzman, or Maud."

The stuffy parlour looked a duller apartment than ever as Herries opened the door and stepped in. He half expected to see Maud, but instead faced a tall lady with the look of a queen, who rose and smiled as he entered. From the description given by Kind, Angus had no doubt but what this was the daughter of the Indiana ex-president.

"How do you do, Mr. Herries?" she said in excellent English. "You are surprised to meet me here, instead of your father-in-law."

"What, you know----?"

"I know that Mr. Gowrie wrote you a letter asking you to come to this place," said Señora Guzman composedly.

"Then you know where he is?"

"I do."

"Can you tell me----?"

"Not at present," she interrupted, "but later you shall know everything, Mr. Herries."

"About the murder?" he asked looking at her in a penetrating manner, and trying to read her thoughts.

"Certainly. The time is coming, when all that is mysterious will be made plain to you. But," added Donna Maria with emphasis, "you will have to pay for your knowledge."

"Ah!" Herries was quite cool, "I thought the element of money would come into the matter. And how much?"

"Say, four thousand pounds."

Herries laughed.

"My dear lady, I don't possess as many pence."

"Not at present, but you will, when certain information is given to you. I have read the papers, Mr. Herries, and I know that you inherit fifty thousand a year, on certain conditions."

"Ah, but those conditions were not mentioned in the newspapers."

"Quite so," rejoined Señora Guzman, resuming her seat, "but we learned the conditions from another person."

"We?"

"Myself and Captain Kyles."

"I have no wish," said Herries slowly, "to ask impertinent questions, madame, but I should like to know if you and Captain Kyles are in partnership?"

Señora Guzman laughed in her turn.

"You might put it that way," she said, resting her elbow on the shaky round table, and her chin on the back of her locked fingers. "Captain Kyles and myself intend to make our fortunes, and then marry."

"But Maud----"

"Maud," she interrupted fiercely, "don't talk to me of that wicked girl, or I shall lose my temper. I only hope I won't tell her some painful truths, when I see her."

"Are you going to see her?"

"To-day and here," Señora Guzman glanced at a bracelet watch, "in a quarter of an hour. I wrote and asked her to come here."

"Why here?"

"Because I want to see her in your presence."

"But you don't mean to say that Maud knows anything of----"

"On the contrary she knows a very great deal, and has acted towards you, Mr. Herries, in a most cruel manner."

"Oh, I know that myself. Certainly there are some excuses, seeing that she has lost a fortune."

"It was in her power to retain it," replied the Mexican lady coolly, "but she _would_ hover round a flame."

"Is the flame Captain Kyles?"

"Why should you think so?"

"Because Maud was engaged to him, and----"

Donna Maria seemed determined to give Herries no chance of finishing a single sentence.

"She was engaged, for certain reasons, but Captain Kyles will marry no one but me."

"Then don't you think that he has acted very badly towards Maud?"

"What do you think yourself?" she asked, irrelevantly.

Herries thought for a few moments.

"I know that my cousin has not acted well," he said hesitatingly, "all the same, this unfortunate engagement with Captain Kyles, and one which you admit, Señora, he never intended to fulfil, may have driven her into courses, which in more unemotional moments she would not have entered into."

"I must say, Mr. Herries, that for a wronged man, you are generous."

"I have had much trouble in my life," said Angus simply, "and it has taught me to judge no one."

"I think you are a good man," said Señora Guzman, looking at him in a softened manner. "All the better. Captain Kyles and myself will have all the more pleasure in placing you in possession of your property."

"Then you know who killed my uncle?"

"I do not, nor indeed does Captain Kyles. Still we can place certain evidence at your disposal which will go far towards solving the riddle. But the price----
"

"I am willing to pay the price."

"Four thousand pounds."

"Five if you wish it," said Herries frankly, "it is a small sum out of fifty thousand a year."

Donna Maria looked at him in silence for a moment. Then her proud lip quivered, and she burst into tears. Herries was quite distressed when she laid her head down on her arms and wept as though her heart would break.

"My dear lady----"

"I feel so ashamed," she sobbed, "making it a condition that you should pay for what ought to be done without money. You must think that I am an adventuress and a bad woman."

"I think nothing," said Herries rather coldly, for he did not know what this scene might mean, "because I know nothing."

"Mr. Herries," she said raising her head and wiping her eyes with a dainty lace handkerchief, "you must not judge me too hardly. I am the daughter of a man who held great power in Indiana, although I am a Mexican by birth. I was brought up to riches and honour, and for years had everything I could wish for. But an enemy of my father's intrigued against him, and in a night he was driven from the Presidential palace. My mother was shot during the revolution, and my father and myself escaped only with our lives, thanks to the bravery of Captain Kyles. We lived in exile for some time, and fortunately escaped in the yacht, which had belonged to the Government."

"The 'Tarabacca?'"

"Yes. It is a splendid yacht. It is all that remains of my father's wealth, for the new Government confiscated everything. But my father learned from an Indian of the whereabouts of a certain treasure in Peru, which had been hidden--according to tradition--by Manco Capac, who first civilised the Peruvian Indians. To get that treasure entails a long and toilsome journey and much money. Leaving my father concealed at Lima, Captain Kyles and myself came to this country to try and raise some money on Indiana bonds. We wanted the sum of two thousand or four thousand pounds, so as to fit out

an expedition and get this money,--this treasure. Unfortunately the new Indiana Government had been beforehand, and we found that the bonds were useless. Then an accident introduced us to Sir Simon Tedder, and there was a chance that he might assist us."

"But I understood that you came to buy war-ships?"

"That was the excuse we gave out, and for that reason, we have been haunted by Indiana emissaries, who would take our lives, if it was needful. But we promised Sir Simon a share of the----"

Scarcely had she got this far, when they heard the shrill scream of a woman in the tap-room. Herries sprang from his chair, and opened the door hurriedly. When he and Señora Guzman walked hastily into the tap-room, they found Maud Tedder in the grasp of Armour the policeman, who was in plain clothes. Herries flung himself forward, and threw the bulky man to one side.

"How dare you touch a lady?" he said, indignantly.

"A lady," said Armour, who had evidently been drinking, "if she's a lady, let her pay me for having lost my position in the Force through her visit."

"Don't listen to him,--don't listen to him," whispered Maud, pale and trembling and clinging to Herries.

"I've been dismissed the Force," complained Armour in a maundering tone, "and all on account of that there blamed murder. And she," he pointed a stumpy finger at Miss Tedder, "she knows summat about it, she does."

"It's a lie," gasped Maud, shaking from head to foot, while the eyes of Señora Guzman lighted up and she took an eager step forward.

"Oh," raved the ex-policeman, while Alice lost her head and flew out of doors shouting for help, "is it a lie that she," he pointed again towards Maud, "that she came to my house, when I was on my rounds and made my wife betray me? On the very night of the murder, she was at my house, and----"

"I came to see my old nurse," gasped Maud.

"Then what were you doing wandering about Desleigh at midnight. I got it out of my missus, I did. And you put them sailors on to me.

"No! No!"

"You did. And I believe," cried Armour, "that you murdered your father your very own self."

CHAPTER XXIII

AN EXPLANATION

Maud uttered a squeak like that of a trapped rabbit, and clung to her cousin in a half-fainting condition. The startling accusation of the ex-policeman came upon Herries with the force of a bludgeon, and his flesh crept as he felt Maud's terrified grasp. What if she were guilty after all,--what if she had,--but the thought was too horrible. Bad as the girl was in many ways, vain, frivolous, cruel, selfish, she would never have killed the father who had loved her so greatly. As it was, she vehemently denied the accusation.

"It's a he,--a lie," she murmured, trying to keep from fainting, "oh, how dare you, how----" here nature would have her way, and Maud sank unconscious on the ground. Armour continued his vociferations, so Herries gave the insensible girl to Señora Guzman, who received her with reluctance, and caught Armour by the collar.

"Do you know what you are saying?" he demanded, shaking the man in a fierce way. "How dare you accuse this young lady of----"

"Well, if she didn't do it, who killed him?" asked the man in a sullen tone and beginning to see that he had gone too far. "It wasn't that Herries chap."

"I am Herries!"

"You." Armour shook off the grasp and recoiled against the wall.

"Yes! And you have no right to accuse my cousin. She came, as her companion, Mrs. Mountford, knew," this was a lie, but Herries wanted to save the miserable girl, "to see her old nurse."

"And went out late at night. My wife confessed it."

It was at this moment that Alice returned, followed by Mrs. Armour.

After her first cry for help the servant had thought it best to go for the wife. Fortunately there were few people about, and her feeble cry had gone unheeded. Also the tap-room was empty, a rare occurrence for the time being, so when Alice brought back Mrs. Armour, that woman ran into the room, with a white face, dreading lest her husband's tongue, loosened by liquor, should have wagged too freely.

"You drunken beast," she said, advancing with brandished arms, "how dare you insult my young lady?"

"She killed her father," grumbled Armour, but under his breath, as the stern looks of Herries and the presence of his wife cowed him not a little.

Mrs. Armour uttered an indignant exclamation and placing her hand on his coat-collar dragged him to the door.

"It is quite false, you fool."

"He says that you told him," said Herries to the wife.

Mrs. Armour pushed her husband outside and faced round.

"I told him nothing of the sort. He found out, I don't know how, that my young lady was at my house on the night of the murder, and taxed me with it.

I confessed--like a fool,--that she had been there, and then he got it into his head that she set those sailors after him, to get him kidnapped. He thinks that he lost his position in the Force through her, which is quite wrong."

"Why didn't you come to the inquest and say that Miss Tedder was with you on the night?" asked Herries sternly.

"Because she asked me not to. I wouldn't have said a word even to Armour, but that he found out. Who are you, sir?"

"I am Miss Tedder's cousin----"

"Who was accused of the murder?" screeched Mrs. Armour in surprise.

"Yes, and if my cousin was here on that night,----"

"She is innocent,--innocent I swear," interrupted the woman, in great agitation, "she only came to the inn----"

"Oh. She was here, was she? In the house?"

