Havoc

（Volume II）

by E. Phillips Oppenheim

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CHAPTER XXI. MADEMOISELLE IDIALE'S VISIT

Laverick, on the following morning, found many things to think about. He was accustomed to lunch always at the same restaurant, within a few yards of his office, and with the same little company of friends. Just as he was leaving, an outside broker whom he knew slightly came across the room to him.

"Tell me, Laverick," he asked, "what's become of your partner?"

"He has gone abroad for a few weeks. As a matter of fact, we shall be announcing a change in the firm shortly."

"Queer thing," the broker remarked. "I was in Liverpool yesterday, and I could have sworn that I saw him hanging around the docks. I should never have doubted it, but Morrison was always so careful about his appearance, and this fellow was such a seedy looking individual. I

called out to him and he vanished like a streak."

"It could scarcely have been Morrison," Laverick said. "He sailed several days ago for New York."

"That settles it," the man declared, passing on. "All the same, it was the most extraordinary likeness I ever saw."

Laverick, on his way back, went into a cable office and wrote out a marconigram to the Lusitania,

Have you passenger Arthur Morrison on board? Reply.

He signed his name and paid for an answer. Then he went back to his office.

"Any one to see me?" he inquired.

"Mr. Shepherd is here waiting," his clerk told him, "queer looking fellow who paid you two hundred and fifty pounds in cash for some railway stock."

Laverick nodded.

"I'll see him," he said. "Anything else?"

"A lady rang up name sounded like a French one, but we could none of us catch what it was to say that she was

coming down to see you."

"If it is Mademoiselle Idiale," Laverick directed, "I must see her directly she arrives. How are you, Shepherd?" he added, nodding to the waiter as he passed towards his room. "Come in, will you? You've got your certificates all right?"

Mr. James Shepherd had the air of a man with whom prosperity had not wholly agreed. He was paler and pastier looking than ever, and his little green eyes seemed even more restless. His attire a long rough overcoat over the livery of his profession scarcely enhanced the dignity of his appearance.

"Well, what is it?" Laverick asked, as soon as the door was closed.

"Our bar is being watched," the man declared. "I don't think it's anything to do with the police. Seems to be a sort of foreign gang. They're all round the place, morning, noon, and night. They've pumped everybody."

"There isn't very much," Laverick remarked slowly,

"for them to find out except from you."

"They've found out something, anyway," Shepherd continued. "My junior waiter, unfortunately, who was asleep in the sitting room, told them he was sure there were customers in the place between ten and twelve on Monday night, because they woke him up twice, talking. They're beginning to look at me a bit doubtful."

"I shouldn't worry," Laverick advised. "The inquest's on now and you haven't been called. I don't fancy you're running any sort of risk. Any one may say they believe there were people in the, bar between those hours, but there isn't any one who can contradict you outright. Besides, you haven't sworn to anything. You've simply said, as might be very possible, that you don't remember any one."

"It makes me a bit nervous, though," Shepherd remarked apologetically. "They're a regular keen looking tribe, I can tell you. Their eyes seem to follow you all over the place."

"I shall come in for a drink presently myself,"

Laverick declared. "I should like to see them. I might get an idea as to their nationality, at any rate."

"Very good, sir. I'm sure I'm doing just as you suggested. I've said nothing about leaving, but I'm beginning to grumble a bit at the work, so as to pave the way. It's a hard job, and no mistake. I had thirty nine chops between one and half past, single handed, too, with only a boy to carry the bread and that, and no one to serve the drinks unless they go to the counter for them. It's more than one man's work, Mr. Laverick."

Laverick assented.

"So much the better," he declared. "All the more excuse for your leaving.

"You '11 be round sometime to day, sir, then?" the man asked, taking up his hat.

"I shall look in for a few moments, for certain," Laverick answered. "If you get a chance you must point out to me one of those fellows."

Jim Shepherd departed. There was a shouting of

newspaper boys in the street outside. Laverick sent out for a paper. The account of the inquest was brief enough, and there were no witnesses called except the men who had found the dead body. The nature of the wounds was explained to the jury, also the impossibility of their having been self inflicted. In the absence of any police evidence or any identification, the discussion as to the manner of the death was naturally limited. The jury contented themselves by bringing in a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown." Laverick laid down the paper. The completion of the inquest was at least the first definite step toward safety. The question now before him was what to do with that twenty thousand pounds. He sat at his desk, looking into vacancy. After all, had he paid too great a price? The millstone was gone from around his neck, something new and incomprehensible had crept into his life. Yet for a background there was always this secret knowledge.

A clerk announcing Mademoiselle Idiale broke in upon his reflections. Laverick rose from his seat to greet his

visitor. She was wonderfully dressed, as usual, yet with the utmost simplicity, a white serge gown with a large black hat, but a gown that seemed to have been moulded on to her slim, faultless figure. She brought with her a musical rustle, a slight suggestion of subtle perfumes a perfume so thin and ethereal that it was unrecognizable except in its faint suggestion of hothouse flowers. She held out her hand to Laverick, who placed for her at once an easy chair.

"This is indeed an honor, Mademoiselle."

She inclined her head graciously.

"You are very kind," said she. "I know that here in the city you are very busy making money all the time, so I must not stay long. Will you buy me some stocks, some good safe stocks, which will bring me in at least four per cent?"

"I can promise to do that," Laverick answered. "Have you any choice?"

"No, I have no choice," Louise told him. "I bring with me a cheque, see, I give it to you, it is for six thousand

pounds. I would like to buy some stocks with this, and to know the names so that I may watch them in the paper. I like to see whether they go up or down, but I do not wish to risk their going down too much. It is something like gambling but it is no trouble."

"Your money shall be spent in a few minutes, Mademoiselle," Laverick assured her, "and I think I can promise you that for a week or two, at any rate, your stocks will go up. With regard to selling "

"I leave everything to you," she interrupted, "only let me know what you propose."

"We will do our best," Laverick promised.

"It is good," she said. "Money is a wonderful thing. Without it one can do little. You have not forgotten, Mr. Laverick, that you were going to show me this passage?"

"Certainly not. Come with me now, if you will. It is only a yard or two away."

He took her out into the street. Every clerk in the office forgot his manners and craned his neck. Outside,

Mademoiselle let fall her veil and passed unrecognized. Laverick showed her the entry.

"It was just there," he explained, "about half a dozen yards up on the left, that the body was found."

She looked at the place steadily. Then she looked along the passage.

"Where does it lead to that?" she asked.

"Come and I will show you. On the left" as they passed along the flagged pavement "is St. Nicholas Church and churchyard. On the right here there are just offices. The street in front of us is Henschell Street. All of those buildings are stockbrokers' offices."

"And directly opposite," she asked, "that is a caf? is it not, a restaurant, as you would call it?"

Laverick nodded.

"That is so," he agreed. "One goes in there sometimes for a drink."

"And a meeting place, perhaps?" she inquired. "It would probably be a meeting place. One might leave there

and walk down this passage naturally enough."

Laverick inclined his head.

"As a matter of fact," he declared, "I think that the evidence went to prove that there were no visitors in the restaurant that night. You see, all these offices round here close at six or seven o'clock, and the whole neighborhood becomes deserted."

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Your English police, they do not know how to collect evidence. In the hands of Frenchmen, this mystery would have been solved long before now. The guilty person would be in the hands of the law. As it is, I suppose that he will go free."

"Well, we must give the police a chance, at any rate," answered Laverick. "They haven't had much time so far."

"No," she admitted, "they have not had much time. I wonder " She hesitated for a moment and did not conclude her sentence. "Come," she exclaimed, with a little shiver, "let us go back to your office! This place is not cheerful.

All the time I think of that poor man. It does make me frightened."

Laverick escorted his visitor back to the electric brougham which was waiting before his door.

"A list of stocks purchased on your behalf will reach you by to night's post," he promised her. "We shall do our best in your interests."

He held out his hand, but she seemed in no hurry to let him go.

"You are very kind, Mr. Laverick. I would like to see you again very soon. You have heard me sing in Samson and Delilah?"

"Not yet, but I am hoping to very shortly."

"To night," she declared, "you must come to the Opera House. I leave a box for you at the door. Send me round a note that you are there, and it is possible that I may see you. It is against the rules, but for me there are no rules."

Laverick hesitating, she leaned forward and looked into his face.

"You are doing something else?" she protested. "You were, perhaps, thinking of taking out again the little girl with whom you were sitting last night?"

"I had half promised "

"No, no!" she exclaimed, holding his hand tighter. "She is not for you that child. She is too young. She knows nothing. Better to leave her alone. She is not for a man of the world like you. Soon she would cease to amuse you. You would be dull and she would still care. Oh, there is so much tragedy in these things, Mr. Laverick so much tragedy for the woman! It is she always who suffers. You will take my advice. You will leave that little girl alone."

Laverick smiled.

"I am afraid," said he, "that I cannot promise that so quickly. You see, I have not known her long, but she has very few friends and I think that she would miss me. Perhaps," he added, after a second's pause, "I care for her too much."

"It is not for you," she answered scornfully, "to care too much. An Englishman, he cares never enough. A woman to him is something amusing, his companion for a little of his spare time, something to be pleased about, to show off to his friends, to share, even, the passion of the moment. But an Englishman he does not care too much. He never cares enough. He does not know what it is to care enough."

"Mademoiselle, there may be truth in what you say, and again there may not. We have the name, I know, of being cold lovers, but at least we are faithful."

She held up her hand with a little grimace.

"Oh, how I do hate that word!" she exclaimed. "Who is there, indeed, who wishes that you would be faithful? How much we poor women do suffer from that! Why can you never understand that a woman would be cared for very, very much, with all the strength and all the passion you can conceive, but let it not last for too long. It gets weary. It gets stale. It is as you say, the Englishman he cares very

little, perhaps, but he cares always; and the woman, if she be an artiste and a woman, she tires. But good afternoon, Mr. Laverick! I must not keep you here on the pavement talking of these frivolous matters. You come to night?"

"You are very kind," Laverick said. "If I may come until eleven o'clock, it would give me the greatest pleasure."

"As you will," she declared. "We shall see. I expect you, then. You ask for your box."

"If you wish it, certainly."

She smiled and waved her hand.

"You will tell him, please," she directed, "to drive to Bond Street."

Laverick re entered his office, pausing for a minute to give his clerk instructions for the purchase of stocks for Mademoiselle Idiale. He had scarcely reached his own room when he was told that Mr. James Shepherd wished to speak to him for a moment upon the telephone. He took up the receiver.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"It is Shepherd," was the answer. "Is that Mr. Laverick?"

"Yes!"

"You were outside the restaurant here a few minutes ago," Shepherd continued. "You had with you a lady a young, tall lady with a veil."

"That's right," Laverick admitted. "What about her?"

"One of the two men who watch always here was reading the paper in the window," Shepherd went on hoarsely. "He saw her with you and I heard him mutter something as though he had received a shock. He dropped his glass and his paper. He watched you every second of the time you were there until you had disappeared. Then he, too, put on his hat and went out."

"Anything else?"

"Nothing else," was the reply. "I thought you might like to know this, sir. The man recognized the lady right enough."

"It seems queer," Laverick admitted. "Thank you for ringing me up, Shepherd. Good morning!"

Laverick leaned back in his chair. There was no doubt whatever now in his mind but that Mademoiselle Idiale, for some reason or other, was interested in this crime. Her wish to see the place, her introduction to him last night and her purchase of stocks, were all part of a scheme. He was suddenly and absolutely convinced of it. As friend or foe, she was very certainly about to take her place amongst the few people over whom this tragedy loomed.

CHAPTER XXII. ACTIVITY OF AUSTRIAN SPIES

Louise left her brougham in Piccadilly and walked across the Green Park. Bellamy, who was waiting, rose up from a seat, hat in hand. She took his arm in foreign fashion. They walked together towards Buckingham Palace a strangely distinguished looking couple.

"My dear David," she said, "the man perplexes me. To look at him, to hear him speak, one would swear that he was honest. He has just those clear blue eyes and the stolid face, half stupid and half splendid, of your athletic Englishman. One would imagine him doing a foolishly honorable thing, but he is not my conception of a criminal at all."

Bellamy kicked a pebble from the path. His forehead wore a perplexed frown.

"He didn't give himself away, then?"

"Not in the least."

"He took you out and showed you the spot where it happened?"

"Without an instant's hesitation."

"As a matter of curiosity," asked Bellamy, "did he try to make love to you?"

She shook her head.

"I even gave him an opening," she said. "Of flirtation he has no more idea than the average stupid Englishman

one meets."

Bellamy was silent for several moments.

"I can't believe," he said, "that there is the least doubt but that he has the money and the portfolio. I have made one or two other inquiries, and I find that his firm was in very low water indeed only a week ago. They were spoken of, in fact, as being hopelessly insolvent. No one can imagine how they tided over the crisis."

"The man who was watching for you?" she inquired.

"He makes no mistakes," Bellamy assured her. "He saw Laverick enter that passage and come out. Afterwards he went back to his office, although he had closed up there and had been on his homeward way. The thing could not have been accidental."

"Why do you not go to him openly?" she suggested. "He is, after all, an Englishman, and when you tell him what you know he will be very much in your power. Tell him of the value of that document. Tell him that you must have it."

"It could be done," Bellamy admitted. "I think that one of us must talk plainly to him. Listen, Louise, are you seeing him again?"

"I have invited him to come to the Opera House to night."

"See what you can do," he begged. "I would rather keep away from him myself, if I can. Have you heard anything of Streuss?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Nothing directly," she replied, "but my rooms have been searched even my dressing room at the Opera House. That man's spies are simply wonderful. He seems able to plant them everywhere. And, David! "

"Yes, dear?"

"He has got hold of Lassen," she continued. "I am perfectly certain of it."

Then the sooner you get rid of Lassen, the better," Bellamy declared.

"It is so difficult," she murmured, in a perplexed tone.

"The man has all my affairs in his hands. Up till now, although he is uncomely, and a brute in many ways, he has served me well."

"If he is Streuss's creature he must go," Bellamy insisted.

She nodded.

"Let us sit down for a few minutes," she said. "I am tired."

She sank on to a seat and Bellamy sat by her side. In full view of them was Buckingham Palace with its flag flying. She looked thoughtfully at it and across to Westminster.

"Do they know, I wonder, your country people?" she asked.

"Half a dozen of them, perhaps," he answered gloomily, no more.

"To day," she declared, "I seem to have lost confidence. I seem to feel the sense of impending calamity, to hear the guns as I walk, to see the terror fall upon the faces of all

these great crowds who throng your streets. They are a stolid, unbelieving people these. The blow, when it comes, will be the harder."

Bellamy sighed.

"You are right," he said. "When one comes to think of it, it is amazing. How long the prophets of woe have preached, and how completely their teachings have been ignored! The invasion bogey has been so long among us that it has become nothing but a jest. Even I, in a way, am one of the unbelievers."