"No! Yes,--that is. I tell you, sir, she is innocent," cried Mrs. Armour at her wits' end. "She only came to see me. I'm her old nurse, sir. Don't you believe what Armour says. He's drunk; he doesn't know what mischief he is making."

"Miss Tedder was in this house on the night of the murder, about midnight."

"She wanted to see her father, and ask him not to take her lover from her," sobbed Mrs. Armour putting her apron to her eyes. "Indeed she's as innocent as the sun, sir. But I'm ready to confess----"

"Confess nothing," interrupted the young man, "if my cousin has been indiscreet--we'll put it that way,--I'll see that nothing comes of the matter. But I'll come round and see you later, to hear what you have to say. Meanwhile I'll question Miss Tedder."

"Where is she; my lamb?"

"In the parlour with a lady. She has fainted."

"Oh," Mrs. Armour was about to start towards the parlour, when Herries stopped her.

"No. Go back to your husband. Take him home, and get him sober. If he dares to say another word about Miss Tedder, I shall have him arrested."

"Yes, yes, I'll go,--I'll stop him speaking. But oh, sir," Mrs. Armour wheeled at the door with clasped hands, "believe me, my young lady is innocent."

"Yes, I believe that, but I must hear what she has to say, before exonerating her. Now go."

Mrs. Armour fled like a hare, and clutching her husband dragged him home, scolding him all the way in a low vehement tone.

"You fool, you fool," she muttered, "you'll ruin me, you'll ruin yourself."

"I didn't mean," mumbled Armour, now growing sober and terrified, for he really had scanty reason to say what he had said.

"You didn't mean,--you born fool. If this ends in a police court it will be the worse for us both. My young lady is innocent, but you have placed her in a most dangerous position. You beast, you ass, you wretch, but I'll trounce you. I'll take it out of you," and half-dragged, half-driven, Armour was brought back to his home.

In the meanwhile Herries gave Alice a shilling to hold her tongue, promising her more if she did not speak. "And especially, not to Mrs. Narby," said Herries, impressively.

"I'm fly," said the small servant, biting the shilling to see that it was a good one. "I don't tell her anything, if I can help. She hammers me too hard, sir."

"You poor little devil," said Herries pityingly, "when these things are settled we must see if we can get you a good home," and so saying he patted the miserable Alice on her head of tangled hair and walked into the parlour.

Maud had revived, as Señora Guzman had dashed water on her face with no gentle hand, and was now standing at the end of the room, looking at her with

extreme aversion. Maud herself, with all the spirit knocked out of her, was seated at the table with her face hidden in her hands, weeping silently. Badly as the girl had behaved, her cousin could not help feeling sorry for her, especially, when she raised her small, pathetic, childish face. He closed the door, and came forward gravely.

"Well, Maud, and what have you to say to this accusation?"

"Nothing,--I'm sure I was very fond of poor pa," she sobbed, looking a woeful spectacle with her damp dress and tearful face. "No one was more sorry than I was when he was killed."

"You were not sorry for me," Herries could not help remarking.

"I thought you had killed pa."

"What? When you accused Señora Guzman of the crime, to my wife."

The Mexican lady started, and her fine eyes flashed. "You accused me," she said, drawing herself up.

"Yes! and I believe you did it," said Maud, raising her head and darting a malignant look at her rival.

For the moment it looked as though Donna Maria would fling herself on her enemy, but controlling her temper with a violent effort, she laughed coldly.

"Of course such an accusation does not deserve any defence."

"You were in the neighbourhood, you set those men on Armour," cried Maud viciously, and rearranging her disordered dress.

"Oh, I don't mind acknowledging that," retorted Señora Guzman with a curling lip, "I have nothing to conceal. I accompanied Captain Kyles from Pierside in the launch, and remained on board, while he went up to see Sir Simon at this inn. Captain Kyles told me that he suspected some emissary from the Republic would spy on his movements, and as he did not come back I sent up the sailors, and told them to carry away anyone who happened to be lurking about the inn at so late an hour. They saw Armour the policeman

sitting under the window of Sir Simon's room, and thinking that he was waiting for Captain Kyles to descend in order to kill him,--for they took the policeman for an Indiana spy,--they muffled his head in my shawl, and carried him away, to leave him in a ditch. Then they returned to the launch which was on the river on the other side of the railway line."

Herries nodded. This was exactly the explanation which he had given Elspeth, and he was delighted to see how accurate his forecast had been. But there was another point which he wished to be cleared up.

"At what time did Captain Kyles return to the launch?"

She shrugged her fine shoulders.

"I must leave Captain Kyles to tell you his own story, Mr. Herries. All I wish to do at present, is to show Miss Tedder that I am not afraid to confess my movements on that night. It is lucky for her if she can do the same."

"I was with Mrs. Armour," said Maud quickly, yet with a passing gleam of terror.

"You were in this very house," said Herries sternly, "Mrs. Armour told me so."

"Then she was with me. She would not allow me to go alone."

"I'll ask her about that, myself," said Herries sitting down, "in the meanwhile you must confess everything you did on that night."

"I shan't," said Maud, setting her baby face in an obstinate frown.

"Then I shall tell the police."

She quivered at this and choked.

"You would tell on me, a woman, your own cousin?"

"You never hesitated to tell about me," said Herries, grimly.

"That's different--you are a man--you can defend yourself, not like poor little me. I have enemies," and she scowled at the Mexican lady in a most venomous manner.

"I am not afraid," said Señora Guzman sitting down near the door. "You would like to kill me with a look, and marry Bruce, but you will not. Oh no, he will be my husband."

"He'll be hanged."

"Aha. You will accuse him, Miss Tedder. I make you my compliments on your delicate way of making love."

"He loves me, he doesn't love you."

"Oh, but he does, Mademoiselle; you mistake. Bruce is not fond of English babies," this with a disdainful look at Maud's childish face, twisted with rage and grief.

"Ah, you cat. Wait till I see him face to face. He can't resist me. He never loved you--never, never, never."

Señora Guzman laughed again in the most irritating manner.

"You will never see him face to face. We go away, he and I, from this land of yours to South America. There we shall be happy."

Maud started to her feet.

"He shan't go, he won't go. I'll tell the police. I'll have him hanged. I'll--oh--oh--oh," she appeared to be on the verge of a fit of hysterics, when Herries, thinking this scene between the two women had gone far enough, caught her by the arms, and hurt her a trifle. The pain made her cry out, but it strung her up to overcoming the hysteria.

"You brute," said Maud, with a sob, "to strike a woman."

"I did not strike you," said Herries very patiently, "and if I have hurt you I beg your pardon. But you had better sit down quietly and tell me all you

know."

"I shan't."

"Then I can't protect you from the police."

"You will tell?"

"No. On second thoughts I shall not tell, but Armour will. And if he does, what is to become of you, Maud?"

She saw her danger and made for the door as though to fly. But Herries brought her back.

"Sit down, sit down," he said soothingly. "Believe me, Maud, that badly as you have treated me, I am still your friend--your only friend."

"And you need a friend," observed Señora Guzman, surveying the girl with coldly critical eyes.

"You cat," cried Maud turning on her viciously, then dropped into a chair with a sob. "Oh, Heavens, was there ever so unfortunate a creature as I am? I've lost my money and my father, and----"

"And your lover."

"Pray be silent, Señora," said Herries, rather disgusted.

"I will not," she retorted fiercely, "why should I be silent, when she tried to take my lover from me? She knew that he was engaged to me, she knew----!"

"I didn't," sobbed Maud, interrupting swiftly.

"You did. Sir Simon asked me to his house when we came to see him on business--we--Bruce and myself. I told you that I was engaged to be married. And you,--you tried to get him away."

"And I succeeded," said Maud with dismal triumph, "he made love to me, he kissed me."

"I know that. He told me everything."

"What! He--told--you."

"Yes," snapped the Señora, "we wanted money,--heaps of money. Sir Simon knew that we didn't want war-ships, but only money for this treasure expedition. At first he would lend, then he would not. Then since you were so shameless----"

"Señora, Señora," pleaded Herries, quite helpless between these two fierce creatures quarrelling over a man.

"I must speak," she cried loudly, and striking the table with her gloved hand. "She must be told the truth, for once in her silly, vapid life. She dares to pit herself against me,--the daughter of a house which has been famous for centuries. She dares to compare her feeble, washed-out beauty with mine--with mine. Ah," she raised her arms with a proud gesture, "look at me, look at you. I tell you, Bruce would lay down his life for me."

"He shall, on the gallows," panted Maud viciously.

"Pah, you little fool," sneered the Mexican woman with scorn, "you have been a catpaw to get the money. I told Bruce to make love to you, to lead you on, to twist you round his little finger, and all to get the money. Was I wrong, seeing how shamelessly you tried to steal my lover? No," she answered herself, "I was right. Bruce told Sir Simon that he would take you away. Sir Simon forbade you to think of Bruce. You persisted, and then he said he would cut you out of his will. He wrote a letter to Bruce telling him that he had done so, and asked him to meet him at this inn, offering to bribe him to give you up. You," said Señora Guzman with an insulting laugh, "you, for whom Bruce cared nothing. Bruce said that he would take two thousand pounds more or less. He hinted as much to Sir Simon, and he came here with that amount of money. Then Sir Simon was murdered----"

"By Captain Kyles," cried Maud.

"It is a lie," said the woman striking the table again. "Had he killed him he would have had the money and have sailed away. But he did not kill him, and

so lost the money."

"But I saw Captain Kyles at this inn," said Maud.

"He was here. I told you so, but how came you to see him?"

"I was taking a walk before going to bed. Mrs. Armour was with me. I saw Captain Kyles under the window, where the red light shone."

"The red light," said Herries involuntarily.

"Yes I There was a red light in the front room. The window was open and Captain Kyles was looking up."

"I understand," said Herries gravely. "Sir Simon hung a red handkerchief in front of a candle to serve as a signal. Well?"