"You are not serious, David!" she exclaimed.

"I am," he affirmed. "I think that if we could read that document we should see that there is no plan there for the immediate invasion of England. I think you would find that the blow would be struck simultaneously at our Colonies. We should either have to submit or send a considerable fleet away from home waters. Then, I presume, the question of invasion would come again. All the time, of course, the gage would be flung down, treaties would be

defied, we should be scorned as though we were a nation of weaklings. Austria would gather in what she wanted, and there would be no one to interfere."

Louise was very pale but her eyes were flashing fire.

"It is the most terrible thing which has happened in history," she said, "this decadence of your country. Once England held the scales of justice for the world. Now she is no longer strong enough, and there is none to take her place. David, even if you know what that document contains, even then will it help very much?"

"Very much indeed. Don't you see that there is one hope left to us one hope and that is Russia? The Czar must be made to withdraw from that compact. We want to know his share in it. When we know that, there will be a secret mission sent to Russia. Germany and Austria are strong, but they are not all the world. With Russia behind and France and England westward, the struggle is at least an equal one. They have to face both directions, they have to face two great armies working from the east and from the

west."

She nodded, and they sat there in silence for several moments. Bellamy was thinking deeply.

"You say, Louise," he asked, looking up quickly, "that your rooms have been searched. When was this?"

"Only last night," she replied.

Bellamy drew a little sigh of relief.

"At any rate," he said, "Streuss has no idea that the document is not in our possession. He knows nothing about Laverick. How are we going to deal with him, Louise, when he comes for his answer?"

"You have a plan?" she asked.

"There is only one thing to be done," Bellamy declared. "I shall say that we have already handed over the document to the English Government. It will be a bluff, pure and simple. He may believe it or he may not."

"You will break your compact then," she reminded him.

"I shall call myself justified," he continued. "He has

attempted to rob us of the document. You are sure of what you say that your rooms and dressing room have been searched?"

"Absolutely certain," she declared.

"That will be sufficient," Bellamy decided. "If Streuss comes to me, I shall meet him frankly. I shall tell him that he has tried to play the burglar and that it must be war. I shall tell him that the compact is in the hands of the Prime Minister, and that he and his spies had better clear out."

She looked at him questioningly.

"Of course, you understand," he added, "there is one thing we can do, and one thing only. We must send a mission to Russia and another to France, and before the German fleet can pass down the North Sea we must declare war. It is the only thing left to us a bold front. Without that packet we have no casus belli. With it, we can strike, and strike hard. I still believe that if we declare war within seven days, we shall save ourselves."

Streuss and Kahn looked, too, across the panorama of

London, across the dingy Adelphi Gardens, the turbid Thames, the smoke hung world beyond. They were together in Streuss's sitting room on the seventh floor of one of the great Strand hotels.

"Our enterprise is a failure!" Kahn exclaimed gloomily. "We cannot doubt it any longer. I think, Streuss, that the best course you and I could adopt would be to realize it and to get back. We do no good here. We only run needless risks."

The face of the other man was dark with anger. His tone, when he spoke, shook with passion.

"You don't know what you say, Kahn!" he cried hoarsely. "I tell you that we must succeed. If that document reaches the hands of any one in authority here, it would be the worst disaster which has fallen upon our country since you or I were born. You don't understand, Kahn! You keep your eyes closed!"

"What men can do we have done," the other answered. "Von Behrling played us false. He has died a traitor's death,

but it is very certain that he parted with his document before he received that twenty thousand pounds."

"Once and for all, I do not believe it!" Streuss declared. "At mid day, I can swear to it that the contents of that envelope were unknown to the Ministers of the King here. Now if Von Behrling had parted with that document last Monday night, don't you suppose that everything would be known by now? He did not part with it. Bellamy and Mademoiselle lie when they say that they possess it. That document remains in the possession of Von Behrling's murderer, and it is for us to find him."

Kahn sighed.

"It is outside our sphere that. What can we do against the police of this country working in their own land?"

Streuss struck the table before which they were standing. The veins in his temples were like whipcord.

"Adolf," he muttered, "you talk like a fool! Can't you see what it means? If that document reaches its destination, what do you suppose will happen?"

"They will know our plans, of course," Kahn answered. "They will have time to make preparation."

Streuss laughed bitterly.

"Worse than that!" he exclaimed. "They are not all fools, these English statesmen, though one would think so to read their speeches. Can't you see what the result would be if that document reaches Downing Street? War at a moment's notice, war six months too soon! Don't you know that every shipbuilding yard in Germany is working night and day? Don't you know that every nerve is being strained, that the muscles of the country are hammering the rivets into our new battleships? There is but one chance for this country, and if her statesmen read that document they will know what it is. It is open to them to destroy the German navy utterly, to render themselves secure against attack."

"They would never have the courage," Kahn declared. "They might make a show of defending themselves if they were attacked, but to take the initiative no! I do not believe

it."

"There is one man who has wit enough to do it," Streuss said. "He may not be in the Cabinet, but he commands it. Kahn, wake up, man! You and I together have never known what failure means. I tell you that that document is still to be bought or fought for, and we must find it. This morning Mademoiselle drove into the city and called at the offices of a stockbroker within a dozen yards of Crooked Friars' Alley. She was there a long time. The stockbroker himself came out with her into the street, took her to see the entry, stood with her there and returned. What was her interest in him, Kahn? His name is Laverick. Four days ago he was on the brink of ruin. To the amazement of every one, he met all his engagements. Why did Mademoiselle go to the city to see him? He was at his office late that Tuesday night. He had a partner who has disappeared."

Kahn looked at his companion with admiration.

"You have found all this out!" he exclaimed.

"And more," Streuss declared. "For twenty four hours, this man Laverick has not moved without my spies at his heels."

"Why not approach him boldly?" Kahn suggested. "If he has the document, let us outbid Mademoiselle Louise, and do it quickly."

Streuss shook his head.

"You don't know the man. He is an Englishman, and if he had any idea what that document contained, our chances of buying it would be small indeed. This is what I think will happen. Mademoiselle will try to obtain it, and try in vain. Then Bellamy will tell him the truth, and he will part with it willingly. In the meantime, I believe that it is in his possession.

"The evidence is slender enough," objected Kahn.

"What if it is!" Streuss exclaimed. "If it is only a hundred to one chance, we have to take it. I have no fancy for disgrace, Adolf, and I know very well what will happen if we go back empty handed."

The telephone bell rang. Streuss took off the receiver and held it to his ear. The words which he spoke were few, but when he laid the instrument down there was a certain amount of satisfaction in his face.

"At any rate," he announced, "this man Laverick did not part with the document to day. Mademoiselle Louise and Bellamy have been sitting in the Park for an hour. When they separated, she drove home and dropped him at his club. Up till now, then, they have not the document. We shall see what Mr. Laverick does when he leaves business this evening; if he goes straight home, either the document has never been in his possession, or else it is in the safe in his office; if he goes to Mademoiselle Idiale's "

"Well?" Kahn asked eagerly.

"If he goes to Mademoiselle Idiale's," Streuss repeated slowly, "there is still a chance for us!"

CHAPTER XXIII. LAVERICK AT THE OPERA

Laverick, in presenting his card at the box office at Covent Garden that evening, did so without the slightest misconception of the reasons which had prompted Mademoiselle Idiale to beg him to become her guest. It was sheer curiosity which prompted him to pursue this adventure. He was perfectly convinced that personally he had no interest for her. In some way or other he had become connected in her mind with the murder which had taken place within a few yards of his office, and in some other equally mysterious manner that murder had become a subject of interest to her. Either that, or this was one of the whims of a spoiled and pleasure surfeited woman.

He found an excellent box reserved for him, and a measure of courtesy from the attendants not often vouchsafed to an ordinary visitor. The opera was Samson and Delilah, and even before her wonderful voice thrilled the house, it seemed to Laverick that no person more lovely

than the woman he had come to see had ever moved upon any stage. It appeared impossible that movement so graceful and passionate should remain so absolutely effortless. There seemed to be some strange power inside the woman. Surely her will guided her feet! The necessity for physical effort never once appeared. Notwithstanding the slight prejudice which he had felt against her, it was impossible to keep his admiration altogether in check. The fascination of her wonderful presence, and then her glorious voice, moved him with the rest of the audience. He clapped as the others did at the end of the first act, and he leaned forward just as eagerly to catch a glimpse of her when she reappeared and stood there with that marvelous smile upon her lips, accepting with faint, deprecating gratitude the homage of the packed house.

Just before the curtain rose upon the second act, there was a knock at his box door. One of the attendants ushered in a short man of somewhat remarkable personality. He was barely five feet in height, and an extremely fat neck and a

corpulent body gave him almost the appearance of a hunchback. He had black, beady eyes, a black moustache fiercely turned up, and sallow skin. His white gloves had curious stitchings on the back not common in England, and his silk hat, exceedingly glossy, had wider brims than are usually associated with Bond Street.

Laverick half rose, but the little man spread out one hand and commenced to speak. His accent was foreign, but, if not an Englishman, he at any rate spoke the language with confidence.

"My dear sir," he began, "I owe you many apologies. It was Mademoiselle Idiale's wish that I should make your acquaintance. My name is Lassen. I have the fortune to be Mademoiselle's business manager.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Lassen," said Laverick. "Will you sit down?"

Mr. Lassen thereupon hung his hat upon a peg, removed his overcoat, straightened his white tie with the aid of a looking glass, brushed back his glossy black hair

with the palms of his hands, and took the seat opposite Laverick. His first question was inevitable.

"What do you think of the opera, sir?"

"It is like Mademoiselle Idiale herself," Laverick answered. "It is above criticism."

"She is," Mr. Lassen said firmly, "the loveliest woman in Europe and her voice is the most wonderful. It is a great combination, this. I myself have managed for many stars, I have brought to England most of those whose names are known during the last ten years; but there has never been another Louise Idiale, never will be."

I can believe it," Laverick admitted.

She has wonderful qualities, too," continued Mr. Lassen. "Your acquaintance with her, I believe, sir, is of the shortest."

"That is so," Laverick answered, a little coldly. He was not particularly taken with his visitor.

"Mademoiselle has spoken to me of you," the latter proceeded. "She desired that I should pay my respects

during the performance."

"It is very kind of you," Laverick answered. "As a matter of fact, it is exceedingly kind, also, of Mademoiselle Idiale to insist upon my coming here to night. She did me the honor, as you may know, of paying me a visit in the city this morning."

"So she did tell me," Mr. Lassen declared. "Mademoiselle is a great woman of business. Most of her investments she controls herself. She has whims, however, and it never does to contradict her. She has also, curiously enough, a preference for the men of affairs."

Laverick had reached that stage when he felt indisposed to discuss Mademoiselle any longer with a stranger, even though that stranger should be her manager. He nodded and took up his programme. As he did so, the curtain rang up upon the next act. Laverick turned deliberately towards the stage. The little man had paid his respects, as he put it. Laverick felt disinclined for further conversation with him. Yet, though his head was

turned, he knew very well that his companion’s eyes were fixed upon him. He had an uncomfortable sense that he was an object of more than ordinary interest to this visitor, that he had come for some specific object which as yet he had not declared.

"You will like to go round and see Mademoiselle," the latter remarked, some time afterwards.

Laverick shook his head.

"I shall find another opportunity, I hope, to congratulate her."

"But, my dear sir, she expects to see you," Mr. Lassen protested. "You are here at her invitation. It is usual, I can assure you."

"Mademoiselle Idiale will perhaps excuse me," Laverick said. "I have an engagement immediately after the performance is over."

His companion muttered something which Laverick could not catch, and made some excuse to leave the box a few minutes later. When he returned, he carried a little, note

which he presented to Laverick with an air of triumph.

"It is as I said!" he exclaimed. "Mademoiselle expects you."

Laverick read the few lines which she had written.

I wish to see you after the performance. If you cannot come round or escort me yourself, will you come later to the restaurant of Luigi, where, as always, I shall sup. Do not fail. Louise Idiale.

Laverick placed the note in his waistcoat pocket without immediate remark. Later on he turned to his companion.

"Will you tell Mademoiselle Idiale," he said, "that I will do myself the honor of coming to her at Luigi's restaurant. I have an engagement after the performance which I must keep."

"You will certainly come?" Lassen asked anxiously.

"Without a doubt," Laverick promised.

Mr. Lassen took up his hat...

"I will go and tell Mademoiselle. For some reason or

other she seemed particularly desirous of seeing you this evening. She has her whims, and those who have most to do with her, like myself, find it well to keep them gratified. If I do not see you again, sir, permit me to wish you good evening."

He disappeared with several bows of his pudgy little person, and Laverick was left with another puzzle to solve. He was not in the least conceited, and he did not for a moment misinterpret this woman's interest in him. Her invitation, he knew very well, was one which half London would have coveted. Yet it meant nothing personal, he was sure of that. It simply meant that for some mysterious reason, the same reason which had prompted her to visit him in the city he was of interest to her.

At a few minutes before eleven Laverick left the place and drove to the stage door of the Universal Theatre. Zoe came out among the first and paused upon the threshold, looking up and down the street eagerly. When she recognized him, her smile was heavenly.

"Oh, how nice of you!" she exclaimed, stepping at once into his taxicab. "You don't know how different it feels to hope that there is some one waiting for you and then to find your hope come true. To night I was not sure. You had said nothing about it, and yet I could not help believing that you would be here."

"I was hoping," he said, "that we might have another supper together. Unfortunately, I have an engagement."

"An engagement?" she repeated, her face falling.

Laverick loved the truth and he seldom hesitated to tell it.

"It is rather an odd thing," he declared. "You remember that woman at Luigi's last night Mademoiselle Idiale?"

"Of course."

"She came to my office to day and gave me six thousand pounds to invest for her. She made me take her out and show her where the murder was committed, and asked a great many questions about it. Then she insisted

that I should go and hear her sing this evening, and I find that I was expected to take her on to supper afterwards. I excused myself for a little while, but I have promised to go to Luigi’s, where she will be."

The girl was silent for a moment.

"Where are we going now, then?" she asked.

"Wherever you like. I can take you home first, or I can leave you anywhere."

She looked at him with a piteous little smile.

"The last two nights you have spoiled me," she said. "I have so many evil thoughts and I am afraid to go home."

"I am sorry. If I could think of anything or anywhere "

"No, you must take me home, please," said she. "It was selfish of me. Only Mademoiselle Idiale is such a wonderful person. Do you think that she will want you every night?"

"Of course not," he laughed. "Come, I will make an engagement with you. We will have supper together to morrow evening."

She brightened up at once.

"I wonder," she asked timidly, a few minutes afterwards, "have you heard anything from Arthur? He promised to send a telegram from Queenstown."