"Then I wanted to go up and see my father. Bruce had told me that papa wanted to bribe him to give me up, and that he was going to meet him at the inn. That was why I came. I came by a late train and went to Mrs. Armour, who is my old nurse. I implored her to help me, since she knew Mrs. Narby. I wanted to get into the house and throw myself at my father's feet and implore him not to send Bruce away. Mrs. Armour came, and when we saw Captain Kyles under the window, we stole round in the fog to the back door. Mrs. Armour knocked at Mrs. Narby's bedroom window at the back in a peculiar way, and Mrs. Narby came to the back door. She would not let me in at first, but I offered her twenty pounds, which I had brought with me. Then I went into the house, and up the stairs in the darkness. I saw a gleam of light under the door of the furthest room, and then I heard deep breathing. I grew afraid, and ran down the stairs again. I believe there was a man in the nearer room, which was in darkness."

"That was Gowrie," said Herries, "he heard the swish of a woman's dress. So it was you. And you saw nothing?"

"Nothing. I ran out and asked Mrs. Armour to take me back, and hold her tongue. I slept that night at her house, as her husband was away, and then went home by an early train. Mrs. Mountford let me into my home, and no

one knew that I had been away."

"And when you heard that your father had been murdered?"

"I thought Captain Kyles had lost his temper and had killed him."

"Oh. Then you did not believe that it was me, after all."

"No. I never knew that you were in the house. But when I heard that you had been arrested, I thought, in any case, that you would be hanged, and so joined in the cry against you. I wanted to save Bruce," wailed Maud.

"I see," said Herries, horrified at this callous girl, "so you were willing to hang an innocent man, and marry one whom you thought had murdered your father."

"Bruce did not murder Sir Simon," put in Señora Guzman vehemently, "it is not true. I came here, Mr. Herries, to explain all I could, and to ask you to come on board the yacht which is at Tarhaven."

"Will I see Captain Kyles?"

"Yes. He wishes to see you about the money."

"Why should I pay the money?"

"You said you would," said Señora Guzman vehemently, "and you will have to do so if you wish to get the fortune."

An evil light suddenly shone in Maud's eyes, as though the devil had whispered some delicious thought.

"Let me come also," she said eagerly to Señora Guzman.

"No. We do not want you."

"Then I shall go straight back to Tarhaven and tell the police all about myself, and Captain Kyles."

"You are afraid."

"I am not, but," Maud looked cunning and snarled, "I am desperate."

"You shan't come----"

"She shall," said Herries in a peremptory manner. "I want everyone to be present at the clearing up of this affair. Not a word, Señora, Miss Tedder comes with me, or I don't set foot on the yacht."

Señora Guzman shrugged her shoulders.

"Very good," she said insolently, "Bring her if you like. But I have said all, so I will go."

"When shall I come to the yacht?"

"Captain Kyles will let you know," and she vanished.

CHAPTER XXIV

STARTLING NEWS

Herries brought Maud back to the "Moated Hall," and delivered her into the hands of Mrs. Mountford. The girl recovered herself wonderfully on the journey, but said very little. All the time in the train she sat huddled in her corner of the compartment, and eyed Angus in a most spiteful manner. Her cousin saw the look and wondered what was in her mind. Had he known he

might not have pitied her as he did. As it was, he felt truly sorry for the miserable girl. By her own foolishness, she had forfeited a fortune, she had been deserted by the man whom she had striven to take from another woman, and had lost her father by a violent death. Had not Maud troubled her head over the buccaneer's good looks, her father would never have made a second will; he would never have gone to the "Marsh Inn" to meet his death. For all the terrible things that had happened, Maud had only herself to blame. Yet she talked of Fate, and bemoaned herself as the most unfortunate creature in the world. Many people cheat themselves in the same way.

However, Mrs. Mountford saw that she was really getting ill and that her nerves were in a terribly excited state. She, therefore, sent her at once to bed when Herries brought her back, and remained alone in the drawing-room with the young man.

"I know that Maud went to the 'Marsh Inn' in response to an invitation from Señora Guzman," she said gravely, "but I did not expect that you would bring her back, Mr. Herries."

"I was there also," he replied, quietly, "I went to meet Mr. Gowrie and found Señora Guzman instead. Maud got into trouble."

"With that woman?"

"With Armour, the policeman, who said that Maud had been at Desleigh on the night her father was murdered."

Mrs. Mountford turned pale.

"Surely you do not believe that wild statement, Mr. Herries?"

"I have such good authority, Mrs. Mountford, that I must."

"Whose authority?"

"That of Maud herself."

"Unhappy girl. What has she said?"

"I think you know what she said, Mrs. Mountford, since you also knew that Maud stopped with Mrs. Armour on that night."

"Mrs. Armour is Maud's old nurse," said the ex-governess with emotion, "and Maud went to visit her without my permission."

"Maud said that you helped her."

"No. That is not true. I would not have let Maud out of my sight to pay such a visit, and at so late an hour. She certainly told me that Sir Simon was to meet Captain Kyles at the 'Marsh Inn,' and then bribe him to give her up. She wanted to go to Desleigh and implore her father not to act in this way. I said that she was not to go, but she slipped out of the house and went. I could do nothing save watch for her return and admit her secretly, lest the servants should come to know of her mad visit."

"What did she tell you when she returned?" asked Herries, curiously.

"That she had stopped all night with Mrs. Armour."

"She did not inform you that she had been inside the 'Marsh Inn?'"

"No." Mrs. Mountford closed her eyes in horror, "Impossible!"

"It is true. Maud went there to see her father."

"Mr. Herries," Mrs. Mountford rose and grasped the young man's arm, "I cannot believe that Maud has anything to do with this crime."

"Why should you believe it?" said Herries, astonished at the emotion displayed in her usually solemn face.

"Tell me what you know, and I'll explain."

Herries hesitated, but reflecting that Mrs. Mountford could do no harm, and that it was better to have her for a friend than an enemy at this juncture, he told all that had taken place at the inn, as he had heard it from Maud herself. At the conclusion Mrs. Mountford drew a long breath of relief.

"It is better than I expected," she said, nodding, "I must tell you, Mr. Herries, to explain for the way in which Maud has acted, that she is not quite right in the head."

"Mad!" was the young man's startled exclamation.

"Not exactly mad. She has no moral principles, and if she does not get her own way, will not hesitate even at a crime to get it. Her mother, a frivolous, foolish woman, who came of a decayed family, was the same. Maud at times is not responsible for her actions. Sir Simon was devoted to her, and therefore, after Maud's education was finished, he kept me here, to look after her."

"I noticed that you had great power over Maud."

"The power of a strong mind over a weak one," said Mrs. Mountford in her deep voice, "yet at times Maud is too difficult and cunning even for me to manage. You know how she escaped and went to Desleigh. I dreaded lest she should meet her father, for then----" Mrs. Mountford hesitated.

"Would she have murdered him?"

"Not deliberately. But she would have fallen into a frenzy of rage and the first weapon to hand would have been used by her. In these rages, she goes, what the Norsemen called baresark, and stops at nothing to gain her ends. She loves this Captain Kyles so much that she would do anything to become his wife. You know that she was quite ready to sacrifice you, Mr. Herries."

"And Señora Guzman also," said the young man, rather startled at what he had heard, "since she accuses her wrongfully."

Mrs. Mountford looked gravely at him.

"I believe that Captain Kyles killed Sir Simon," she said decisively, "and Señora Guzman may not be so innocent as you imagine. The Captain was certainly at the 'Marsh Inn' on that night, since you say Maud saw him looking up at the window wherein Sir Simon had placed his signal. Also Señora Guzman was in the neighbourhood and had that policeman

kidnapped."

"All these things look suspicious," assented Herries, "yet, since Kyles was willing to give up Maud, for whom he had no affection, and since Sir Simon was willing to pay the price, I do not see the motive for the commission of the crime."

"It is strange. What does Captain Kyles say himself?"

"I have not seen him yet. To-morrow, however, I am going on board the 'Tarabacca,' which lies off Tarhaven quay, out-stream, I believe. Then Kyles will explain. And Maud is to come with me."

Mrs. Mountford started to her feet.

"Impossible. If she meets Captain Kyles face to face, I don't know what would happen."

"I'll look after her," said Herries, who was determined that Maud should be brought face to face with her lover, so that everything should be cleared up in a proper manner. "I must know the truth, as I want to enter into possession of my property. Kyles evidently can tell me who killed my uncle, and I am going to see Ritson, as to getting four thousand pounds to bribe him into speaking the truth."

"He deserves no money after the way in which he has treated Maud."

"I quite agree with you," responded Herries dryly, "but beggars cannot be choosers. Apparently Kyles is the only man who can solve the mystery, so he must be paid."

"He will have to acknowledge himself guilty then," said Mrs. Mountford obstinately, "in which case he should be arrested."

"Certainly. And I may tell you that I intend to give information to Inspector Trent as to my engagement to see Kyles on board the yacht. He will come later in the evening, for I believe that the explanation will be given to-morrow night. If Kyles is guilty he will be arrested. But he won't confess unless he

gets the money, so I must enlist the services of Ritson to procure it, and take it on board. I can get it back if your surmise is correct."

"Well," said Mrs. Mountford coldly, "I presume that will be the best way to settle the matter. And Mr. Herries," she added, giving him her hand, "I may tell you that I am glad you have got the money. Were Maud in possession, I would lose my influence over her, and then God knows what would happen to so feather-headed a creature. She would be surrounded by flatterers and sycophants, and would waste the money in excesses, ending probably in an insane asylum."

"But she is not mad."

"I tell you she is at times," said Mrs. Mountford impatiently. "The germs of insanity are in her, and it only needs great emotions to develop them into rank lunacy. See what she was prepared to do, in order to get Captain Kyles for a husband. She is not safe, she never will be safe; and Sir Simon did not want her to marry. No, Mr. Herries, you get this money and make good use of it. Maud and myself will go abroad and live on her thousand a year."

"You must let me add to that," said Herries shaking her hand in a hearty manner. "I believe that you are a good woman."

"I have had great troubles," said Mrs. Mountford, "and troubles make us think of others. When you are in possession of that large income, Mr. Herries, don't forget the poor and needy. Let your troubles aid you to remember the troubles of others."

"You can depend upon that," said Herries, and took his leave feeling a profound respect for Mrs. Mountford.

He was not so surprised as he might have been, on hearing of Maud's weakness. Several times, when he was courting her in Edinburgh, he had noticed how strange her manner was, and how careless she seemed to be of other people's feelings. But then he was blinded with what he took for love, and had not seen clearly. Now he could judge dispassionately, and felt certain,--apart from any personal benefit,--that the best thing that could have happened to Maud was the loss of the money. To weight so frail and fickle a

creature with gold would have been to sink her in the ocean of life. He determined to allow Mrs. Mountford another thousand a year, for looking after her, and then the ex-governess could take the poor girl away to some lonely place, where she could quietly live out the rest of her life. In his own mind, Herries, with a sudden memory of a striking book, compared her to Lady Audley, and recalled how that celebrated heroine had been placed in seclusion as dangerous. Maud was just such another childish, pretty, cunning, dangerous woman, as that conceived by Miss Braddon.

Having made up his mind how to act towards his unfortunate cousin, Herries returned home, and told Browne and Elspeth all that had occurred. Both of them were much astonished, and were divided as to who was guilty of the crime. Elspeth fancied that Señora Guzman was guilty. Browne held that Kyles was the criminal. Herries shook his head.

"There's been so many mistakes over this case," he said, "that I am afraid to give an opinion. It might have been Mrs. Narby, for all we know."

"Mrs. Narby," ejaculated Elspeth, with a gasp. "Mrs. Narby," echoed the doctor, his face growing redder than ever.

Herries shrugged his shoulders.

"She looks the kind of woman who would kill anyone, especially for money."

"My father knows Mrs. Narby better than anyone else," said Elspeth.

"I should think you knew her well enough, my dear."

"The worst side of her, perhaps."

"Has she any better side? If so, I should be glad to know it. But I wish I knew where your father is at present. Señora Guzman is aware of his hiding-place, but she won't tell."

"Why is he hiding?" asked Browne, very directly. "Really, I don't know. He can't be in any trouble, or he would have said so in his letter."

"The letter that was posted at Tarhaven," said Elspeth, who had risen from

the table, and was thinking deeply. "Angus, I should not be surprised to learn that my father was on board the yacht."

"By Jove, it's very probable, Elspeth. Kyles was ashore this morning according to Sweetlips, so Gowrie probably gave him the letter to post. That was why it did not bear the Desleigh post mark. But why should he have boarded the yacht."

No one could answer this very pertinent question, but Browne ventured an explanation.

"I believe that all this is a conspiracy to get that four thousand pounds. I wouldn't pay Kyles a cent, Herries."

"Then how am I to clear up the mystery of the murder, and get the money, Browne? I must make some move, as I can't live here on you all the days of my life. Four thousand pounds is worth paying, if by Kyles' information I can get fifty thousand a year."

"Quite so, but if Kyles is guilty he won't accuse himself."

"Why not? He won't see me ashore, but on the yacht. He can say what he likes and then steam away with the money."

"And you will let him," said Elspeth, indignantly.

"No!" said her husband, putting on his hat, "I'll see Trent to-morrow, and inform him of the proposed meeting. After I get the truth,--whatever it may be,--out of Kyles, Trent can come on board and arrest the guilty person."

"Señora Guzman!" said Elspeth.

"Captain Kyles," ventured Browne, but not very eagerly.

"It may be one or the other, or neither," retorted Herries, "meanwhile I'm off."

"To see Inspector Trent?" said Elspeth accompanying him to the door.

"No. I won't see him until I have a note saying what time I am to go on board the yacht. I must interview Ritson about the money."

This Herries did, after he had thought well over the position of affairs, which was decidedly perplexing. Ritson gasped when he heard all that Herries knew, and appeared to take the same view as Browne had done.

"I believe that Kyles is guilty," he said, in a profoundly certain tone, "and that being the case, why pay him four thousand pounds?"

"He won't confess anything until he gets the money," insisted the client, "and if he is guilty Trent can arrest him. Then we can get the money back. But will you advance me the cash, Ritson?"

"Yes," said the lawyer without the slightest hesitation. "You have a good enough security."

"Be careful, Ritson," warned Herries gravely, "I am not yet in possession of the fifty thousand a year, and unless I learn the absolute truth, I never may be."

"You'll learn the truth sooner or later. At all events, to get to the bottom of the thing, I'm willing to risk four thousand on the matter. It's a sprat to catch a mackerel. But you must make it worth my while, risking this much, Herries."

"Naturally," said the other, "I never expected you to oblige me without asking a percentage. What do you want?"

"I must think it over," said Ritson, rubbing his hands, "but you won't find me too expensive. I wish to keep you as a client."

"That you certainly will," said Herries, "as you have been most kind during all these troubles. Good-bye. I'll see you to-morrow. Make your arrangements and have the money,--in gold of course."

"Humph. Rather a large sum in gold. Better take a cheque."

"My dear man, I don't take the money. Kyles won't be satisfied with a cheque which may be stopped."

"Bank notes then?"

"Same objection applies. Kyles is a wary man, and will accept nothing but gold."

"Well," sighed Ritson, "we must see what we can do. By the way, are you certain that Kyles is guilty?"

"I am not, but you are."

"I'm changing my mind, since you tell me that your father-in-law is on board the yacht."

"I only think that he is on board."

"Then if he is perhaps he has fled."

"Fled?" Herries, somewhat startled, returned from the door.

"To escape justice. I shouldn't wonder," added Ritson playing with a pen, "to learn that Gowrie was the guilty person."

Herries turned red and hot at the thought of the disgrace to his wife.

"All the more reason that we should see Kyles on the yacht and pay him the four thousand. He can take Gowrie to South America. This puts a different complexion on the matter, Ritson. I shan't tell Trent to come on board now."

Herries, having thus made up his mind, went away. But Ritson determined, when he learned the hour of the meeting with Kyles, to tell the Inspector. The lawyer knew that if Gowrie was guilty the truth would have to be made public in order that Herries should get the fortune, and, as he intended to make a good bargain for the loan of the four thousand, he did not intend to let any sentimental business spoil his chance of getting back the money and interest. If Gowrie was guilty, he would be arrested by Trent and taken ashore; Mr. and Mrs. Herries would just have to put up with the disgrace. "Fifty thousand a year is worth a trifle of mud," thought Ritson.

Meanwhile Herries, quite unaware of Ritson's proposed treachery, passed a very bad night. From the flight, as he thought it was, of Gowrie, he really began to believe that the old scamp was the guilty person after all. Since he had condescended to robbery for a few shillings, he probably would not mind throat-cutting for so large a sum as two thousand pounds. Angus did not tell Elspeth his idea of the old man's guilt, and although she saw that he had something on his mind, she could not learn what it was. That her father might have done the horrible deed, never entered her mind.

All the next day Herries waited to hear from Kyles. He soon found out that the "Tarabacca" was anchored some distance away from the shore,--about a quarter of a mile, in fact, and went down to the end of the pier to look at her through a glass. She seemed a very pretty little craft of the piratical order. Herries was half minded to take a boat and board her, but on second thoughts he determined not to be so rash. While he was watching he saw a launch put off, and saw also that there was a lady in it. Thinking that this was Señora Guzman, he waited, and waved his hand. As the boat drew near the pier she recognised him, and made the sailors row longside. Herries went down the steps, and she gave him a letter.

"I can't stop to talk, Mr. Herries," she said quickly, fearing apparently to be asked unnecessary questions. "Read the letter."

While the launch steamed back to the yacht, Herries read the note and found that he was expected on board that night at eight o'clock. At once he returned to the town, and seeing Ritson, arranged about the money, which the lawyer was expecting from town by the five o'clock train. Then Herries gave the time and place for the meeting and went home again, to await the hour. Ritson put on his hat, and repaired to the station. There he remained until the money came to hand in charge of a Bank of England messenger, and he saw that it was taken to his office. After that the lawyer went to see Trent at the police station, and arrange about the arrest of Michael Gowrie.

He found Trent in a great state of agitation with a long telegram in his hand. He fairly rushed at the lawyer.

"I am glad to see you," said he. "You were Sir Simon's solicitor, so you have the right to know first."

"Know what?"

"That a man presented one of the missing notes. Before he could be arrested he slipped away, and the police are hunting for him. He was,--he was," said the Inspector solemnly, "Pope Narby."

CHAPTER XXV

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY

At half-past seven o'clock that same evening Herries was on the fisherman's jetty situated in the lower parts of Tarhaven, and with him was his cousin. Both were well wrapped up, as the night was bitterly cold. However, the atmosphere was clear, and there shone a wintry-looking moon, the light of which was occasionally obscured by drifting clouds. Maud looked over the grey choppy sea to an emerald star, which indicated the position of the "Tarabacca," and shuddered at the idea of venturing out on such an evening. Timid as a rule, only her love for Kyles made her resolve to board the ship. Also she had another idea in her head, and as she thought of it again, she stole a glance at her cousin, which was forebodingly forbidding.

But Herries was looking up towards the town, and wondering why Ritson did not come. The lawyer had insisted upon sharing the adventure, and on taking charge of the gold.

But the watched pot boiled on this occasion, and very soon a cab drove down to the top of the jetty, and Ritson came along, well-muffled up in a fur coat, followed by two men carrying a wooden box, which they placed in the

waiting boat by his directions. Then Herries got in, after handing Maud to a seat, and the oarsmen,--there were two, dipped their oars into the gleaming water.

"Got it there?" asked Angus, nodding towards the wooden box, as they swept clear of the jetty.

"The lead. Yes!" said Ritson with a frown. "You mean the leaden seals, don't you?"

"Certainly," replied Herries, seeing that Ritson did not wish either the boatmen or Maud to learn the real contents of the wooden box.

"They are very heavy--those seals," continued Ritson with emphasis.

"What seals?" asked Miss Tedder, glancing at the box.

"Official seals connected with the Indiana Republic," answered the solicitor promptly. "Captain Kyles is taking them out."

"But I thought that he was not allowed to enter the Republican territory again?"

"Oh, he's made all that square. He and Señora Guzman are steaming back to Indiana to-morrow," replied Ritson, lying frankly.

"I'll go too," muttered Maud, "that is, if----" she huddled her wraps about her and stole a vicious glance at Herries, which passed unnoticed in the darkness.