Laverick shook his head. He said nothing about the marconigram he had sent, or the answer which he had received informing him that there was no such person on board. It seemed scarcely worth while to worry her.

"I have heard nothing," he replied. "Of course, he must be half way to America by now."

"There have been no more inquiries about him?" she asked.

"No more than the usual ones from his friends, and a few creditors. The latter I am paying as they come. But there is one thing you ought to do with me. I think we ought to go to his rooms and lock up his papers and letters. He never even went back, you know, after that night."

She nodded thoughtfully.

"When would you like to do this?"

"I am so busy just now that I am afraid I can spare no time until Monday afternoon. Would you go with me then?"

"Of course... My time is my own. We have no matinee, and I have nothing to do except in the evening."

They had reached her home. It looked very dark and very uninviting. She shivered as she took her latchkey from the bag which she was carrying.

"Come in with me, please, while I light the gas," she begged. "It looks so dreary, doesn't it?"

"You ought to have some one with you," he declared, "especially in a part like this."

"Oh, I am not really afraid," she answered. "I am only lonely."

He stood in the passage while she felt for a box of matches and lit the gas jet. In the parlor there was a bowl of milk standing waiting for her, and some bread.

"Thank you so much," she said. "Now I am going to make up the fire and read for a short time. I hope that you

will enjoy your supper well, moderately," she added, with a little laugh.

"I can promise you," he answered, "that I shall enjoy it no more than last night's or to morrow night's."

She sighed.

"Poor little me!" she exclaimed. "It is not fair to have to compete with Mademoiselle Idiale. Good night!"

Something he saw in her eyes moved him strangely as he turned away.

"Would you like me," he asked hesitatingly, "supposing I get away early would you like me to come in and say good night to you later on?"

Her face was suddenly flushed with joy.

"Oh, do!" she begged. "Do!"

He turned away with a smile.

"Very well," he said. "Don't shut up just yet and I will try."

"I shall stay here until three o'clock," she declared, "until four, even. You must come. Remember, you must

come. See."

She held out to him her key.

"I can knock at the door," he protested. "You would hear me."

"But I might fall asleep," she answered. "I am afraid. If you have the key, I am sure that you will come."

He put it in his waistcoat pocket with a laugh.

"Very well," he said, "if it is only for five minutes, I will come."

CHAPTER XXIV. A SUPPER PARTY AT LUIGI'S

Laverick walked into Luigi's Restaurant at about a quarter to twelve, and found the place crowded with many little supper parties on their way to a fancy dress ball. The demand for tables was far in excess of the supply, but he had scarcely shown himself before the head maitre d'hotel came hurrying up.

"Mademoiselle Idiale is waiting for you, sir," he announced at once. "Will you be so good as to come this way?"

Laverick followed him. She was sitting at the same table as last night, but she was alone, and it was laid, he noticed with surprise, only for two.

"You have treated me," she said, as she held out her fingers, "to a new sensation. I have waited for you alone here for a quarter of an hour I! Such a thing has never happened to me before."

"You do me too much honor," Laverick declared, seating himself and taking up the carte.

"Then, too," she continued, "I sup alone with you. That is what I seldom do with any man. Not that I care for the appearance," she added, with a contemptuous wave of the hand. "Nothing troubles me less. It is simply that one man alone wearies me. Almost always he will make love, and that I do not like. You, Mr. Laverick, I am not afraid of. I do not think that you will make love to me."

"Any intentions I may have had," Laverick remarked, with a sigh, "I forthwith banish. You ask a hard task of your cavaliers, though, Mademoiselle."

She smiled and looked at him from under her eyelids.

"Not of you, I fancy, Mr. Laverick," she said. "I do not think that you are one of those who make love to every woman because she is good looking or famous."

"To tell you the truth," Laverick admitted, "I find it hard to make love to any one. I often feel the most profound admiration for individual members of your sex, but to express one's self is difficult sometimes it is even embarrassing. For supper?"

"It is ordered," she declared. "You are my guest."

"Impossible!" Laverick asserted firmly. "I have been your guest at the Opera. You at least owe me the honor of being mine for supper."

She frowned a little. She was obviously unused to being contradicted.

"I sup with you, then, another night," she insisted.

"No," she continued, "If you are going to look like that, I take it back. I sup with you to night. This is an ill omen for our future acquaintance. I have given in to you already I, who give in to no man. Give me some champagne, please."

Laverick took the bottle from the ice pail by his side, but the sommelier darted forward and served them.

"I drink to our better understanding of one another, Mr. Laverick," she said, raising her glass, "and, if you would like a double toast, I drink also to the early gratification of the curiosity which is consuming you."

"The curiosity? "

"Yes! You are wondering all the time why it is that I chose last night to send and have you presented to me, why I came to your office in the city to day with the excuse of investing money with you, why I invited you to the Opera to night, why I commanded you to supper here and am supping with you alone. Now confess the truth; you are full of curiosity, is it not so?"

"Frankly, I am."

She smiled good humoredly.

"I knew it quite well. You are not conceited. You do not believe, as so many men would, that I have fallen in love with you. You think that there must be some object, and you ask yourself all the time, 'What is it?' in your heart, Mr. Laverick, I wonder whether you have any idea."

Her voice had fallen almost to a whisper. She looked at him with a suggestion of stealthiness from under her eyelids, a look which only needed the slightest softening of her face to have made it something almost irresistible.

"I can assure you," Laverick said firmly, "that I have no idea."

"Do you remember almost my first question to you?" she asked.

"It was about the murder. You seemed interested in the fact that my office was within a few yards of the passage where it occurred."

"Quite right," she admitted. "I see that your memory is very good. There, then, Mr. Laverick, you have the secret

of my desire to meet you."

Laverick drank his wine slowly. The woman knew! Impossible! Her eyes were watching his face, but he held himself bravely. What could she know? How could she guess?

"Frankly," he said, "I do not understand. Your interest in me arises from the fact that my offices are near the scene of that murder. Well, to begin with, what concern have you in that?"

"The murdered man," she declared thoughtfully, "was an acquaintance of mine."

"An acquaintance of yours!" Laverick exclaimed. "Why, he has not been identified. No one knows who he was."

She raised her eyebrows very slightly.

"Mr. Laverick," she murmured, "the newspapers do not tell you everything. I repeat that the murdered man was an acquaintance of mine. Only three days ago I traveled part of the way from Vienna with him."

Laverick was intensely interested.

"You could, perhaps, throw some light, then, upon his death?"

"Perhaps I could," she answered. "I can tell you one thing, at any rate, Mr. Laverick, if it is news to you. At the time when he was murdered, he was carrying a very large sum of money with him. This is a fact which has not been spoken of in the Press."

Once again Laverick was thankful for those nerves of his. He sat quite still. His face exhibited nothing more than the blank amazement which he certainly felt.

"This is marvelous," he said. "Have you told the police?"

"I have not," she answered. "I wish, if I can, to avoid telling the police."

"But the money? To whom did it belong?"

"Not to the murdered man."

"To any one whom you know of?" he inquired.

"I wonder," she said, after a moment of hesitation,

"whether I am telling you too much."

"You are telling me a good deal," he admitted frankly.

"I wonder how far," she asked, "you will be inclined to reciprocate?"

"I reciprocate!" he exclaimed. "But what can I do? What do I know of these things?"

She stretched out her hand lazily, and drew towards her a wonderful gold purse set with emeralds. Carefully opening it, she drew from the interior a small flat pocketbook, also of gold, with a great uncut emerald set into its centre. This, too, she opened, and drew out several sheets of foreign note paper pinned together at the top. These she glanced through until she came to the third or fourth. Then she bent it down and passed it across the table to Laverick.

"You may read that," she said. "It is part of a report which I have had in my pos session since Wednesday morning."

Laverick drew the sheet towards him and read, in thin,

angular characters, very distinct and plain:

Some ten minutes after the assault, a policeman passed down the street but did not glance toward the passage. The next person to appear was a gentleman who left some offices on the same side as the passage, and walked down evidently on his homeward way. He glanced up the passage and saw the body lying there. He disappeared for a moment and struck a match. A minute afterwards he emerged from the passage, looked up and down the street, and finding it empty returned to the office from which he had issued, let himself in with his latchkey, and closed the door behind him. He was there for about ten minutes. When he reappeared, he walked quickly down the street and for obvious reasons I was unable to follow him.

The address of the offices which he left and re entered was Messrs. Laverick & Morrison, Stockbrokers.

"That interests you, Mr. Laverick?" she asked softly.

He handed it back to her.

"It interests me very much," he answered. "Who was

this unseen person who wrote from the clouds?"

"I may not tell you all my secrets, Mr. Laverick," she declared. "What have you done with that twenty thousand pounds?"

Laverick helped himself to champagne. He listened for a moment to the music, and looked into the wonderful eyes which shone from that beautiful face a few feet away. Her lips were slightly parted, her forehead wrinkled. There was nothing of the accuser in her countenance; a gentle irony was its most poignant expression.

"Is this a fairy tale, Mademoiselle Idiale?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It might seem so," she answered. "Sometimes I think that all the time we live two lives, the life of which the world sees the outside, and the life inside of which no one save ourselves knows anything at all. Look, for instance, at all these people these chorus girls and young men about town the older ones, too all hungry for pleasure, all drinking at the cup of life as though they had indeed but to

day and to morrow in which to live and enjoy. Have they no shadows, too, no secrets? They seem so harmless, yet if the great white truth shone down, might one not find a murderer there, a dying man who knew his terrible secret, yonder a Croesus on the verge of bankruptcy, a strong man playing with dishonor? But those are the things of the other world which we do not see. The men look at us to night and they envy you because you are with me. The women envy me more because I have emeralds upon my neck and shoulders for which they would give their souls, and a fame throughout Europe which would turn their foolish heads in a very few minutes. But they do not know. There are the shadows across my path, and I think that there are the shadows across yours. What do you say, Mr. Laverick?"

He looked at her, curiously moved. Now at last he began to believe that it was true what they said of her, that she was indeed a marvelous woman. She had a fame which would have contented nine hundred and ninety nine women

out of a thousand. She had beauty, and, more wonderful still, the grace, the fascination which are irresistible. She had but to lift a finger and there were few who would not kneel to do her bidding. And yet, behind it all there were other things in her life. Had she sought them, or had they come to her?

"You are one of those wise people, Mr. Laverick," she said, "who realize the danger of words. You believe in silence. Well, silence is often good. You do not choose to admit anything."

"What is there for me to admit? Do you want to know whether I am the man who left those offices, who disappeared into the passage, who reappeared again "

"With a pocket book containing twenty thousand pounds," she murmured across the flowers.

"At least tell me this?" he demanded. "Was the money yours?"

"I am not like you," she replied. "I have talked a great deal and I have reached the limit of the things which I may

tell you."

"But where are we?" he asked. "Are you seriously accusing me of having robbed this murdered man?"

"Be thankful," she declared, "that I am not accusing you of having murdered him."

"But seriously," he insisted, "am I on my defence have I to account for my movements that night as against the written word of your mysterious informant? Is it you who are charging me with being a thief? Is it to you I am to account for my actions, to defend myself or to plead guilty?"

She shook her head.

"No," she answered. "I have said almost my last word to you upon this subject. All that I have to ask of you is this. If that pocket book is in your possession, empty it first of its contents, then go over it carefully with your fingers and see if there is not a secret pocket. If you discover that, I think that you will find in it a sealed document. If you find that document, you must bring it to me."

The lights went down. The voice of the waiter murmured something in his ears.

"It is after hours," Mademoiselle Idiale said, "but Luigi does not wish to disturb us. Still, perhaps we had better go."

They passed down the room. To Laverick it was all like a dream the laughing crowd, the flushed men and bright eyed women, the lowered lights, the air of voluptuousness which somehow seemed to have enfolded the place. In the hall her maid came up. A small motor brougham, with two servants on the box, was standing at the doorway. Mademoiselle turned suddenly and gave him her hand.

"Our supper party, I think, Mr. Laverick," she said, "has been quite a success. We shall before long, I hope, meet again."

He handed her into the carriage. Her maid walked with them. The footman stood erect by his side. There were no further words to be spoken. A little crowd in the doorway

envied him as he stood bareheaded upon the pavement.

CHAPTER XXV. JIM SHEPHERD'S SCARE

It was, in its way, a pathetic sight upon which Laverick gazed when he stole into that shabby little sitting room. Zoe had fallen asleep in a small, uncomfortable easy chair with its back to the window. Her supper of bread and milk was half finished, her hat lay upon the table. A book was upon her lap as though she had started to read only to find it slip through her fingers. He stood with his elbow upon the mantelpiece, looking down at her. Her eyelashes, long and silky, were more beautiful than ever now that her eyes were closed. Her complexion, pale though she was, seemed more the creamy pallor of some southern race than the whiteness of ill health. The bodice of her dress was open a few inches at the neck, showing the faint white smoothness of her flawless skin. Not even her shabby shoes could conceal the perfect shape of her feet and ankles.

Once more he remembered his first simile, his first thought of her. She seemed, indeed, like some dainty statuette, uncouthly clad, who had strayed from a world of her own upon rough days and found herself ill equipped indeed for the struggle. His heart grew hot with anger against Morrison as he stood and watched her. Supposing she had been different! It would have been his fault, leaving her alone to battle her way through the most difficult of all lives. Brute!

He had muttered the word half aloud and she suddenly opened her eyes. At first she seemed bewildered. Then she smiled and sat up.

"I have been asleep!" she exclaimed.

"A most unnecessary statement," he answered, smiling. "I have been standing looking at you for five minutes at least."

"How fortunate that I gave you the key!" she declared. "I don't suppose I should ever have heard you. Now please stand there in the light and let me look at you."

"Why?"

"I want to look at a man who has had supper with Mademoiselle Idiale."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Am I supposed to be a wanderer out of Paradise, then?"

She looked at him doubtfully.

"They tell strange stories about her," she said; "but oh, she is so beautiful! If I were a man, I should fall in love with her if she even looked my way."

"Then I am glad," he answered, "that I am less impressionable."

"And you are not in love with her?" she asked eagerly.

"Why should I be?" he laughed. "She is like a wonderful picture, a marvelous statue, if you will. Everything about her is faultless. But one looks at these things calmly enough, you know. It is life which stirs life."

"Do you think that there is no life in her veins, then?"

Zoe asked.

"If there is," he answered, "I do not think that I am the man to stir it."

She drew a little sigh of content.

"You see," she said, "you are my first admirer, and I haven't the least desire to let you go."

"Incredible!" he declared.

"But it is true," she answered earnestly. "You would not have me talk to these boys who come and hang on at the stage door. The men to whom I have been introduced by the other girls have been very few, and they have not been very nice, and they have not cared for me and I have not cared for them. I think," she said, disconsolately, "I am too small. Every one to day seems to like big women. Cora Sinclair, who is just behind me in the chorus, gets bouquets every night, and simply chooses with whom she should go out to supper."

Laverick looked grave.

"You are not envying her?" he asked.

"Not in the least, as long as I too am taken out sometimes."

Laverick smiled and sat on the arm of her chair.

"Miss Zoe," he said, "I have come because you told me to, just to prove, you see, that I am not in the toils of Mademoiselle Idiale. But do you know that it is half past one? I must not stay here any longer."

She sighed once more.

"You are right," she admitted, "but it is so lonely. I have never been here without May and her mother. I have never slept alone in the house before the other night. If I had known that they were going away, I should never have dared to come here."

"It is too bad," he declared. "Couldn't you get one of the other girls to stay with you?"

She shook her head.

"There are one or two whom I would like to have," she said, "but they are all living either at home or with relatives. The others I am afraid about. They seem to like to sit up so

late and "

"You are quite right," he interrupted hastily, "quite right. You are better alone. But you ought to have a servant."

She laughed.

"On two pounds fifteen a week?" she asked. "You must remember that I could not even live here, only I have practically no rent to pay."

He fidgeted for a moment.

"Miss Zoe," he said, "I am perfectly serious when I tell you that I have money which should go to your brother. Why will you not let me alter your arrangements just a little ? I cannot bear to think of you here all alone."

"It is very kind of you," she answered doubtfully; "but please, no. Somehow, I think that it would spoil everything if I accepted that sort of help from you. If you have any money of Arthur's, keep it for a time and I think when you write him I do not want to seem grasping but I think if he has any to spare you might suggest that he does give me

just a little. I have never had anything from him at all. Perhaps he does not quite understand how hard it is for me.

"I will do that, of course," Laverick answered, "but I wish you would let me at least pay over a little of what I consider due to you. I will take the responsibility for it. It will come from him and not from me."

She remained unconvinced.

"I would rather wait," she said. "If you really want to give me something, I will let you out of my brother's money, of course, I mean," she added. "I haven't anything saved at all, or I wouldn't have that. But one day you shall take me out and buy me a dress and hat. You can tell Arthur directly you write to him. I don't mind that, for sometimes I do feel ashamed I did the other night to have you sit with me there, and to feel that I was dressed so very differently from all of them."

He laughed reassuringly.

"I don't think men notice those things. To me you seemed just as you should seem. I only know that I was

glad enough to be there with you."

"Were you?" rather wistfully.

"Of course I was. Now I am going, but before I go, don't forget Monday afternoon. We'll have lunch and then go to your brother's rooms."

She glanced at the clock.

"Is it really so late?" she asked.

"It is. Don't you notice how quiet it is outside?"

They stood hand in hand for a moment. A strange silence seemed to have fallen upon the streets. Laverick was suddenly conscious of something which he had never felt when Mademoiselle Idiale had smiled upon him a quickening of the pulses, a sense of gathering excitement which almost took his breath away. His eyes were fixed upon hers, and he seemed to see the reflection of that same wave of feeling in her own expressive face. Her lips trembled, her eyes were deeper and softer than ever. They seemed to be asking him a question, asking and asking till every fibre of his body was concentrated in the desperate

effort with, which he kept her at arm's length.

"Is it so very late?" she whispered, coming just a little closer, so that she was indeed almost within the shelter of his arms.

He clutched her hands almost roughly and raised them to his lips.

"Much too late for me to stay here, child," he said, and his voice even to himself sounded hard and unnatural.

"Run along to bed. To morrow night to morrow night, then, I will fetch you. Good bye!"

He let himself out. He did not even look behind to the spot where he had left her. He closed the front door and walked with swift, almost savage footsteps down the quiet Street, across the Square, and into New Oxford Street. Here he seemed to breathe more freely. He called a hansom and drove to his rooms.

The hall porter had left his post in the front hall, and there was no one to inform Laverick that a visitor was awaiting him. When he entered his sitting room, however,

he gave a little start of surprise. Mr. James Shepherd was reclining in his easy chair with his hands upon his knees Mr. James Shepherd with his face more pasty even than usual, his eyes a trifle greener, his whole demeanor one of unconcealed and unaffected terror.

"Hullo!" Laverick exclaimed. "What the dickens what do you want here, Shepherd?"

"Upon my word, sir, I'm not sure that I know," the man replied, "but I'm scared. I've brought you back the certificates of them shares. I want you to keep them for me. I'm terrified lest they come and search my room. I am, I tell you fair. I'm terrified to order a pint of beer for myself. They're watching me all the time."

"Who are?" Laverick demanded.

"Lord knows who;" Shepherd answered, "but there's two of them at it. I told you about them as asked questions, and I thought there we'd done and finished with it. Not a bit of it ! There was another one there this afternoon, said he was a journalist, making sketches of the passage and asking

me no end of questions. He wasn't no journalist, I'll swear to that. I asked him about his paper. 'Half a dozen,' he declared. 'They're all glad to have what I send them.' Journalist! Lord knows who the other chap was and what he was asking questions for, but this one was a 'tec, straight. Joe Forman, he was in to day looking after my place, for I'd given a month's notice, and he says to me, "You see that big chap?' meaning him as had been asking me the questions and I says "Yes!' and he says, 'That's a 'tee. I've seed him in a police court, giving evidence.' I went all of a shiver so that you could have knocked me down."

"Come, come!" said Laverick. "There's no need for you to be feeling like this about it. All that you've done is not to have remembered those two customers who were in your restaurant late one night. There's nothing criminal in that."

"There's something criminal in having two hundred and fifty pounds' worth of shares in one's pocket something suspicious, anyway," Shepherd declared, plumping them

down on the table. "I ain't giving you these back, mind, but you must keep 'em for me. I wish I'd never given notice. I think I'll ask the boss to keep me on."

"Why do you suppose that this man is particularly interested in you?" Laverick inquired.

"Ain't I told you?" Shepherd exclaimed, sitting up. "Why, he's been to my place down in 'Ammersmith, asking questions about me. My landlady swears he didn't go into my room, but who can tell whether he did or not? Those sort of chaps can get in anywhere. Then I went out for a bit of an airing after the one o'clock rush was over to day, and I'm danged if he wasn't at my 'eels. I seed him coming round by Liverpool Street just as I went in a bar to get a drop of something."

Laverick frowned.

"If there is anything in this Story, Shepherd," he said, "if you are really being followed, what a thundering fool you were to come here! All the world knows that Arthur Morrison was my partner."

"I couldn't help it, sir," the man declared. "I couldn't, indeed. I was so scared, I felt I must speak about it to some one. And then there were these shares. There was nowhere I could keep 'em safe."

"Look here," Laverick went on, "you're alarming yourself about nothing. In any case, there is only one thing for you to do. Pull yourself together and put a bold face upon it. I'll keep these certificates for you, and when you want some money you can come to me for it. Go back to your place, and if your master is willing to keep you on perhaps it would be a good thing to stay there for another month or so. But don't let any one see that you're frightened. Remember, there's nothing that you can get into trouble for. No one's obliged to answer such questions as you've been asked, except in a court and under oath. Stick to your story, and if you take my advice," Laverick added, glancing at his visitor's shaking fingers, "you will keep away from the drink."

"It's little enough I've had, sir," Shepherd assured him.

"A drop now and then just to keep up one's spirits nothing that amounts to anything."

"Make it as little as possible," Laverick said. "Remember, I'm back of you, I'll see that you get into no trouble. And don't come here again. Come to my office, if you like there's nothing in that but don't come here, you understand?"

Shepherd took up his hat.

"I understand, sir. I'm sorry to have troubled you, but the sight of that man following me about fairly gave me the shivers."

"Come into the office as often as you like, in reason, Laverick said, showing him out, "but not here again. Keep your eyes open, and let me know if you think you've been followed here."

"There's no more news in the papers, sir? Nothing turned up?"

"Nothing," replied Laverick. "If the police have found out anything at all, they will keep it until after the inquest."

"And you've heard. nothing, sir," Shepherd asked, speaking in a hoarse whisper, "of Mr. Morrison?"

"Nothing," Laverick answered. "Mr. Morrison is abroad."

The man wiped his forehead with his hand.

"Of course!" he muttered. "A good job, too, for him!"

CHAPTER XXVI. THE DOCUMENT DISCOVERED

On the following morning, Laverick surprised his office cleaner and one errand boy by appearing at about a quarter to nine. He found a woman busy brushing out his room and a man Cleaning the windows. They stared at him in amazement. His arrival at such an hour was absolutely unprecedented.

"You can leave the office just as it is, if you please," he told them. "I have a few things to attend to at once."

He was accordingly left alone. He had reckoned upon

this as being the one period during the day when he could rely upon not being disturbed. Nevertheless, he locked the door so as to be secure against any possible intruder. Then he went to his safe, unlocked it, and drew from its secret drawer the worn brown leather pocket book.

First of all he took out the notes and laid them upon the table. Then he felt the pocket book all over and his heart gave a little leap. It was true what Mademoiselle Idiale had told him. On one side there was distinctly a rustling as of paper. He opened the case quite flat and passed his fingers carefully over the lining. Very soon he found the opening it was simply a matter of drawing down the stiff silk lining from underneath the overlapping edge. Thrusting in his fingers, he drew out a long foreign envelope, securely sealed. Scarcely stopping to glance at it, he rearranged the pocket book, replaced the notes, and locked it up again. Then he unbolted his door and sat down at his desk, with the document which he had discovered, on the pad in front of him.

There was not much to be made of it. There was no address, but the black seal at the end bore the impression of a foreign coat of arms, and a motto which to him was indecipherable. He held it up to the light, but the outside sheet had not been written on, and he gained no idea as to its contents. He leaned back in his chair for a moment, and looked at it. So this was the document which would probably reveal the secret of the murder in Crooked Friars' Alley! This was the document which Mademoiselle Idiale considered of so much more importance than the fortune represented by that packet of bank notes! What did it all mean? Was this man, who had either expiated a crime or been the victim of a terrible vengeance, was he a politician, a dealer in trade secrets, a member of a secret society, an informer? Or was he one of the underground criminals of the world, one of those who crawl beneath the surface of known things a creature of the dark places? Perhaps during those few minutes, when his brain was cool and active, with the great city awakening all

around him, Laverick realized more completely than ever before exactly how he stood. Without doubt he was walking on the brink of a precipice. Four days ago there had been nothing for him but ruin. The means of salvation had suddenly presented themselves in this startling and dramatic manner, and without hesitation he had embraced them. What did it all amount to? How far was he guilty, and of what? Was he a thief? The law would probably call him so. The law might have even more to say. It would say that by keeping his mouth closed as to his adventure on that night he had ranged himself on the side of the criminals, he was guilty not only of technical theft, but of a criminal knowledge of this terrible crime. Events had followed upon one another so rapidly during these last few days that he had little enough time for reflection, little time to realize exactly how he stood. The long expected boom in" Unions," the coming of Zoe, the strange advances made to him by Mademoiselle Idiale, her incomprehensible connection with this tragedy across

which he had stumbled, and her apparent knowledge of his share in it, these things were sufficient, indeed, to give him food for thought. Laverick was not by nature a pessimist. Other things being equal, he would have made, without doubt, a magnificent soldier, for he had courage of a rare and high order. It never occurred to him to sit and brood upon his own danger. He rather welcomed the opportunity of occupying his mind with other thoughts. Yet in those few minutes, while he waited for the business of the: day to commence, he looked his exact position in the face and he realized more thoroughly how grave it really was. How was he to find a way out to set himself right with the law? What could he do with those notes? They were there untouched. He had only made use of them in an indirect way. They were there intact, as he had picked them up upon that fateful night. Was there any possible chance by means of which he might discover the owner and restore them in such a way that his name might never be mentioned? His eyes repeatedly sought that envelope which

lay before him. Inside it must lie the secret of the whole tragedy. Should he risk everything and break the seal, or should he risk perhaps as much and tell the whole truth to Mademoiselle Idiale? It was a strange dilemma for a man to find himself in.

Then, as he sat there, the business of the day commenced. A pile of letters was brought in, the telephones in the outer office began to ring. He thrust the sealed envelope into the breast pocket of his coat and buttoned it up. There, for the present, it must remain. He owed it to himself to devote every energy he possessed to make the most of this great tide of business. With set face he closed the doors upon the unreal world, and took hold of the levers which were to guide his passage through the one in which he was an actual figure.

Her visit was not altogether unexpected, and yet, when they told him that Mademoiselle Idiale was outside, he hesitated.

"It is the lady who was here the other day," his head

clerk reminded him. "We made a remarkably good choice of stocks for her. They must be showing nearly sixteen hundred pounds profit. Perhaps she wants to realize."

"In any case, you had better show her in," said Laverick.

She came, bringing with her, notwithstanding her black clothes and heavy veil, the atmosphere of a strange world into his somewhat severely furnished office. Her skirts swept his carpet with a musical swirl. She carried with her a faint, indefinable perfume of violets, a perfume altogether peculiar, dedicated to her by a famous chemist in the Rue Royale, and supplied to no other person upon earth. Who else was there, indeed, who could have walked those few yards as she walked?

He rose to his feet and pointed to a chair.

"You have come to ask about your shares?" he asked politely. "So far, we have nothing but good news for you."

She recognized that he spoke to her in the presence of his clerk, and she waved her hand.

"Women who will come themselves to look after their poor investments are a nuisance, I suppose," she said. "But indeed I will not keep you long. A few minutes are all that I shall ask of you. I am beginning to find city affairs so interesting."

They were alone by now and Louise raised her veil, raised it so high that he could see her eyes. She leaned back in her chair, supporting her chin with the long, exquisite fingers of her right hand. She looked at him thoughtfully.

"You have examined the pocket book?" she asked.

"I have."

"And the document was there?"

"The document was there," he admitted. "Perhaps you can tell me how it would be addressed?"

Looking at her closely, it came to him that her indifference was assumed. She was shivering slightly, as though with cold.

"I imagine that there would be no address," she said.

"You are right. That document is in my pocket."

"What are you going to do with it?" she asked.

"What do you advise me to do with it?"

"Give it to me."

"Have you any claim?"

She leaned a little nearer to him.

"At least I have more claim to it," she whispered, "than you to that twenty thousand pounds."

"I do not claim them," he replied. "They are in my safe at this moment, untouched. They are there ready to be returned to their proper owner."

"Why do you not find him?" with a note of incredulity in her tone.

"How am I to do that?" Laverick demanded.

"We waste words," she continued coldly. "I think that if I leave you with the contents of your safe, it will be wise for you to hand me that document."

"I am inclined to do so," Laverick admitted. "The very fact that you knew of its existence would seem to give you a sort of claim to it. But, Mademoiselle Idiale, will you

answer me a few questions?"

"I think," she said, "that it would be better if you asked me none."