There was not much conversation. Herries was anxiously wondering if Gowrie would be accused of committing the crime, and was congratulating himself that he had not informed Inspector Trent about the meeting on the yacht. He would scarcely have been so easy in his mind, had he known that Ritson had arranged with Trent that the police should board the "Tarabacca" between nine and ten o'clock, when the truth had been told, as it was probable it would be by that time. Ritson, on his side, was debating if he would inform Herries that Pope Narby had tried to pass one of the notes for which Sir Simon had been murdered. The lawyer had no doubt in his own mind but that

Pope was the culprit, and privately considered himself a fool, for taking four thousand pounds in gold on board the yacht to pay Kyles for information already received. In fact, he had intended to stop away, but Trent had advised him to go, and to hear what Kyles would say. Then, even if the money were paid, it could be recovered again by the police, when they paid the proposed visit. Kyles did not expect that the law would board his nefarious craft on that night, and within a couple of hours.

As for Maud, she kept glancing every now and then at her cousin and hugging her secret to her breast. She had conceived an idea, by which she hoped to get back her fortune and thus secure Kyles. "If I could only get him away from that woman," thought Maud, "I would be quite happy. And when I have the money----" she glanced again at Herries, and laughed softly.

"What is amusing you, Maud?" he asked, rather uneasy at mirth so obviously out of place.

"Only my own thoughts," she muttered. "Shall we soon be there?"

Herries nodded. The yacht was only a stone throw away. As he looked, the long black form of the launch shot out from behind the ship, and steamed at full speed up the Thames, in the direction--as it seemed to Herries,--of the waterway which led to the "Marsh Inn."

"That boat can go," he said, wondering what was up.

"Ah, sir, she just can," said one of the boatmen, as the launch sped along scattering the white foam from her sides to glisten in the pale moonlight. "She's been dodging about these waters for the last month or so, racing between Tarhaven and Pierside. She can show a clean pair of heels, like the yacht herself."

"Is she quick?"

The boatman chuckled.

"I should just think so. A mate of mine met one of the engineers, a Scotch chap, and he said that she could steam hell for leather, begging the lady's

pardon."

Herries winced. Kyles was extremely unscrupulous, and in a boat of great speed, might not hesitate to keep him a prisoner until much more than four thousand was paid over. He had only to get up steam and slip away in the darkness for South America, and it would be difficult to catch him. However, the adventure was begun and had to be finished, and Herries, believing that his luck had changed with marriage, hoped for the best.

Shortly the boat was longside the yacht, swinging up and down on the tide. Kyles was expecting them, and a rope ladder was lowered. Up this swarmed Herries who was well used to the sea. Ritson came next, but was in a state of terror the whole time owing to the swaying of the rope ladder. Lastly, the boatmen assisted Maud up the steep black side of the yacht. Kyles, who had made no observation when the two men ascended, uttered an exclamation when he saw a woman appear.

"Have you brought your wife, Herries?" he asked, much vexed.

"It's my cousin."

"Your cousin!" said Kyles in tones of dismay.

By this time Maud had scrambled on deck, and was holding out her hand.

"Good evening, Captain Kyles," she said ceremoniously, "you have been quite a stranger of late."

"Why--why do you come--come here?" stammered the Captain who was considerably taken aback.

Maud laughed in an amused manner.

"To say good-bye," said she, carelessly.

"Humph! I believe that," he retorted and she could hear him grit his teeth at her unwelcome presence. At that ominous sound, the girl, who, unfortunately for herself, really did love him, turned pale, and laid her hand on her heart, as though she there felt a cruel pain, as no doubt she did. Kyles stared at her

frowning and then turned away with a grunt of satisfaction as a wooden box was hoisted on board by the two boatmen and a couple of his own sailors.

"You've got it," he said, in a thankful tone.

Herries nodded.

"And this is my solicitor, Mr. Ritson, who advanced the cash and has come to see it paid over,--on conditions," added the young man significantly.

"Oh, I'll keep my word," said Kyles, looking over the side, "you two men below can remain where you are!" Then he turned to three truculent-looking sailors, "Don't let them come on board. You know what to do when the launch returns."

After giving his orders, he asked the company to come below, and two sailors carried the box between them down the brass-bound steps which led to the state-room. Herries was surprised at the splendour of the cabin, but still more surprised when he saw, seated at the head of the long table, a well-known figure sipping whisky and smoking vigorously.

"Aye!" said the voice of the missing sage, "it's me, ma ain sel, Angus, taken awa frae a useful existence tae herd wi' tarry men, the which ca' themsels sailors, but who are nae mair nor the scum o' the arth. But I'll hae an action for false detention if there's law to be had, and I chairge you, laddie, tae pay ma fees."

"How the deuce did you come here?" asked Herries, recovering from his astonishment.

"I kidnapped him," said Kyles casting down his gold-laced cap, and throwing off his oilskin. "Sit down, Miss Tedder."

"Miss Tedder," echoed Maud in tones of reproach. Kyles flushed all over his bronzed face, and gave her an angry look, striving meanwhile to remain calm. "We can speak, after we have transacted this business," he said.

"Call me Maud, then."

"Maud," said the Captain in ironical tones.

"And what is Maud doing here?" asked another voice--a woman's, cold and cutting as an east wind.

Maud recognised her rival with a snarl like that of an angry cat, and looked defiantly at her. Señora Guzman, in a richly trimmed dinner dress, which well became her beauty, was standing at the door of her berth, and her face grew pale with wrath, as she gazed at the insolent baby face of Miss Tedder.

"You have no right here," said the Mexican lady, "this is my ship."

"Captain Kyles' ship," taunted Maud.

"He is the skipper, and my servant. How dare you thrust yourself here uninvited?"

"I brought her, Señora," said Herries, firmly, "and it will be as well to postpone any conversation you may wish to have, until we have despatched the business we have come about."

The two women glared at one another, and all the men,--even the philosophic Gowrie,--felt uneasy at their attitude.

"Dods," he growled, "an' they ca' yon the weaker sex. It's weel that the late Mistress Gowrie is unnergrund, for never again wull I trust my ain precious sel' tae sic jades as they."

"After the business is ended we can speak," said Señora Guzman, and sat down disdainfully.

"I'll be only too glad," snapped Maud likewise sinking down. "You're not going to have it all your own way, madam," and after a mutual scowl, both fixed their jealous eyes on Kyles, who, for a brave man, looked decidedly nervous. He was about to relieve the situation by addressing himself to the business in hand, when the silence was broken by an exclamation from Herries. The young man had mechanically picked up a telegram which was lying on the table, and without thinking had read the same. Its contents

astonished him not a little.

"I beg your pardon, Kyles," he stammered, still holding the telegram with an expression of amazement on his face. "I read this inadvertently. It is from Kind, to you."

"Quite so," answered the Captain smoothly, "and you will see that Pope Narby presented one of the notes stolen from Sir Simon at a shop, and was given in charge. Also that he escaped, and that Kind believed he fled at once with his mother to the 'Marsh Inn.' It takes a lengthy wire to explain all that, Herries, but I told Kind not to spare expense."

"Was this why Kind went up to town?"

"Yes. He met me yesterday ashore, and I gave him my instructions."

"Oh," cried the young man, wonderfully surprised, "and do you mean to say that Kind obeyed them?" Kyles pointed to the telegram. "That proves it." Ritson picked up the wire and looked at the time. "You got this before the news came to Trent," he said sharply.

"Oh," remarked the Captain smiling, "so the police have been informed already. I told Kind to let them know in London, guessing that the news would be at once forwarded to Tarhaven. My only regret is that Pope Narby should have escaped. But we can't foresee everything."

"Aye," remarked Gowrie waving his pipe, "what says glorious Robbie?"

'The best laid plans o' mice an' men
Gang then wrang.'

"I'm nae varra sure o' the context, but there's the sense for ye."

Herries passed a bewildered hand across his brow. "I don't quite understand," he observed. "Is Pope Narby the guilty person?"

"Oh, I don't say that," replied the Captain, agreeably.

"It's his limmer o' a mither," cried Gowrie.

"What!" cried Ritson, jumping up with an activity surprising in so elderly a lawyer. "Did she----?"

"Here!" interrupted Kyles impatiently, "we'll never get on at this rate. Mr. Gowrie, you had better tell what happened at the 'Marsh Inn' and I'll take up the story when your knowledge fails."

Gowrie smiled graciously, asking nothing better than to be the central figure in the conversation. The three men listened attentively, but the two women, still glaring at one another, gave but a careless ear to the tale, told in the old tutor's best style and in his best English. "For the beenefit o' the lawyer body," explained Gowrie, nodding towards Ritson, "him being unacquaint wi' the tongue o' Auld Reekie. But baith ye laddies," he indicated Herries and Kyles respectively, "ken well the vernacular ye sooked in wi' yer mither's milk as it micht be."

"Get on, get on," cried Kyles looking at his watch, "we have not much time. I have steam up, and we lift anchor before midnight."

Ritson smiled to himself, thinking that before midnight Captain Kyles would probably find himself in Tarhaven prison. However, as Gowrie was speaking, he gave his attention to the story, and it astonished him not a little.

The sage related all that had taken place at the inn since his arrival there, and described with indignation how he had been kidnapped while searching for the box buried by Mrs. Narby. In the midst of his diatribes, the Captain cut him short.

"I learned from Señora Guzman that Mrs. Narby had gone to see her son in London," he explained rapidly, "and got the address from the maid-servant of the inn. Mrs. Narby had given her the address and had told her to send on any letters. On receiving this information I went ashore with one of the notes, which I took from the box. I intended to come and see you, Herries, and make an arrangement. But I met Kind by chance on the jetty and made the arrangement with him. He agreed to take the note to town, and give it to Pope Narby; also to try and induce him to pass it, and then give information to the police so that Pope might be arrested, and thus the note would be brought under the notice of the Scotland Yard authorities."

"But Pope would never have tried to pass a note of that sort, when he knew that the authorities had the numbers."