"But listen," he begged. "You are the only person with whom I have come into touch who seems to know anything about this affair. I should rather like to tell you exactly how I stumbled in upon it. Why can we not exchange confidence for confidence? I want neither the twenty thousand pounds nor the document. I want, to be frank with you, nothing but to escape from the position I am now in of being half a thief and half a criminal. Show me some claim to that document and you shall have it. Tell me to whom that money belongs, and it shall be restored."

"You are incomprehensible," she declared. "Are you, by any chance, playing a part with me? Do you think that it is worth while?"

"Mademoiselle Idiale," Laverick protested earnestly, "nothing in the world is further from my thoughts. There is very little of the conspirator about me. I am a plain man of

business who stumbled in upon this affair at a critical moment and dared to make temporary use of his discovery. You can put it, if you like, that I am afraid. I want to get out. Nothing would give me greater pleasure, if such a thing were possible, than to send this pocket book and its contents anonymously to Scotland Yard, and never hear about them again.

She listened to him with unchanged face. Yet for some moments after he had finished speaking she was thoughtful.

"You may be speaking the truth," she said. "If so, I have been deceived. You are not quite the sort of man I did believe you were. What you tell me is amazing, but it may be true."

"It is the truth," Laverick repeated calmly.

"Listen," she said, after a brief pause. "You were at school, were you not, with Mr. David Bellamy? You know well who he is?"

"Perfectly well," Laverick admitted.

"You would consider him a person to be trusted?"

"Absolutely."

"Very well, then," she declared. "You shall come to my fiat at five o'clock this afternoon and bring that document. If it is possible, David Bellamy shall be there himself. We will try then and prove to you that you do no harm in parting with that document to us."

"I will come," Laverick promised, "at five o'clock; but you must tell me where."

"You will put it down, please," she said. "There must not be any mistake. You must come, and you must come to day. I am staying at number 15, Dover Street. I will leave orders that you are shown in at once."

She rose to her feet and he walked to the door with her. On the way she hesitated.

"Take care of yourself to day, Mr. Laverick," she begged. "There are others beside myself who are interested in that packet you carry with you. You represent to them things beside which life and death are trivial happenings."

Laverick laughed shortly. He was a matter of fact man, and there seemed something a little absurd in such a warning.

"I do not think," he declared, "that you need have any fear. London is, as you doubtless find it, a dull old city, but it is a remarkably safe one to live in."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Laverick," she repeated earnestly, "be on your guard to day, for all our sakes."

He bowed and changed the subject.

"Your investments," he remarked, "you will be content, perhaps, to leave as they are. It is, no doubt, of some interest to you to know that they are showing already a profit of considerably over a thousand pounds."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It was an excuse that investment," she declared. "Yet money is always good. Keep it for me, Mr. Laverick, and do what you will. I will trust your judgment. Buy or sell as you please. You will let nothing prevent your coming this afternoon?"

"Nothing," he promised her.

>From the window of her beautifully appointed little electric brougham she held out her hand in farewell.

"You think me foolish, I know, that I persist," she said, "but I do beg that you will remember what I say. Do not be alone to day more than you can help. Suspect every one who comes near to you. There may be a trap before your feet at any moment. Be wary always and do not forget at five o'clock I expect you."

Laverick smiled as he bowed his adieux.

"It is a promise, Mademoiselle," he assured her.

CHAPTER XXVII. PENETRATING A MYSTERY

About an hour after Mademoiselle Idiale's departure a note marked "Urgent" was brought in and handed to Laverick. He tore it open. It was dated from the address of a firm of stockbrokers, with two of the partners of which he was on friendly terms. It ran thus:

MY DEAR LAVERICK, I want a chat with you, if you can spare five minutes at lunch time. Come to Lyons' a little earlier than usual, if you don't mind, say at a quarter to one. J.HENSHAW.

Laverick read the typewritten note carelessly enough at first. He had even laid it down and glanced at the clock, with the intention of starting out, when a thought struck him. He took it up and read it though again. Then he turned to the telephone.

"Put me on to the office of Henshaw & Allen. I want to speak to Mr. Henshaw particularly."

Two minutes passed. Laverick, meanwhile, had been washing his hands ready to go out. Then the telephone bell rang. He took up the receiver.

"Hullo! Is that Henshaw?"

"I'm Henshaw," was the answer. "That's Laverick, isn't it? How are you, old fellow?"

"I'm all right," Laverick replied. "What is it that you want to see me about?"

"Nothing particular that I know of. Who told you that I wanted to?"

Laverick, who had been standing with the instrument in his hand, sat down in his chair.

"Look here," he said, "Didn't you send me a note a few minutes ago, asking me to come out to lunch at a quarter to one and meet you at Lyons'?"

Henshaw's laugh was sufficient response.

"Delighted to lunch with you there or anywhere, old chap, you know that," was the answer, "but some one 's been putting up a practical joke on you."

"You did not send me a note round this morning, then?" Laverick insisted.

"I'll swear I didn't," came the reply. "Do you seriously mean that you've had one purporting to come from me?"

Laverick pulled himself together.

"Well, the signature's such a scrawl," he said, "that no one could tell what the name really was. I guessed at you but I seem to have guessed wrong. Good bye!"

He set down the receiver and rang off to escape further questioning. Now indeed the plot was commencing to thicken. This was a deliberate effort on the part of some one to secure his absence from his offices at a quarter to one.

With the document in his pocket and the safe securely locked, Laverick felt at ease as to the result of any attempted burglary of his premises. At the same time his curiosity was excited. Here, perhaps, was a chance of finding some clue to this impenetrable mystery.

There were thee clerks in the outer office. He put on his hat and despatched two of them on errands in different directions. The last he was obliged to take into his confidence.

"Halsey," he said, "I am going out to lunch. At least, I wish it to be thought that I am going out to lunch. As a matter of fact, I shall return in about ten minutes by the back way. I do not wish you, however, to know this. I want you to have it in your mind that I have gone to lunch and

shall not be back until a quarter past two. If there are visitors for me Inquirers of any sort act exactly as you would have done if you really believed that I was not in the building."

Halsey appeared a good deal mystified. Laverick took him even further into his confidence.

"To tell you the truth, Halsey," he said, "I have just received a bogus letter from Mr. Henshaw, asking me to lunch with him. Some one was evidently anxious to get me out of my office for an hour or so. I want to find out for myself what this means, if possible. You understand?"

"I think so, sir," the man replied doubtfully. "I am not to be aware that you have returned, then?"

"Certainly not," Laverick answered. "Please be quite clear about that. If you hear any commotion in the office, you can come in, but do not send for the police unless I tell you to. I wish to look into this affair for myself."

Halsey, who had started life as a lawyer’s clerk, and was distinctly formal in his ideas, was a little shocked.

"Would it not be better, sir," he suggested, "for me to communicate with the police in the first case? If this should really turn out to be an attempt at burglary, it would surely be best to leave the matter to them."

Laverick frowned.

"For certain reasons, Halsey, which I do not think it necessary to tell you, I have a strong desire to investigate this matter personally. Please do exactly as I say."

He left the office and strolled up the street in the direction of the restaurant which he chiefly frequented. He reached it in a moment or two, but left it at once by another entrance. Within ten minutes he was back at his office.

"Has any one been, Halsey?"

"No one, sir," the clerk answered.

"You will be so good," Laverick continued, "as to forget that I have returned."

He passed on quickly into his own room and made his way into the small closet where he kept his coat and washed his hands. He had scarcely been there a minute

when he heard voices in the outside hall. The door of his office was opened.

"Mr. Laverick said nothing about an appointment at this hour," he heard Halsey protest in a somewhat deprecating tone.

"He had, perhaps, forgotten," was the answer, in a totally unfamiliar voice. "At any rate, I am not in a great hurry. The matter is of some importance, however, and I will wait for Mr. Laverick."

The visitor was shown in. Laverick investigated his appearance through a crack in the door. He was a man of medium height, well dressed, clean shaven, and wore gold rimmed spectacles. He made himself comfortable in Laverick's easy chair, and accepted the paper which Halsey offered him.

"I shall be quite glad of a rest," he remarked genially. "I have been running about all the morning."

"Mr. Laverick is never very long out for lunch, sir," Halsey said. "I daresay he will not keep you more than a

quarter of an hour or twenty minutes."

The clerk withdrew and closed the door. The man in the chair waited for a moment. Then he laid down his newspaper and looked cautiously around the room. Satisfied apparently that he was alone, he rose to his feet and walked swiftly to Laverick's writing table. With fingers which seemed gifted with a lightning like capacity for movement, he swung open the drawers, one by one, and turned over the papers. His eyes were everywhere. Every document seemed to be scanned and as rapidly discarded. At last he found something which interested him. He held it up and paused in his search. Laverick heard a little breath come though his teeth, and with a thrill he recognized the paper as one which he had torn from a memorandum tablet and upon which he had written down the address which Mademoiselle Idiale had given him. The man with the gold rimmed glasses replaced the paper where he had found it. Evidently he had done with the writing table. He moved swiftly over to the safe and stood there listening for

a few seconds. Then from his pocket he drew a bunch of keys. To Laverick's surprise, at the stranger's first effort the great door of the safe swung open. He saw the man lean forward, saw his hand reappear almost directly with the pocket book clenched in his fingers. Then he stood once more quite still, listening. Satisfied that no one was disturbed, he closed the door of the safe softly and moved once more to the writing table. With marvelous swiftness the notes were laid upon the table, the pocket book was turned upside down, the secret place disclosed the secret place which was empty. It seemed to Laverick that from his hiding place he could hear the little oath of disappointment which broke from the thin red lips. The man replaced the notes and, with the pocket book in his hand, hesitated. Laverick, who thought that things had gone far enough, stepped lightly out from his hiding place and stood between his unbidden visitor and the door.

"You had better put down that pocket book," he ordered quietly.

The man was upon him with a single spring, but Laverick, without the slightest hesitation, knocked him prone upon the floor, where he lay, for a moment, motionless. Then he slowly picked himself up. His spectacles were broken he blinked as he stood there.

"Sorry to be so rough," Laverick said. "Perhaps if you will kindly realize that of the two I am much the stronger man, you will be so good as to sit in that chair and tell me the meaning of your intrusion."

The man obeyed. He covered his eyes with his hand, for a moment, as though in pain.

"I imagine," he said and it seemed to Laverick that his voice had a slight foreign accent "I imagine that the motive for my paying you this visit is fairly clear to you. People who have compromising possessions may always expect visits of this sort. You see, one runs so little risk."

"So little risk!" Laverick repeated.

"Exactly," the other answered. "Confess that you are not in the least inclined to ring your bell and send for a

constable to give me in charge for being in possession of a pocket book abstracted from your safe, containing twenty thousand pounds in Bank of England notes."

"It wouldn't do at all," Laverick admitted.

"You are a man of common sense," declared the other. "It would not do. Now comes the time when I have a question to ask you. There was a sealed document in this pocket book. Where is it ? What have you done with it?"

"Can you tell me," Laverick asked, "why I should answer questions from a person whom I discover apparently engaged in a nefarious attempt at burglary?"

The man's hand shot out from his trouser pocket, and Laverick looked into the gleaming muzzle of a revolver.

"Because if you don't, you die," was the quick reply. "Whether you've read that document or not, I want it. If you've read it, you know the sort of men you've got to deal with. If you haven't, take my word for it that we waste no time. The document! Will you give it me?"

"Do I understand that you are threatening me?"

Laverick asked, retreating a few steps.

"You may understand that this is a repeating revolver, and that I seldom miss a half crown at twenty paces," his visitor answered. "If you put out your hand toward that bell, it will be the last movement you'll ever make on earth."

"London isn't really the place for this sort of thing," Laverick said. "If you discharge that revolver, you haven't a dog's chance of getting clear of the building. My clerks would rush out after you into the street. You'd find yourself surrounded by a crowd of business men. You couldn't make your way through anywhere. You'd be held up before you'd gone a dozen yards. Put down your revolver. We can perhaps settle this little matter without it."

"The document!" the man ordered. "You've got it! You must have it! You took that pocket book from a dead man, and in that pocket book was the document. We must have it. We intend to have it."

"And who, may I ask, are we?" Laverick inquired.

"If you do not know, what does it matter? Will you

give it to me?"

Laverick shook his head.

"I have no document."

The man in the chair leaned forward. The muzzle of his revolver was very bright, and he held it in fingers which were firm as a rock.

"Give it to me!" he repeated. "You ought to know that you are not dealing with men who are unaccustomed to death. You have it about you. Produce it, and I've done with you. Deny me, and you have not time to say your prayers!"

Laverick was leaning against a small table which stood near the door. His fingers suddenly gripped the ledger which lay upon it. He held it in front of his face for a single moment, and then dashed it at his visitor. He followed behind with one desperate spring. Once, twice, the revolver barked out. Laverick felt the skin of his temple burn and a flick on the ear which reminded him of his school days. Then his hand was upon the other man's throat and the revolver lay upon the carpet.

"We ’ll see about that. By the Lord, I’ve a good mind to wring the life out of you. That bullet of yours might have been in my temple."

"It was meant to be there," the man gasped. "Hand over the document, you pig headed fool! It’ll cost you your life if not to day, to morrow."

"I’ll be hanged if you get it, anyway!" Laverick answered fiercely. "You assassin! Scoundrel! To come here and make a cold blooded effort at murder! You shall see what you think of the inside of an English prison."

The man laughed contemptuously.

"And what about the pocket book?" he asked.

Laverick was silent. His assailant smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Come," he said, "I have made my effort and failed. You have twenty thousand pounds. That’s a fair price, but I’ll add another twenty thousand for that document unopened."

"It is possible that we might deal," Laverick remarked,

kicking the revolver a little further away. "Unfortunately, I am too much in the dark. Tell me the real position of the murdered man? Tell me why he was murdered? Tell me the contents of this document and why it was in his possession? Perhaps I may then be inclined to treat with you."

"You are either an astonishingly ingenuous person, Mr. Laverick," his visitor declared, "or you're too subtle for me. You do not expect me to believe that you are in this with your eyes blindfolded? You do not expect me to believe that you do not know what is in that sealed envelope? Bah! It is a child's game, that, and we play as men with men."

Laverick shook his head.

"Your offer," he asked, "what is it exactly?"

"Twenty thousand pounds," the man answered. "The document is worth no more than that to you. How you came into this thing is a mystery, but you are in and, what is more, you have possession. Twenty thousand pounds, Mr. Laverick. It is a large sum of money. You find it interesting?"

"I find it interesting," Laverick answered dryly, "but I am not a seller."

The intruder moved his hand away from his eyes. His expression was full of wonder.

"Consider for a moment," he said. "While that document remains in your possession, you walk the narrow way, your life hangs upon a thread. Better surrender it and attend to your stocks and shares. Heaven knows how you first came into our affairs, but the sooner you are out of them the better. What do you say now to my offer?"