"He did not know that this was one of the stolen notes. Mrs. Narby, I presume, went to London to tell him that the box had been found--which it was by me, and is now on board,--but he would never connect Kind and the stolen notes. Kind presented the note to Pope, who is a fool, as a present from Señora Guzman, who admired his poetry. It was for fifty pounds, and Pope swallowed the bait. He went out to cash the note, as he was short of money. Kind, according to my instructions, entered the shop with him, and declared that it was one of the notes that had to do with the Tedder murder, and gave Pope in charge."

"But since Kind gave him the note----"

"Oh, Kind could explain that in due time. All he wanted and I wanted, was to have that Narby animal arrested. However, Pope lost his head, and before the policeman could seize him, he escaped. I think that was how the affair happened, and you see from that telegram, that Kind believes Pope and his mother have made for the 'Marsh Inn.' I expect that they will hastily pack a few things and escape."

"Then Pope Narby killed Sir Simon," said Herries again.

"I can't be certain of that until I see him," said Kyles.

"Then you don't get the four thousand pounds," retorted Ritson.

"I'll have it before midnight," said Kyles glancing again at his watch, "for then I sail for--let us say, Indiana. I have so wish that you, Mr. Ritson, should put the police on my track. Mr. Herries I can trust, but you,--a lawyer."

"Aye, aye," commented Mr. Gowrie, "they lawyer bodies are the bairns o' Auld Nicky-Ben. The Faither o' Lies, the Accuser o' the Brethren, perverse an' damnable----"

"Don't miscall your best friend, Mr. Gowrie," snapped Ritson. "But we are no nearer the end than we were. Perhaps, Captain Kyles, you will now make your long deferred explanation."

"Have you the four thousand pounds?" asked Kyles sharply.

"There's the box. But you don't get it until----"

"Open the box, and let me see the money," said Kyles. "How do I know but what you will diddle me?"

"You said that you would trust me," put in Herries.

"Yes. I also said that I mistrusted your lawyer. I'll get a screw-driver and a hammer. The box must be opened," and Kyles left the cabin in a hurry.

"I believe he is guilty himself," exclaimed Ritson striking the table.

"You are wrong," remarked Señora Guzman quietly, "Captain Kyles is innocent."

"He isn't," cried Maud, viciously. "I can prove--"

"You can prove nothing."

"I can!"

"You can't, and what is more, you shan't."

The two women, panting and savage, faced one another defiantly. However the scene was ended for the time being by the return of Kyles, and the box

was opened by Ritson, who declined to let the Captain tamper with the precious metal. When the lid was thrown back and the glitter of sovereigns was displayed, Kyles raised another objection.

"You have some money there," he admitted, "but how do I know that the sum amounts to four thousand pounds?"

"Count it," said Ritson curtly.

"That would take too long. Mr. Herries, will you give me your word of honour that the sum of four thousand pounds is in that box?"

"Yes, so Ritson assures me."

"Ah," Kyles was suspicious at once, "then you can't say yourself if the whole--hark!" he stopped abruptly and held up his finger.

There was a long shrill whistle, evidently from some steamer near at hand. Kyles rushed out of the cabin, and Ritson hastily replaced the lid on the box, wondering if the police had arrived thus inopportunistically, and before the revelation had been made. But in any case the gold was safe, and he chuckled at the thought of having Kyles arrested, and forced to speak the truth in order to save his own neck. The buccaneer would not gain possession of the gold after all, for which Ritson was profoundly thankful. But his glee was of short duration. In five minutes, during which everyone sat pale and expectant, Kyles returned. But not alone. With him was Pope Narby, white and sick with fear. He shambled in at the heels of the Captain, and dropped into a chair.

"Here," said Kyles, waving his hand, "allow me to present to you Mr. Pope Narby. He and his mother did return to the 'Marsh Inn' to prepare for flight. I sent up the launch, and they have sought safety on board this boat. I'll take them to South America. Meanwhile, I can now say, Herries, that this," he laid his hand on Pope's arm, "this is the murderer of your uncle."

"No, no," howled a high, shrill voice, "I killed 'im," and Mrs. Narby, looking like a grey old rat at bay in a trap, rushed into the cabin.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Ritson and Herries appeared to be the only members of the company who were surprised by Mrs. Narby's announcement. Gowrie, in a state of high glee, leaned forward, his elbows on the table, and his pipe in his mouth.

"Aye, mistress," said he portentously, "ye're fighting for yer young like the milky mither o' the herd, wha horns the rash intruder wha wud convart her caulf into veal. The muckle great deil tak ye for a leear."

"Gowrie," cried Herries, who was on his feet, "you knew all along!"

"Nae, nae, ye'll nae mack me compromise maesel in yon way. I hed ma suspeecions, though no o' her."

"Say plainly," Herries rapped the table, "is Mrs. Narby guilty or----?"

"I'm nae varra sure."

"Captain Kyles?" he appealed to the skipper, who stood by Mrs. Narby, with folded arms and a grim smile.

"I accuse the son."

"It's a bloomin' lie," panted the landlady, who looked a gruesome object, with her grey hair disarranged and her bonnet askew. "It wos me who cut th' ole

man's 'orrid throat. Pope wouldn't 'urt a fly. I did h'it fur the tin, so es t' 'elp Pope t' be a great man."

"You don't seem to be surprised, Señora Guzman," said Herries, looking at the composed face of the Mexican lady.

"Captain Kyles told me long ago that Pope Narby was guilty."

"Me! Me! Me!" declared Mrs. Narby with vehemence, and wreathed her old arms round the shaking, drooping figure of her miserable son.

"Aye, aye," commented the sage, pointing with the stem of his pipe, "mark hoo th' mither-luve rins thro' a' th' wand. Yon's Alfred Tennyson, I'm theenkin'."

Herries, who was the person principally interested, seeing that on the truth of this statement depended the possession of fifty thousand a year, turned to the mother and son.

"Which one of you did it?" he demanded. "I must know for certain."

Pope made no reply, for his tongue clove to the roof of his palate, and Mrs. Narby, wiping his damp brow with her handkerchief, replied for him.

"I tell you I killed yer bloomin' uncle."

"And I say that Pope Narby did," declared the skipper decisively.

"And I," cried Maud, rising suddenly and stretching out her arm in a threatening manner, "I say that Bruce Kyles is the assassin."

Señora Guzman leaned across the table, and pushed Maud back on to the divan.

"If you dare to say that, I'll have you thrown overboard. Bruce," she addressed the Captain imperiously, "tell them what happened on that night. Mr. Herries knows that we came to England to get money for the expedition; he knows that you made love to Maud by my order, so that Sir Simon should help us; and he has been told that Sir Simon wrote a letter saying that this

woman," she pointed to the indignant Maud, "was disinherited, and that he would meet you at the inn to pay you to give her up. Give her up," laughed the lady insultingly, "a woman for whom he did not care two straws while I lived to be his wife."

"It's a lie--a lie. Bruce, Bruce, you love me, me only," and Maud looked at her quondam lover with agonised appeal.

"I don't love you at all," mumbled the skipper in the most brazen manner, and cutting anything but an heroic figure, "you knew that I was engaged to Señora Guzman, and yet you wanted me to throw her over and be your husband. I never had any intention of marrying you. All I wanted was to get money out of your father, and----"

"Oh, cut it short, you hound," interrupted Herries fiercely.

Kyles turned livid.

"You are on my boat, in my power," he said, in a slow and deadly manner.

"What do I care for that?" retorted the young man, facing the buccaneer with determination. "You have acted like a cur towards my cousin."

"No, no," moaned Maud, who persisted in believing that Kyles was acting a part, because Señora Guzman was present, "if I had the money he would marry me."

"Very good," said Herries. "Captain Kyles, I offer you half the money left by my uncle, that is, twenty-five thousand a year, if you will marry Maud Tedder."

"Bruce! Bruce!" cried Maud, stretching out her arms, "you consent?"

"Bruce," cried Donna Maria, in her turn, with flashing eyes, "you promised me to----"

Kyles interrupted both with an imperious gesture.

"I stick to my one and only love, and that is Maria Guzman," he said sharply,

but his face was pale. "I have four thousand pounds. With that I'll find the treasure and have five millions. Then we'll--but that's neither here nor there, Herries," he wheeled round to face that most indignant gentleman, "you may think what you like. It is not to my interest to kill you or to keep you prisoner. You shall hear all I know and then go free. For your opinion of me I don't care that," and he snapped his fingers contemptuously.

Herries eyed him with scorn.

"Fewer words would have done, Kyles. I wait to hear what you have to say."

"Aye," said the sage gravely, "we're wasting valuable meenutes, an' it's dry wark, a' this talk wi'oot the cheerin' cup."

Kyles flushed and winced at the tone of Herries, and cast a glance at Mrs. Narby, who was still fondling her miserable, tongue-tied son. Then he straightened himself, and his face brightened when his eyes rested on the wooden box, which contained the money he had risked so much to get. He spoke quietly and to the point.

"Sir Simon," said Captain Kyles, "objected to my marrying his daughter, and wanted me to give her up. To gain my own ends, I refused. Then he offered to bribe me with one thousand pounds. I declined, and said that I would take two thousand."

Herries shrugged his shoulders, but did not look up. Kyles reddened at this sign of contempt, and continued more rapidly, as though eager to get the shameful tale ended. The rest of the company, even the lively Gowrie, held their peace.

"Sir Simon then made his plans. He signed a will disinheriting Maud, save for £1,000 a year, and giving the money to you, Herries, provided you found out who killed him, and----"

"Why did he do that?"

"Because he was to have an interview with me at a lonely inn, and fancied that in a fit of anger I might kill him, or else might get rid of him and marry

Maud with her money. That was the reason he disinherited the girl, and why he put in the proviso about the discovery of the murderer, who would, in Sir Simon's opinion, be me."

"I see," said Herries quietly, "Sir Simon wanted to make sure if you did kill him that you would not get the benefit of your crime by marrying Maud and her money."

"That's it," assented the Captain, "but I need hardly say, that I had no idea of killing the old man. When I got his letter, I arranged to go to the inn, and receive the two thousand. Then I would have gone away. As I was not certain of what time I would be at the inn, Sir Simon said that he would put a red light in his bedroom window, and that I could climb up, or that he would admit me by the door when everyone was in bed."

"I don't see the reason for all these precautions," said Herries, in an impatient manner.

"Ah, now you trench on politics. I was being watched by emissaries from our Indiana Republic, and ran a chance of being stabbed or shot. I had reason to believe that they got wind of my engagement at the 'Marsh Inn' and would be on the watch. That was why I would not fix the exact time for calling on Sir Simon. He expected me earlier, but I said that I might be late, so he invented the red handkerchief signal. Well, to make a long story short, I went to the 'Marsh Inn' with Señora Guzman----"

"That is, he went in the launch," she interrupted quickly. "I remained on board the launch, and----"

"Yes, yes," Herries interrupted in his turn, "I know how you sent the sailors to see if any Indiana person was about, and how they kidnapped Armour by mistake. Well, Captain, you got to the inn--at what time, may I ask?"

"Shortly after midnight. I walked through the rain and the fog, with my revolver in my hand. I knew where the inn was, as I had been there before. I noted the red light in the window----"

"I saw you--I saw you," cried Maud, looking at him eagerly.

"I am aware of that, seeing what took place afterwards."

"It was for your sake," she gasped, with a side glance at Herries.

"What is that, Maud?" asked the young man quietly.

"You'll hear in due time if you will allow me to go on with my story," said Kyles testily. "It's getting late and I wish to get away as soon as possible."

"Go on then," said Ritson who was deeply interested.

"I scrambled up to the window which was open. It had been left ajar on purpose by Sir Simon. I am not heavy," the Captain cast a complacent look at his slim figure, "so I easily clambered up the trellis-work----"

"You broke it, you beast," said Mrs. Narby savagely.

"Pooh," rejoined Kyles good-humouredly, "I did very little harm. I easily slipped into the room, wondering why Sir Simon was not on the look-out. I spoke his name softly. There was no reply, so I came gently from behind the dressing table, which had been moved to one side, and went to the bed----"

"Was there a light in the room?" asked Ritson eagerly.

"Oh yes, a candle which was placed behind a red handkerchief so as to signal the special room I was to climb into. I took the candle, and then to my horror saw that Sir Simon was lying dead with his throat cut."

"You did it," cried Maud with a sob.

"I did not," cried Kyles savagely, "the man was dead when I entered the room. His pocket-book lay on the table along with a razor, and a few papers. I could not find the money, else I should have gone away in silence. Then I heard a footstep, and concealed myself behind the curtains of the bed. The door opened gently, and this creature," he pointed to Pope, who shuddered, "crept in softly. He had a bloody towel in his hands with which he wiped them, and then began to examine the pocket-book. I crept out, and caught him by the throat. He nearly fainted."

"You hurt me," moaned Pope at this moment, and his mother fondled him.

"I would have choked you had I had the two thousand pounds safe at that time," said Kyles savagely, "to go and murder an old man in his sleep."

"I did it--I did it," cried Mrs. Narby like a parrot, and trembling violently with mixed emotions of rage and terror.

"That's rubbish, as I can prove. I made Pope confess. He said that he had been tempted by the gold and notes, which he had seen in the parlour. He crept up the stairs shortly before midnight and cut Sir Simon's throat, then he emptied the pocket-book, and took the money to his own room downstairs at the back of the house. He had come back, when I caught him, to see if he had taken everything. He also told me that you, Herries, the nephew of the old man, were in the next room asleep."

"How did he know that I was Sir Simon's nephew?"

"He heard your name, and your talk with Gowrie."

"I didn't mention to Gowrie that I was Sir Simon's nephew."

"Aye. I can stake my life on that, laddie."

"I'll explain,--I'll explain," said Kyles impatiently, "however, to continue. I promised to say nothing, if Pope went down and brought up the money. On that condition I let him go. He went and never returned. I waited and waited in that dismal room with the one candle, and the corpse on the bed. Then I thought that the red light might attract the attention of any Indiana spy who was about, so I put out the light and sat in the dark. Pope never came."

"Why not?" asked Herries surprised.

Pope opened his mouth to speak, but his watchful mother put her hand over his mouth.

"You never did it, lovey; you know nothink," she said, significantly.

"But I can prove that he did," said Kyles. "Pope did not return," he went on

quickly, "because he knew that I could not give the alarm without incriminating myself, and he intended, if I did, to accuse me of killing the old man. I guessed that, and afterwards I made him confess that he intended to act in that way. So there I sat in the darkness. Then I remembered the papers on the table, and examined them to see if Sir Simon had made any mention of the appointment. I found my own letter, and confiscated that----"

"How did you see in the dark?" asked Ritson, suspiciously.

"I lighted matches, as I was afraid to relight the candle. Well then, I also found a small pocket diary written up to the time Sir Simon went to bed. It mentioned that Angus Herries was in the house, and sleeping there----"

"How did my uncle know that?" asked Herries much amazed.

"He overheard your voice raised when talking to Gowrie, and peered out of the parlour to see who it was. He recognised you----"

"Nae, nae," said Gowrie waving the smoke away from his eyes, "he cudnae hae recognised the laddie sae changed wi' weary travels. But Angus here talked tae me, his auld tutor, and I spoke his name at times. Aye, and I mind me noo, the door of the parlour opened and shut, while we hed oor crack."

"I don't remember that," said Angus thoughtfully.

"Aye, but I do, ma laddie. Ye were sae taken up wi' yer tale of woe,--and verra sad it wis,--that ye didna hear nor see. But I keeked oot o' the tail o' ma ee, and saw,--though tae be sure I didna weel ken at the time it wis yer lawfu' uncle. Hed I kenned I micht hae touched him for a shullin' or two."

"You evidently robbed Herries instead," said Kyles contemptuously.

"Eh, but that's actionable. I'll hale ye afore the magistrate for yon speech. Hoo d'y' ken I wis in Herries' room."

"I heard you muttering to yourself. Your accent betrayed you."

"Well, and wherefore no. I joost looked in tae see that my puir laddie wis asleep."

"And you took his money. Pope Narby found that out."

Gowrie turned wrathfully on the culprit.

"D'y' ken yon's a base lee?"

"Here," interrupted Herries, growing weary of all this talk, "get on with what you have to say, Captain Kyles. We can settle these minor details later. What did you do when Narby did not return?"

"I waited until the morning, then assumed Sir Simon's coat and boldly walked out of the inn."

"Why did you wait until the morning?"

"For two reasons. First, I wanted to get the money which Pope had taken away, and thought up to the last moment that he would return. And second, when I did have a half idea of escaping by the window, Armour came and sat down beneath it And there was a third reason," added Kyles, with his eyes on Maud Tedder.

"One moment before you proceed further," said Ritson quickly. "How can we believe all this about Pope Narby?"

"There's his confession," said Kyles, taking a packet from his breast pocket and throwing it across the table. "I saw him later; he refused to give up the money, but I made him sign that confession by threatening to arrest him, and---"

"Pope," yelled Mrs. Narby, "oh, you fool, did you sign----?"

"I had to, mother," moaned her son, "and Captain Kyles said he would save me by taking me away to America."

"And I'll do that," said Kyles nodding. "Herries, Ritson, you have now the truth. That confession repeats all that I have told you, and has been signed by Pope Narby, who killed Sir Simon. You can now leave the four thousand pounds with me and go ashore. I am off in another hour from these waters."

But one thing I'll say before I go," he declared, "you, Herries, have defended your cousin, and have blamed me for treating her as I did. But you have very little reason to decry me, and defend her. For it was your cousin who placed the razor and the pocket-book in your room and who smeared your shirt with her father's blood."

"Maud!" cried Herries, horrified, and started to his feet.

"Yes, I did," she said, with pinched lips and a bloodless face, "I got into the inn, as I told you, but I did not run away when I heard Mr. Gowrie coming out of the bedroom. I hid, while he went down the stairs. Then I ran along to the room, where I saw a gleam of light----"

"It came from under the door," explained Kyles, "as I had lighted the candle on hearing Gowrie muttering."

"I saw it was Bruce, and he told me all, and also mentioned that Angus was sleeping in the next room. To save Bruce, and to get my own money, I determined to get Angus hanged for the crime, so I did what Bruce said. Papa had left the money to Angus, as he told Bruce, and Bruce told me, so I thought that if Angus was hanged the money would come back to me. And if you were to die now," added Maud tigerishly, "I should have my fortune again, and then my own Bruce would marry me."

Before Herries could exclaim on the iniquity of his cousin's conduct, there was a sudden shouting overhead. Kyles started and listened. Down the stairs rushed an excited man--he was one of the engineers--who cried out that the police were on board.

"The police," cried Herries, astonished.

"The police," echoed Kyles wrathfully. "Did you betray me, Herries?"

"No. I swear that I----"

"I told Trent to come," cried Ritson, much excited, "as I want the murderer arrested, and----"

Before he could say anything further, Mrs. Narby was at his throat.

"You 'ang my son," she shrieked, "I'll choke y' furst. Guy up thet confession. Pope, come an' elp me."

But Pope, terrified out of his life at his danger, ran up the cabin stairs in the vain endeavour to escape, and so fell into the arms of Trent himself. Ritson, shaking off the old woman, ran up also, and shouted out to Trent to hold the murderer. Kyles followed, and there was a general rush. The night was clear with moonlight, and the deck was filled with the sailors of the yacht. Trent, with a couple of policemen, was on board, and in the boats alongside were many others who were being kept from getting on deck by some of the crew.

"I arrest everyone on board this ship," cried Trent loudly, "in the name of the King----"

"I don't care for King or Kaiser," shouted Kyles, in his turn, "you get away and leave that man."

"No, no," cried the lawyer. "Hold him tightly, Trent. He killed Sir Simon. I have the confession in my pocket. And the Captain here is an accessory after the fact."

"Arrest him," said Trent, pointing to Kyles.