"It is refused," Laverick declared. "I regret; to add," he continued, "that I have already spared you all the time I have at my disposal. Forgive me."

He pressed a button with his finger. His visitor rose up in anger.

"You are not such a fool!" he exclaimed. "You are not going to send me away without it? Why, I tell you that there won't be a safe corner in the World for you!"

Halsey opened the door. Laverick nodded toward his

visitor.

"Show this gentleman out, Halsey," he ordered.

Halsey started. The noise of the revolver shot had evidently been muffled by the heavy connecting doors, but there was a smell of gunpowder in the room, and a little wreath of smoke. The man rose slowly to his feet, still blinking.

"It must be as you will, of course. I wonder if you would be so good as to let your clerk direct me to an oculist? I am, unfortunately, a helpless man in this condition."

"There is one a few yards off," Laverick answered. "Put on your hat, Halsey, and show this gentleman where he can get some glasses."

His visitor leaned towards Laverick.

"It is your life which is in question, not my eyesight," he muttered. "Do you accept my offer? Will you give me the document?"

"I do not and I will not," Laverick replied. "I shall not part with anything until I know more than I know at

present."

The man stood motionless for a moment. His fingers seemed to be twitching. Laverick had a fancy that he was about to spring, but if ever he had had any thoughts of the kind, Halsey's reappearance checked them.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Laverick," he said quietly. "We shall, perhaps, resume this discussion at some future date."

With that he turned and followed Halsey out of the room. Laverick went to the window and threw it wide open. The smoke floated out, the smell of gunpowder was gradually dispersed. Then he walked back to his seat. Once more he locked up the notes. The document was safe in his pocket. There was a slight mark by the side of his temple, and his ear, he discovered, was bleeding. He rang the bell and Halsey entered.

"Has our friend gone, Halsey?"

"I left him in the optician's, sir," the clerk answered. "He was buying some spectacles."

Laverick glanced at the floor, where the remains of those gold rimmed glasses were scattered.

"You had better send for a locksmith at once," he said. "The gentleman who has been here had a skeleton key to my safe. We'll have a combination put on."

"Very good, sir," Halsey answered.

"And, Halsey," his master continued, "be careful about one thing, for your own sake as well as mine. If that man presents himself again, don't let him come into my room unannounced. If you can help it, don't let him come in at all. I have an idea that he might be dangerous."

The clerk's face was a study.

"If he presents himself here, sir," he announced stiffly, "I shall take the liberty of sending for the police."

Laverick made no reply.

CHAPTER XXVIII. LAVERICK'S NARROW ESCAPE

At precisely a quarter past four, nothing having happened in the meantime but a steady rush of business, Laverick ordered a taxicab to be summoned. He then unlocked his safe, placed the pocket book securely in his breast pocket, walked through the office, and directed the man to drive to Chancery Lane. Here at the headquarters of the Safe Deposit Company he engaged a compartment, and down in the strong room locked up the pocket book. There was only now the document left. Stepping once more into the street, he found that his taxicab had vanished. He looked up and down in vain. The man had not been paid and there seemed to be no reason for his departure. A policeman who was standing by touched his hat and addressed him.

"Were you looking for that taxi you stepped out of a few minutes ago, sir?" he asked.

"I was," Laverick answered. "I hadn't paid him and I told him to wait."

"I thought there was something queer about it," the policeman remarked. "Soon after you had gone inside, two gentlemen drove up in a hansom. They got out here and one of them spoke to your driver, who shook his head and pointed to his flag. The gent then said something else to him can't say as I heard what it was, but it was probably offering him double fare. Anyway, they both got in and off went your taxi, sir."

"Thank you," Laverick said thoughtfully. "It sounds a little perplexing."

He hesitated for a moment.

"Constable," he continued, "I have just made a very valuable deposit in there, and I had an idea that I might be followed. I have still in my pocket a document of great importance. I have no doubt whatever but that the object of the men who have taken my taxicab is to leave me in the street here alone under circumstances which will render a

quick attack upon me likely to be successful."

The policeman turned his head and looked at Laverick incredulously. He was more than half inclined to believe that this was a practical joke. Were they not standing on the pavement in Chancery Lane, and was not he an able bodied policeman of great bulk and immense muscle! Yet his companion did not look by any means a man of the nervous order. Laverick was broad shouldered, his skin was tanned a wholesome color, his bearing was the bearing of a man prepared to defend himself at any time. The constable smiled in a non committal manner.

"If you'll excuse my saying so, sir," he remarked, "I don't think this is exactly the spot any one would choose for an assault."

"I agree with you," Laverick answered, "but, on the other hand, you must remember that these gentlemen have had no choice. I stepped from my office direct into the taxi, and I proposed to drive straight from here to the place where I shall probably leave the other document I am

carrying with me. Why I have taken you into my confidence is to ask you this. Can you walk with me to the corner of the street, or until we meet a taxicab? it sounds cowardly, but, as a matter of fact, I am not afraid. I simply want to make sure of delivering this document to the person to whom it belongs."

The constable stood still, a little perplexed.

"My beat, sir," he said, "only goes about twenty five yards further on. I will walk to the corner of Holborn with you, if you desire it. At the same time, I may say that I am breaking regulations. How do I know that it is not your scheme to get me away from this neighborhood for some purpose of your own?"

"You don't believe anything of the sort," Laverick declared, with a smile.

"I do not, sir," the policeman admitted. "Keep by my side, and I think that nothing will happen to you before we reach Holborn."

Laverick was a man of more than medium height, but

by the side of the policeman he seemed short. Both scanned the faces of the passers by closely the police man with mild interest, Laverick with almost feverish anxiety. It was a gray afternoon, pleasant but close. There seemed to be nothing whatever to account for the feeling of nervousness which had suddenly come over Laverick. He felt himself in danger he had no idea how, or in what way but the conviction was there. He took every step fully alert, absolutely on his guard.

They were almost within sight of Holborn when a cry from the bystanders caused them to look away into the middle of the road. Laverick only cast one glance there and abandoned every instinct of curiosity, thinking once more only of himself and his own position. With the constable, however, it was naturally different. He saw something which called at once for his intervention, and he immediately forgot the somewhat singular task upon which he was engaged. A man had fallen in the middle of the street, either knocked down by the shaft of a passing

vehicle or in some sort of fit. There was a tangle of rearing horses, an omnibus was making desperate efforts to avoid the prostrate body. The constable sprang to the rescue. Laverick, instantly suspicious and realizing that there was no one in front of him, turned swiftly around. He was just in time to receive upon his left arm the blow which had been meant for the back of his head. He was confronted by a man dressed exactly as he himself was, in morning coat and silk hat, a man with long, lean face and legal appearance, such a person as would have passed anywhere without attracting a moment's suspicion. Yet, in the space of a few seconds he had whipped out from one pocket, with the skill almost of a juggler, a vicious looking life preserver, and from the other a pocket handkerchief soaked with chloroform. Laverick, quick and resourceful, feeling his left arm sink helpless, struck at the man with his right and sent him staggering against the wall. The handkerchief, with its load of sickening odor, fell to the pavement. The man was obviously worsted. Laverick sprang at him. They

were almost unobserved, for the crowd was all intent upon the accident in the roadway. With wonderful skill, his assailant eluded his attempt to close, and tore at his coat. Laverick struck at him again but met only the air. The man's fingers now were upon his pocket, but this time Laverick made no mistake. He struck downward so hard that with a fierce cry of pain the man relaxed his hold. Before he could recover, Laverick had struck him again. He reeled into the crowd that was fast gathering around them, attracted by what seemed to be a fight between two men of unexceptionable appearance. But there was to be no more fight. Through the people, swift footed, cunning, resourceful, his assailant seemed to find some hidden way. Laverick glared fiercely around him, but the man had gone. His left hand crept to his chest. The victory was with him; the document was still there.

At the outside of the double crowd he perceived a taxi. Ignoring the storm of questions with which he was assailed, and the advancing helmet of his friend the policeman at the

back of the crowd, Laverick hailed it and stepped quickly inside.

"Back out of this and drive to Dover Street," he directed. The man obeyed him. People raced to look through the window at him. The other commotion had died away, the man in the road had got up and walked off. A policeman came hurrying along but he was just too late. Very soon they were on their way down Holborn. Once more Laverick had escaped.

A French man servant, with the sad face and immaculate dress of a High Church cleric, took possession of him as soon as he had asked for Mademoiselle Idiale. He was shown into one of the most delightful little rooms he had ever even dreamed of. The walls were hung with that peculiar shade of blue satin which Mademoiselle so often affected in her clothes. Laverick, who was something of a connoisseur, saw nowhere any object which was not, of its sort, priceless, French furniture of the best and choicest period, a statuette which made him, for a moment, almost

forget the scene from which he had just arrived. The air in the room seemed as though it had passed through a grove of lemon trees, it was fresh and sweet yet curiously fragrant. Laverick sank down into one of the luxurious blue brocaded chairs, conscious for the first time that he was out of breath. Then the door opened silently and there entered not the woman whom he had been expecting, but Mr. Lassen. Laverick rose to his feet half doubtfully. Lassen's small, queerly shaped face seemed to have become one huge ingratiating smile.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Laverick," he said, "very glad indeed."

"I have come to call upon Mademoiselle Idiale," Laverick answered, somewhat curtly. He had disliked this man from the first moment he had seen him, and he saw no particular reason why he should conceal his feelings.

"I am here to explain," Mr. Lassen continued, seating himself opposite to Laverick. "Mademoiselle Idiale is unfortunately prevented from seeing you. She has a severe

nervous headache, and her only chance of appearing tonight is to remain perfectly undisturbed. Women of her position, as you may understand, have to be exceptionally careful. It would be a very serious matter indeed if she were unable to sing to night."

"I am exceedingly sorry to hear it," Laverick answered. "In that case, I will call again when Mademoiselle Idiale has recovered."

"By all means, my dear sir!" Mr. Lassen exclaimed. "Many times, let us hope. But in the meantime, there is a little affair of a document which you were going to deliver to Mademoiselle. She is most anxious that you should hand it to me most anxious. She will tender you her thanks personally, tomorrow or the next day, if she is well enough to receive."

Laverick shook his head firmly.

"Under no circumstances," he declared, "should I think of delivering the document into any other hands save those of Mademoiselle Idiale. To tell you the truth, I had

not fully decided whether to part with it even to her. I was simply prepared to hear what she had to say. But it may save time if I assure you, Mr. Lassen, that nothing would induce me to part with it to any one else."

There was no trace left of that ingratiating smile upon Mr. Lassen's face. He had the appearance now of an ugly animal about to show its teeth. Laverick was suddenly on his guard. More adventures, he thought, casting a somewhat contemptuous glance at the physique of the other man. He laid his fingers as though carelessly upon a small bronze ornament which reposed amongst others on a table by his side. If Mr. Lassen's fat and ugly hand should steal toward his pocket, Laverick was prepared to hurl the ornament at his head.

"I am very sorry to hear you say that, Mr. Laverick," Lassen said slowly. "I hope very much that you will see your way clear to change your mind. I can assure you that I have as much right to the document as Mademoiselle Idiale, and that it is her earnest wish that you should hand it over

to me. Further, I may inform you that the document itself is a most incriminating one. Its possession upon your person, or upon the person of any one who was not upon his guard, might be a very serious matter indeed."

Laverick shrugged his shoulders.

"As a matter of fact," he declared, "I certainly have no idea of carrying it about with me. On the other hand, I shall part with it to no one. I might discuss the matter with Mademoiselle Idiale as soon as she is recovered. I am not disposed I mean no offence, sir but I may say frankly that I am not disposed even to do as much with you."

Laverick rose to his feet with the obvious intention of leaving. Lassen followed his example and confronted him.

"Mr. Laverick," he said, "in your own interests you must not talk like that, in your own interests, I say."

"At any rate," Laverick remarked, "my interests are better looked after by myself than by strangers. You must forgive my adding, Mr. Lassen, that you are a stranger to me."

"No more so than Mademoiselle Idiale!" the little man exclaimed.

"Mademoiselle Idiale has given me certain proof that she knew at least of the existence of this document," Laverick answered. "She has established, therefore, a certain claim to my consideration. You announce yourself as Mademoiselle Idiale's deputy, but you bring me no proof of the fact, nor, in any case, am I disposed to treat with you. You must allow me to wish you good afternoon."

Lassen shook his head.

"Mr. Laverick," he declared, "you are too impetuous. You force me to remind you that your own position as holder of that document is not a very secure one. All the police in this capital are searching to day for the man who killed that unfortunate creature who was found murdered in Crooked Friars' Alley. If they could find the man who was in possession of his pocket book, who was in possession of twenty thousand pounds taken from the dead man's body and with it had saved his business and his credit, how then,

do you think? I say nothing of the document."

Laverick was silent for a moment. He realized, however, that to make terms with this man was impossible. Besides, he did not trust him. He did not even trust him so far as to believe him the accredited envoy of Mademoiselle.

"My unfortunate position," Laverick said, "has nothing whatever to do with the matter. Where you got your information from I cannot say. I neither accept nor deny it. But I can assure you that I am not to be intimidated. This document will remain in my possession until some one can show me a very good reason for parting with it."

Lassen beat the back of the chair against which he was standing with his clenched fist.

"A reason why you should part with it!" he exclaimed fiercely. "Man, it stares you there in the face! If you do not part with it, you will be arrested within twenty four hours for the murder or complicity in the murder of Rudolph Von Behrling! That I swear! That I shall see to myself!"

"In which case," Laverick remarked, "the document will fall into the hands of the English police."

The shot told. Laverick could have laughed as he watched its effect upon his listener. Mr. Lassen's face was black with unuttered curses. He looked as though he would have fallen upon Laverick bodily.

"What do you know about its contents?" he hissed. "Why do you suppose it would not suit my purpose to have it fall into the hands of the English police?"

"I can see no reason whatever," Laverick answered, "why I should take you into my confidence as to how much I know and how much I do not know. I wish you good afternoon, Mr. Lassen! I shall be ready to wait upon Mademoiselle Idiale at any time she sends for me. But in case it should interest you to be made aware of the fact," he added, with a little bow, "I am not going round with this terrible document in my possession."

He moved to the door. Already his hand was upon the knob when he saw the movement for which he had watched.

Laverick, with a single bound, was upon his would be assailant. The hand which had already closed upon the butt of the small revolver was gripped as though in a vice. With a scream of pain Lassen dropped the weapon upon the floor. Laverick picked it up, thrust it into his coat pocket and, taking the man's collar with both hands, he shook him till the eyes seemed starting from his head and his shrieks of fear were changed into moans. Then he flung him into a corner of the room.

"You cowardly brute!" he exclaimed. "You come of the breed of men who shoot from behind. If ever I lay my hands upon you again, you'll be lucky if you live to whimper about it."

He left the room and rang for the lift. He saw no trace of any servants in the hall, nor heard any sound of any one moving. From Dover Street he drove straight to Zoe's house. Keeping the cab waiting, he knocked at the door. She opened it herself at once, and her eyes glowed with pleasure.

"How delightful!" she cried. "Please come in. Have you come to take me to the theatre?"

He followed her into the parlor and closed the door behind them.

"Zoe," he said, "I am going to ask you a favor."

"Me a favor?" she repeated. "I think you know how happy it will make me if there is anything anything at all in the world that I could do."

"A week ago," Laverick continued, "I was an honest but not very successful stockbroker, with a natural longing for adventures which never came my way. Since then things have altered. I have stumbled in upon the most curious little chain of happenings which ever became entwined with the life of a commonplace being like myself. The net result, for the moment, is this. Every one is trying to steal from me a certain document which I have in my pocket. I want to hide it for the night. I cannot go to the police, it is too late to go back to Chancery Lane, and I have an instinctive feeling that my flat is absolutely at the

mercy of my enemies. May I hide my document in your room ? I do not believe for a moment that any one would think of searching here."

"Of course you may," she answered. "But listen. Can you see out into the street without moving very much?"

He turned his head. He had been standing with his back to the window, and Zoe had been facing it.

"Yes, I can see into the street," he assented.

"Tell me you see that taxi on the other side of the way?" she asked.

He nodded.

"It wasn't there when I drove up," he remarked.

"I was at the window, looking out, when you came, she said. "It followed you out from the Square into this street. Directly you stopped, I saw the man put on the brake and pull up his cab. It seemed to me so strange, just as though some one were watching you all the time."

Laverick stood still, looking out of the window.

"Who lives in the house opposite?" he asked.

"I am afraid," she answered, "that there are no very nice people who live round here. The people whom I see coming in and out of that house are not nice people at all."

"I understand," he said. "Thank you, Zoe. You are right. Whatever I do with my precious document, I will not leave it here. To tell you the truth, I thought, for certain reasons, that after I had paid my last call this afternoon I should not be followed any more. Come back with me and I will give you some dinner before you go to the theatre."

She clapped her hands.

"I shall love it," she declared. "But what shall you do with the document?"

"I shall take a room at the Milan Hotel," he said, "and give it to the cashier. They have a wonderful safe there. It is the best thing I can think of. Can you suggest anything?"

She considered for a moment.

"Do you know what is inside?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I have no idea. It is the most mysterious document in

the world, so far as I am concerned."

"Why not open it and read it?" she suggested; "then you will know exactly what it is all about. You can learn it by heart and tear it up."

"I must think that over," he said. "One second before we go out."

He took from his pocket the revolver which Lassen had dropped. It was a perfect little weapon, and fully charged. He replaced it in his pocket, keeping his finger upon the trigger.

"Now, Zoe, if you are ready," he said, "come along."

They stepped out and entered the taxi, unmolested, and Laverick ordered:

"To the Milan Hotel."

CHAPTER XXIX. LASSEN'S TREACHERY DISCOVERED

About twenty minutes past six on the same evening, Bellamy, his clothes thick with dust, his face dark with anger, jumped lightly from a sixty horse power car and rang the bell of the lift at number 15, Dover Street. Arrived on the first floor, he was confronted almost immediately by the sad faced man servant of Mademoiselle Idiale.

"Mademoiselle is in?" Bellamy asked quickly.

The man's expression was one of sombre regret.

"Mademoiselle is spending the day in the country, sir. Bellamy took him by the shoulders and flung him against the wall.

"Thank you," he said, "I've heard that before."

He walked down the passage and knocked softly at the door of Louise's sleeping apartment. There was no answer. He knocked again and listened at the key hole. There was some movement inside but no one spoke.

"Louise," he cried softly, "let me in. It is I David."

Again the only reply was the strangest of sounds. Almost it seemed as though a woman were trying to speak with a hand over her mouth. Then Bellamy suddenly stiffened into rigid attention. There were voices in the small reception room, the voice of Henri, the butler, and another. Reluctantly he turned away from the closed door and walked swiftly down the passage. He entered the reception room and looked around him in amazement. It was still in disorder. Lassen sat in an easy chair with a tumbler of brandy by his side. Henri was tying a bandage around his head, his collar was torn, there were marks of blood about his shirt. Bellamy's eyes sparkled. He closed the door behind him.

"Come," he exclaimed, "after all, I fancy that my arrival is somewhat opportune!"

Henri turned towards him with a reproachful gesture.

"Monsieur Lassen has been unwell, Monsieur," he said. "He has had a fit and fallen down."

Bellamy laughed contemptuously.

"I think I can reconstruct the scene a little better than that," he declared. "What do you say, Mr. Lassen?"

The man glared at him viciously.

"I do not know what you are talking about," he said. "I do not wish to speak to you. I am ill. You had better go and persuade Mademoiselle to return. She is at Dover, waiting."

"You are a liar!" Bellamy answered. "She is in her room now, locked up guarded, perhaps, by one of your creatures. I have been half way to Dover, but I tumbled to your scheme in time, Mr. Lassen. You found our friend Laverick a trifle awkward, I fancy."

Lassen swore through his teeth but said nothing.

"From your somewhat dishevelled appearance," Bellamy continued, "I think I may conclude that you were not able to come to any amicable arrangement with Mademoiselle's visitor. He declined to accept you as her proxy, I imagine. Still, one must make sure."

He advanced quickly. Lassen shrank back in his chair.

"What do you mean?" he asked gruffly. "Keep him away from me, Henri. Ring the bell for your other man. This fellow will do me a mischief."

"Not I," Bellamy answered scornfully. "Stay where you are, Henri. To your other accomplishments I have no doubt you include that of valeting. Take off his coat."

"But, Monsieur!" Henri protested.

"I'm d d if he shall!" the man in the chair snarled.

Bellamy turned to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"Look here," he said, "I do not for one moment believe that Laverick handed over to you the document you were so anxious to obtain. On the other hand, I imagine that your somewhat battered appearance is the result of fruitless argument on your part with a view to inducing him to do so. Nevertheless, I can afford to run no risks. The coat first, please, Henri. It is necessary that I search it thoroughly."

There was a brief hesitation. Bellamy's hand went

reluctantly into his pocket.

"I hate to seem melodramatic," he declared, "and I never carry firearms, but I have a little life preserver here which I have learned how to use pretty effectively. Come, you know, it isn't a fair fight. You've had all you want, Lassen, and Henri there hasn't the muscle of a chicken."

Lassen rose, groaning, to his feet and allowed his coat to be removed. Bellamy glanced through the pockets, holding one letter for a moment in his hands as he glanced at the address.

"The writing of our friend Streuss," he remarked, with a smile. "No, you need not fear, Lassen! I am not going to read it. There is plenty of proof of your treachery without this."

Lassen's face was livid and his eyes seemed like beads. Bellamy handed back the coat.

"That's all right," he said. "Nothing there, I am glad to see or in the waistcoat," he added, passing his hands over it. "I'll trouble you to stand up for a moment, Mr. Lassen."

The man did as he was bid and Bellamy felt him all over. When he had finished, he held in his hand a key.

"The key of Mademoiselle's chamber, I have no doubt," he announced, "I will leave you, then, while I see what deviltry you have been up to."

He walked calmly to the table which stood by the window and deliberately cut the telephone wire. With the instrument under his arm, he left the room. Lassen blundered to his feet as though to intercept him, but Bellamy's eyes suddenly flashed red fury, and the life preserver of which he had spoken glittered above his head. Lassen staggered away.

"I'm a long suffering man," Bellamy said, "and if you don't remember now that you're the beaten dog, I may lose my temper."

He locked them in, walked down the passage and opened the door of Louise's bedchamber with fingers that trembled a little. With a smothered oath he cut the cord from the arms of the maid and the gag from her mouth.

Louise, clad in a loose afternoon gown, was lying upon the bed, as though asleep. Bellamy saw with an impulse of relief that she was breathing regularly.

"This is Lassen's work, of course!" he exclaimed. "What have they done to her?"

The maid spoke thickly. She was very pale, and unsteady upon her feet.

"It was something they put in her wine," she faltered. "I heard Mr. Lassen say that it would keep her quiet for three or four hours. I think I think that she is waking now."

Louise opened her eyes and looked at them with amazement. Bellamy sat by the side of the bed and supported her with his arm.

"It is only a skirmish, dear," he whispered, "and it is a drawn battle, although you got the worst of it."

She put her hand to her head, struggling to remember.

"Mr. Laverick has been here?" she asked.

"He has. Your friend Lassen has been taking a hand in the game. I came here to find you like this and Annette tied

up. Henri is in with him. What has become of your other servants I don't know."

"Henri asked for a holiday for them," she said, the color slowly returning to her cheeks. "I begin to understand. But tell me, what happened when Mr. Laverick came?"

"I can only guess," Bellamy answered, "but it seems that Lassen must have received him as though with your authority."

"And what then?" she asked quickly.

"I am almost certain," Bellamy declared, "that Laverick refused to have anything to do with him. I received a wire from Dover to say that you were on your way home, and asking me to meet you at the Lord Warden Hotel. I borrowed Montresor's racing car, but I sent telegrams, and I was pretty soon on my way back. When I arrived here, I found Lassen in your little room with a broken head. Evidently Laverick and he had a scrimmage and he got the worst of it. I have searched him to his bones and he has no paper. Laverick brought it here,

without a doubt, and has taken it away again."

She rose to her feet.

"Go and let Lassen out," she said. "Tell him he must never come here again. I will see him at the Opera House to night or to morrow night that is, if I can get there. I do not know whether I shall feel fit to sing."

"I shall take the liberty, also," remarked Bellamy, "of kicking Henri out."

Louise sighed.

"He was such a good servant. I think it must have cost our friend Streuss a good deal to buy Henri. You will come back to me when you have finished with them?"

Bellamy made short work of his discomfited prisoners. Lassen was surly but only eager to depart Henri was resigned but tearful. Almost as they went the other servants began to return from their various missions. Bellamy went back to Louise, who was lying down again and drinking some tea. She motioned Bellamy to come over to her side.

"Tell me," she asked, "what are you going to do

now?"

"I am going to do what I ought to have done before," Bellamy answered. "Laverick's connection with this affair is suspicious enough, but after all he is a sportsman and an Englishman. I am going to tell him what that envelope contains tell him the truth."

"You are right!" she exclaimed. "Whatever he may have done, if you tell him the truth he will give you that document. I am sure of it. Do you know where to find him?"

"I shall go to his rooms," Bellamy declared. "I must be quick, too, for Lassen is free they will know that he has failed."

"Come back to me, David," she begged, and he kissed her fingers and hurried out.

CHAPTER XXX. THE CONTEST FOR THE PAPERS

Laverick, sitting with Zoe at dinner, caught his companion looking around the restaurant with an expression in her face which he did not wholly understand.

"Something is the matter with you this evening, Zoe," he said anxiously. "Tell me what it is. You don't like this place, perhaps?"

"Of course I do."

"It is your dinner, then, or me?" he persisted. "Come, out with it. Haven't we promised to tell each other the truth always?"

The pink color came slowly into her cheeks. Her eyes, raised for a moment to his, were almost reproachful.

"You know very well that it is not anything to do with you," she whispered. "You are too kind to me all the time. Only," she went on, a little hesitatingly, "don't you realize can't you see how differently most of the girls here are

dressed? I don't mind so much for myself but you you have so many friends. You keep on seeing people whom you know. I am afraid they will think that I ought not to be here."

He looked at her in surprise, mingled, perhaps, with compunction. For the first time he appreciated the actual shabbiness of her clothes. Everything about her was so neat pathetically neat, as it seemed to him in one illuminating moment of realization. The white linen collar, notwithstanding its frayed edges, was spotlessly clean. The black bow was carefully tied to conceal its worn parts. Her gloves had been stitched a good many times. Her gown, although it was tidy, was old fashioned and had distinctly seen its best days. He suddenly recognized the effort the almost despairing effort which her toilette had cost her.

"I don't think that men notice these things," he said simply. "To me you look just as you should look and I wouldn't change places with any other man in the room for a great deal."

Her eyes were soft perilously soft as she looked at him with uplifted eyebrows and a faint smile struggling at the corners of her lips. A wave of tenderness crept into his heart. What a brave little child she was!

"You will quite spoil me if you make such nice speeches," she murmured.

"Anyhow," he went on, speaking with decision, "so long as you feel like that, you are going to have a new gown or two and a new hat, and you are going to have them at once. They are going to be bought with your brother's money, mind. Shall I come shopping with you?"

She shook her head.

"Mind, it is partly for your sake that I give in," she said. "It would be lovely to have you come, but you would spend far too much money. You really mean it all?"

"Absolutely," he answered. "I insist upon it."

She leaned towards him with dancing eyes. After all, she was very much of a child. The prospect of a new gown, now that she permitted herself to think of it, was

enthralling.

"I might get a coat and skirt," she remarked thoughtfully, "and a simple white dress. A black hat would do for both of them, then."

"Don't you study your brother too much," Laverick declared. "His stock is going up all the time."

"Tell me your favorite color," she begged confidentially.

"I can't conceive your looking nicer than you do in black," he replied.

She made a wry face.

"I suppose it must be black," she murmured doubtfully. "It is much more economical than anything "

She broke off to bow to a stout, red faced man who, after a rude stare, had greeted her with a patronizing nod. Laverick frowned.

"Who is that fellow?" he asked.

"Mr. Heepman, our stage manager," Zoe answered, a little timidly.

"Is there any particular reason why he should behave like a boor?" Laverick continued, raising his voice a little.

She caught at his arm in terror. The man was sitting at the next table.

"Don't, please!" she implored. "He might hear you. He is just behind there."

Laverick half turned in his chair. She guessed what he was about to say, and went on rapidly.

"He has been so foolish," she whispered. "He has asked me so often to go out with him. And he could get me sent away, if he wanted, any time. He almost threatened it, the last time I refused. Now that he has seen me with you, he will be worse than ever."

Laverick's face darkened, and there was a peculiar flash in his eyes. The man was certainly looking at them in a rude manner.

"There are so many of the girls who would only be too pleased to go with him," Zoe continued, in a terrified undertone. "I can't think why he bothers me."

"I can," Laverick muttered. "Let's forget about the brute."

But the dinner was already spoiled for Zoe, so Laverick paid the bill a few minutes later, and walked across to the stage door of the theatre with her. Her little hand, when she gave it to him at parting, was quite cold.

"I'm as nervous as I can be," she confessed. "Mr. Heepman will be watching all the night for something to find fault with me about."

"Don't you let him bully you," Laverick begged.