A policeman advanced and was knocked down. This was the signal for a general fight. Trent held on to Pope Narby like grim death and the miserable creature was whimpering like a soul in pain. The other policemen in the boat managed to get on deck, and one who remained behind sent off a green rocket, as a sign that assistance was required. Apparently Trent, expecting some fighting, had laid his plans excellently. On the moonlit deck a mass of men struggled and strained, with much noise and clamour. Mrs. Narby fought tooth and nail for her son, but he was down under the feet of the Inspector, who stood over him with a levelled revolver. Kyles blew his bo'sn's whistle, and more and more sailors came tumbling up from below, dark, fierce-looking fellows they were, who cared for nothing. The police were overpowered gradually, but already more boats were putting off from the shore, and there was every chance that Kyles would have to yield. He shouted

down to the engine room, and gave the signal to "stand by."

Trent dragged his prisoner to the side and dropped him into the boat, while Mrs. Narby clung to him, biting and scratching. Indeed, but for the assistance of Ritson, she would have succeeded in getting her son free. What with the yelling and swearing and struggling, the deck was like a pandemonium. Having secured at least one prisoner, and seeing that there was danger of bloodshed, Trent cried to his men to regain the boat. At the same time the yacht began to move, and Kyles, on the bridge, was pulling at the whistle, which shrieked shrilly. Herries, not wishing to be carried away, for the policemen were tumbling into their boat, rushed to the side, where his own boatmen were. He saw the boat, and shouted. Just as he did so, and was leaning over at a dangerous angle, he was pushed violently from behind, and had just a glimpse of Maud's malignant face as she thrust him to his death.

"The money's mine--mine," she cried, clapping her hands.

"And Bruce is mine," said Señora Guzman in her ear, and sent Maud Tedder overboard after her victim.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE END

Some months later, in the spring-time, Mr. and Mrs. Herries were seated under their own fig-tree; in other words, they were occupying the "Moated Hall." Angus had entered into full possession of his property, and was now a country gentleman, popular and wealthy. His wife also was much admired,

and, her story being known, everyone was delighted to make her acquaintance. It had been impossible to keep the mysterious tale of the "Marsh Inn" murder out of the newspapers, and quite a legend had grown up in connection with it.

Pope Narby was tried for the murder of Sir Simon, and although he would fain have denied his guilt, and although his mother would fain have taken it on her own shoulders, he was condemned and sentenced to be hanged. It was this news which Elspeth and her husband were discussing after dinner in the garden.

The night was beautiful and spring-like. There was a glorious moon gleaming in a cloudless sky, and everywhere the earth was breaking into blossom with the coming of spring. Browne had been dining with the young couple, but had been hastily called away to see a patient. Angus and his wife were alone, and sat side by side, hand in hand, on the terrace of the old hall. Elspeth looked more delicate and ethereal than ever in her evening dress, and Herries, immaculately groomed and arrayed in purple and fine linen, appeared a very different creature to the worn-out tramp who had sought the shelter of the "Marsh Inn." He was just talking of this experience.

"I thought that it was the unluckiest thing that ever happened to me," he said, looking fondly at his pretty wife, "but now I know that but for my visit there I would never have been where I am. You would not have been my wife, Elspeth, nor would I now be drawing fifty thousand a year."

"Yet we have seen much misery coming out of the whole business," sighed the girl-wife. "Is it a good thing, Angus, to build up happiness on the sorrows of other people?"

"My darling, we did all we could to help others. Their sorrows were caused simply by their own wickedness, from which both of us suffered. No, Elspeth, I don't think we can blame ourselves in any way. Let us recall, for the last time, all that has happened, and then agree to forget the sorrowful past."

"Well, then, Angus, let us begin with Pope Narby."

"I rather think we end with him," said Herries, "seeing that the poor wretch will be hanged in a few days. The appeal his mother made to the Home Secretary has been rejected, and the law will take its course. But he certainly deserves his doom. When I was in the court at the time he was sentenced, Elspeth, he talked about Eugene Aram, and compared himself to that person, saying he had killed Sir Simon to get money to become famous."

"Did Mrs. Narby know that he was guilty?"

"Not at the time. But she noticed that he was always down at the Red Creek--"

"I noticed that also, from the mud on his boots."

"Well, then, one day she followed him there, and found that he had buried the notes and gold in a box. She made him confess all, which he did, only he never told her that Captain Kyles had made him sign a confession."

"I wonder that Pope was so foolish as to do that."

"He would not have done that had not Kyles promised to save him by taking him to South America. Then he thought that he was safe and Kyles certainly would have kept his word had not Trent and his policemen arrived. I was angry with Ritson for having warned Trent, but as events proved it was just as well."

"I thought you intended yourself to warn Trent," said Elspeth.

"So I did, dear, but then, from certain information I learned I fancied that your father might be guilty."

"What, papa? Oh no. He would do many wrong things, I know, but not----"

"Well," said Herries dryly, "I don't think he'd even stop short of murder to get money. But there is no danger of his doing anything of that sort now, as he has his five hundred a year. He is coming to see us to-night, Elspeth, and then intends to go to-morrow to the North there to live always."

"I am glad of that," said the daughter heartily. "Papa is not a good man,

Angus, and the further away from us he is the better. But do you know," she added smiling, "I really thought that papa would have married Mrs. Mountford."

"There was not the least chance of that, dear, although he certainly admired her. Poor Mrs. Mountford, I am glad I allowed her an annuity as she certainly has had a very bad time. She felt the loss of Maud very much."

"Why was not Maud saved?" asked Elspeth.

"In all the confusion it was impossible," said Herries earnestly, "for I would have saved her myself in spite of her wickedness had I got my wits about me. But I struck my head against the side of the yacht, when she pushed me over, and the boatmen dragged me quite stunned into their boat. Maud was pushed over immediately afterwards by Señora Guzman, and----"

"Who can swear to that?"

"Ritson. He saw her do it, and saw Maud push me over. You see, my dear, Maud knew that if I died that the money would come to her, and that was why she wanted to come with me on the yacht. I saw that she had something on her mind, but she would not tell me what it was. And no wonder, seeing that it was her design to push me overboard, and get the cash. Then she thought that Bruce Kyles would marry her."

"Had she been successful would he have done that?"

"No. He loved Señora Guzman. I think that Kyles behaved very badly. However, he has vanished out of our lives with the four thousand----"

"Ah," said Elspeth smiling, "Mr. Ritson has never ceased to mourn for the loss of that."

"I think Kyles deserved the money," said Herries, "and Ritson made a good thing out of it, when the property came into my possession. Without that confession, extorted by Kyles from Pope Narby, we would never have got the fortune. But it proved beyond all doubt that Pope was guilty, so everything has turned out for the best. I do not grudge Kyles the money. He's in South

America by now, I expect, hunting for that treasure along with Señora Guzman and her father.

"What will they do when they find it?"

"Marry, and then, with heaps of money at their back,--I believe the treasure amounts to five millions sterling,--they will try and get back authority in Indiana."

"What about Mrs. Narby?"

"I intend to give her some money and send her to the States to rejoin her husband. Pope must be hanged: there's no help for it."

While they thus talked and enjoyed the beauty of the night, they heard a grand mellow voice chanting one of the psalms. Shortly the musical person came in sight, and then they beheld the Rev. Michael Gowrie, in strict clerical dress, looking fat and gay and more bibulous than ever. On seeing his son-in-law and daughter he advanced with a majestic gait reciting solemnly--

"Soon, as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the glorious tale.

"That's Addison, ye ken, my bairns. A fine poet, though not tae be named i' the same breeth wi' Robbie Burns."

"So you are off to-morrow?" said Herries taking no notice of this poetical outburst.

"I'm gangin' tae morrow tae the Norrth. Aye, my fut wull be on ma native heath soon. Five hunner a year, and a stainless name. Leuk, laddie, what honesty o' purpose does for the wise."

"Oh father," said Elspeth disgusted, "you know you----"

"I know that I walked in miry ways," said the sage quickly, "groped in darkness and employed in the muckrake to find ma gold. But I wis but a good honest mon struggling wi' advarsity. Aye, lassie, dinna forget that I saved your husband fra the gallows."

"You've made five hundred a year out of that," said Herries, contemptuously.

"And gey cheap at the price, my manny. My ain conscience o' having dune good is ma reward. Aye, I can lay ma venerable locks on my pillow and say I've thocht o' the gude o' ithers afore ma ain. See, Elspeth, the husband I got for ye, and the hoose, and the----"

"Oh, shut up and go away," said Herries, disgusted with the old scamp, "and don't come near us oftener than you can help."

"And this," said Mr. Gowrie, lifting his eyes to the cloudless sky, "is gratitude."

"Gratitude be hanged, I owe you none."

"Dinna talk o' hanging, laddie, when ye think that puir Pope's fate micht hae been yours. Ye owe me a' theengs, I'm theenking. What were ye but a Jonah when I took peety on ye at the 'Marsh Inn'? I helped ye with counsel, I cheered yer lonely path, and gied tae ye ma ain bairn, the pride and glory of my existence."

Herries stared at Mr. Gowrie thus praising himself, then taking Elspeth's arm within his own, calmly walked away. "Dear," he said when they entered the house, "when your father goes, we'll forget all the past."

"I never wish to see him again," shuddered the girl, "and oh, Angus, to think I should have such a father," she let fall a tear.

Herries kissed it away.

"There! There! We won't think any more of him or of our troubles. All's well that end's well. You and I are no longer Mr. and Mrs. Jonah."

"What are we then?" asked Elspeth smiling through her tears.

"Darby and Joan," and then they sat down happy at last. And the sage, the wise man, who had steered them,--in his own opinion,--through all their troubles, sat on the terrace lamenting the ingratitude of his children.

"Aye, aye," said Gowrie, "I'm a Lear--wha hes cherished a serpent to sting me. But for the gude siller--aye," he chuckled and rubbed his hands, I hae the siller, and can gang my ways content until yon day when I occupy the hoose built wi'oot hands. A Provideence hes watched o'er me I doot not, for I'm nae ane o' they sceptics wha' disnae believe in ony thing. Weel, weel,' he rose, and walked into the hoose, "a wee drappy toddy and then to bed. Jonah's Luck, aye, it's Jonah's Fortune I'm theenking, and I gie it a' tae Jonah."

THE END

HUNT, BARNARD A CO., LONDON, W., AND AYLESBURY.

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