"I won't," she promised. "Good bye! Thanks so much for my dinner."

She turned away with a brave attempt at a smile, but it was only an attempt. Laverick walked on to his club. There was no one in the dining room whom he knew, and the card room was empty. He played one game of billiards, but he played badly. He was upset. His nerves were wrong he told himself, and little wonder. There seemed to be no chance of a rubber at bridge, so he sallied out again and walked

aimlessly towards Covent Garden. Outside the Opera House he hesitated and finally entered, yielding to an impulse the nature of which he scarcely recognized. While he was inquiring about a stall, a small printed notice was thrust into his hand. He read it with a slight start.

We regret to announce that owing to indisposition Mademoiselle Idiale will not be able to appear this evening. The part of Delilah will be taken by Mademoiselle Blanche Temoigne, late of the Royal Opera House, St. Petersburg.

Ten minutes later, Laverick rang the bell of her flat in Dover Street. A strange man servant answered him.

"I came to inquire after Mademoiselle Idiale," Laverick said.

The man held out a tray on which was already a small heap of cards. Laverick, however, retained his.

"I should be glad if you would take mine in to her," he said. "I think it is just likely that she may see me for a moment."

The servant’s attitude was one of civil but unconcealed

hostility. He would have closed the door had not Laverick already passed over the threshold.

"Madame is not well enough to receive visitors, sir," the man declared. "She shall have your card as soon as possible."

"I should like her to have it now," Laverick persisted, drawing a five pound note from his pocket.

The man looked at the note longingly.

"It would be only waste of time, sir," he declared. "Mademoiselle is confined to her bedroom and my orders are absolute."

"You are not the man who was here earlier in the day," Laverick remarked. "I wonder," he continued, with a sudden inspiration, "whether you are not Mr. Bellamy's servant?"

"That is so, sir. Mr. Bellamy has sent me here to see that no one has access to Mademoiselle Idiale."

"Then there is no harm whatever in taking in my card," Laverick declared convincingly. "You can put that

note in your pocket. I am perfectly certain that Mademoiselle Idiale will see me, and that your master would wish her to do so."

"I will take the risk, sir," the man decided, "but the orders I have received were stringent."

He disappeared and was gone for several moments. When he came back he was accompanied by a pale faced woman dressed in black, obviously a maid.

"Monsieur Laverick," she said, "Mademoiselle Idiale will receive you. If you will come this way?"

She opened the door of the little reception room, and Laverick followed her. The man returned to his place in the hall.

"Madame will be here in a moment," the maid said. "She will be glad to see you, but she has been very badly frightened."

Laverick bowed sympathetically. The woman herself was gray faced, terror stricken.

"It is Monsieur Lassen, the manager of Madame, who

has caused a great deal of trouble here," she said. "Madame never trusted him and now we have discovered that he is a spy."

The woman seemed to fade away. The door of the inner room was opened and Louise came out. She was still exceedingly pale, and there were dark rims under her eyes. She came across the room with outstretched hands. There was no doubt whatever as to her pleasure.

"You have seen Mr. Bellamy?" she asked.

Laverick shook his head.

"No, I have seen nothing of Bellamy to day. I came to call upon you this afternoon."

She wrung her hands.

"You understand, of course!" she exclaimed. "I did not trust Lassen, but I never imagined anything like this. He is an Austrian. Only a few hours ago I learned that he is one of their most heavily paid spies. Streuss got hold of him. But there, I forgot you do not understand this. It is enough that he laid a plot to get that document from you. Where is

it, Mr. Laverick? You have brought it now?"

"Why, no," Laverick answered, "I have not."

Her eyes were round with terror. She held out her hands as though to keep away some tormenting thought.

"Where is it?" she cried. "You have not parted with it?

"I have not," Laverick replied gravely. "It is in the safe deposit of a hotel to which I have moved."

She closed her eyes and drew a long breath of relief.

"You are not well," Laverick said. "Let me help you to a chair."

She sat down wearily.

"Why have you moved to a hotel?" she asked.

"To tell you the truth," Laverick answered, "I seem to have wandered into a sort of modern Arabian Nights. Three times to day attempts have been made to get that document from me by force. I have been followed whereever I went. I felt that it was not safe in my chambers, so I moved to a hotel and deposited it in their strong room. I have come to the conclusion that the best thing I can do is to open it to

morrow morning, and decide for myself as to its destination."

Louise sat quite still for several moments. Then she opened her eyes.

"What you say is an immense relief to me, Mr. Laverick," she declared. "I perceive now that we have made a mistake. We should have told you the whole truth from the first. This afternoon when Mr. Bellamy left me, it was to come to you and tell you everything."

Laverick listened gravely.

"Really," he said, "it seems to me the wisest course. I haven't the least desire to keep the document. I cannot think why Bellamy did not treat me with confidence from the first "

He stopped short. Suddenly he understood. Something in Louise's face gave him the hint.

"Of course!" he murmured to himself.

"Mr. Laverick," Louise said quietly, "in this matter I am no man's judge, yet, as you and I know well, that paper

could have come into your hands in one way, and one way only. There may be some explanation. If so, it is for you to offer it or not, as you think best. Mr. Bellamy and I are allies in this matter. It is not our business to interfere with the course of justice. You will run no risk in parting with that paper.

"Where can I see Bellamy?" Laverick Inquired, rising and taking up his hat.

"He would go straight to your rooms," she answered. "Did you leave word there where you had gone?"

"Purposely I did not," Laverick replied. "I had better try and find him, perhaps."

"It is not necessary," she announced. "No wonder that you feel yourself to have wandered into the Arabian Nights, Mr. Laverick. There are two sets of spies who follow you everywhere two sets that I know of. There may be another."

"You think that Bellamy will find me?" he asked.

"I am sure of it."

"Then I'll go back to the hotel and wait."

She hurried him away, but at the door she detained him for a moment.

"Mr. Laverick," she said, looking at him earnestly, "somehow or other I cannot help believing that you are an honest man.

Laverick sighed. He opened his lips but closed them again.

"You are very kind, Mademoiselle," he declared simply.

Laverick, as he entered the reception hall at the Milan Hotel, noticed a man leaning over the cashier's desk talking confidentially to the clerk in charge. The latter recognized Laverick with obvious relief, and at once directed his questioner's attention to him. Kahn turned swiftly around and without a moment's hesitation came smiling towards Laverick with the apparent intention of accosting him. He was correctly garbed, tall and fair, with every appearance of being a man of breeding. He glanced at

Laverick carelessly as he passed, but, as though changing his original purpose, made no attempt to address him. The cashier, who had been watching, gave vent to a little exclamation of surprise and sprang over the counter. He approached Laverick hastily.

"Do you know that gentleman just going out, sir?" he asked.

"I never saw him before in my life," Laverick answered. "Why?"

"Is this your handwriting, sir?" the man inquired, touching with his forefinger the half sheet of note paper which he had been carrying.

Laverick read quickly,

To the Cashier at the Milan Hotel, Deliver to bearer document deposited with you. STEPHEN LAVERICK.

"It is not," he declared promptly. "It is an impudent forgery. Good God! You don't mean to say that you parted with my property to "

The cashier stopped his breathless question.

"I haven't parted with anything, sir," he said. "I was just wondering what to do when you came in. I'd no reason to believe that the signature was a forgery, but I didn't like the look of it, somehow. We'd better be after him. Come along, sir."

They hurried outside. The man was nowhere in sight. The cashier summoned the head porter.

"A gentleman has just come out," he exclaimed, "tall and fair, very carefully dressed, with a single eyeglass! Which way did he go?"

"He's just driven off in a big Daimler car, sir," the porter answered. "I noticed him particularly. He spoke to the chauffeur in Austrian."

Laverick looked out into the Strand.

"Can't we stop him?" he asked rapidly.

The porter smiled as he shook his head.

"Not the ghost of a chance, sir. He shot round the corner there as though he were in a desperate hurry, and went the wrong side of the island. I heard the police calling

to him. I hope there’s nothing wrong, Mr. Dean?"

The cashier hesitated and glanced at Laverick.

"Nothing much," Laverick answered. "We should have liked to have asked him a question that is all."

Bellamy came out from the hotel and paused to light a cigarette.

"How are you, Laverick?" he said quietly. "Nothing the matter, I hope?"

"Nothing worth mentioning," Laverick replied.

The cashier returned to his duties. The two men were alone. Bellamy, most carefully dressed, with his silver headed cane under his arm, and his silk hat at precisely the correct angle, seemed very far removed from the work of intrigue into which Laverick felt himself to have blundered. He looked down for a moment at the tips of his patent shoes and up again at the sky, as though anxious about the weather.

"What about a drink, Laverick?" he asked nonchalantly.

"Delighted!" Laverick assented.

CHAPTER XXXI. MISS LENEVEU ’S MESSAGE

The two men stepped back into the hotel. The cashier had returned to his desk, and the incident which had just transpired seemed to have passed unnoticed. Nevertheless, Laverick felt that the studied indifference of his companion’s manner had its significance, and he endeavored to imitate it.

"Shall we go through into the bar?" he asked. "There’s very seldom any one there at this time."

"Anywhere you say, Bellamy answered. "It’s years since we had a drink together."

They passed into the inner room and, finding it empty, drew two chairs into the further corner. Bellamy summoned the waiter.

"Two whiskies and sodas quick, Tim," he ordered. "Now, Laverick, listen to me," he added, as the waiter

turned away. "We are alone for the moment but it won't be for long. You know very well that it wasn't to renew our schoolboy acquaintance that I've asked you to come in here with me."

Laverick drew a little breath.

"Please go on," he said. "I am as anxious as you can be to grasp this affair properly."

"When we left school," Bellamy remarked, "you were destined for the Stock Exchange. I went first to Magdalen. Did you ever hear what became of me afterwards?"

"I always understood," Laverick answered, "that you went into one of the Government offices."

"Quite right," Bellamy assented. "I did. At this moment I have the honor to serve His Majesty."

"Two thousand a year and two hours work a day," Laverick laughed. "I know the sort of thing."

"You evidently don't," Bellamy answered. "I often work twenty hours a day, I don't get half two thousand a year, and most of the time I carry my life in my hands.

When I am working and I am working now I am never sure of the morrow."

Laverick looked at him incredulously.

"You're not joking, Bellamy?" he asked.

"Not by any manner of means. I have the honor to be a humble member of His Majesty's Secret Service."

Laverick glanced at his companion wonderingly.

"I really didn't know," he said, "that such a service had any actual existence except in novels."

"I am a proof to the contrary," Bellamy declared grimly. "Abroad, I run always the risk of being dubbed a spy and treated like one. At home, I am simply the head of the A2 Branch of the Secret Service. Here come our drinks."

Laverick raised his whiskey and soda to his lips mechanically.

"Here's luck!" he exclaimed. "Now go on, Bellamy," he continued. "The waiter can't overhear."

Bellamy smiled.

"Tim is one of the few persons in the place," he said, "whom one can trust. As a matter of fact, he has been very useful to me more than once. Now listen to me attentively, Laverick. I am going to speak to you as one man to another."

Laverick nodded.

"I am ready," he said.

"Last Monday," Bellamy went on, leaning forward and speaking in a soft but very distinct undertone, "a man was murdered late at night in the heart of the city within one hundred yards of the Stock Exchange. The papers called it a mysterious murder. No one knows who the man was, or who committed the crime, or why. You and I, Laverick, both know a little more than the rest of the world."

"Well?"

"The murder," Bellamy continued, with a strange light in his eyes, "was accomplished only a stone's throw from your office."

Laverick lit a cigarette and threw the match away.

"Horrible affair it was," he remarked.

Bellamy glanced toward the door, a man had looked in and departed.

"Enough of this fencing, Laverick," he said. "A theft was committed from the person of that murdered man, of which the general public knows nothing. A pocketbook was stolen from him containing twenty thousand pounds and a sealed document. As to who murdered the man, I want you to understand that that is not my affair. As to what has become of that twenty thousand pounds, I have not the slightest curiosity. I want the document."

"What claim have you to it?" Laverick asked quickly.

"I might retort, but I will not," Bellamy replied. "Time is too short. I will answer you by explaining who the man was and what that document consists of. The man's name was Von Behrling, and he was a trusted agent of the Austrian Secret Service. The document of which he was robbed contains a verbatim report of the conference which recently took place at Vienna between the Emperor of

Germany, the Emperor of Austria, and the Czar of Russia. It contains the details of a plot against this country and the undertakings entered into by those several Powers. I want that document, Laverick. Have I established my claim?"

"You have," Laverick answered. "Why on earth Didn't you come to me before? Don't you believe that I should have listened to you as readily as to Mademoiselle Idiale?"

"I wish that I had come," Bellamy admitted, "and yet, here is the truth, Laverick, because the truth is best. Twenty two years lie between us and the time when we knew anything of one another. To me, therefore, you are a stranger. I had my spies following Von Behrling that night. I know that you took the pocket book from his dead body. If you did not murder him yourself, the deed was done by an accomplice of yours. How was I to trust you? We are speaking naked words, my friend. We are dealing with naked truths. To me you were a murderer and a thief. A word from me and you would have realized the value of that document. I tell you frankly that Austria would give

you almost any sum for it to day."

Laverick, strong man though he was, was conscious of a sudden weakness. He raised his hand to his forehead and drew it away wet. He struggled desperately for self control.

"Bellamy," he said, "here's truth for truth. I am not on my trial before you. Believe me, man, for God's sake!"

"I'll try," Bellamy promised. "Go on."

"That night I stayed at my office late because I saw ruin before me on the morrow. I left it meaning to go straight home. I lit a cigarette near that entry, and by the light of a match, as I was throwing it away, I saw the murdered man. I think for a time I was paralyzed. The pocket book was half dragged out from his pocket. Why I looked inside it I don't know. I had some sort of wild idea that I must find out who he was. Mind you, though, I should have given the alarm at once, but there wasn't a soul in the street. There was a man lurking in the entry and I chased him, unsuccessfully. When I came back, the body was still there and the street empty. I looked inside that

pocket book, which would have been in the possession of his murderer but for my unexpected appearance. I saw the notes there. Once more I went out into the street. I gave no alarm, I am not attempting to explain why. I was like a man made suddenly mad. I went back to my office and shut myself in."

Bellamy pointed to the glasses silently. The waiter came forward and refilled them.

"Bellamy," Laverick continued, "your career and mine lie far apart, and yet, at their backbone, as there is at the backbone of every man's life, there must be something of the same sort of ambition. My grandfather lived and died a member of the Stock Exchange, honored and well thought of. My father followed in his footsteps. I, too, was there. Without becoming wealthy, the name I bear has become known and respected. Failure, whatever one may say, means a broken life and a broken honor. I sat in my office and I knew that the use of those notes for a few days might save me from disgrace, might keep the name, which

my father and grandfather had guarded so jealously, free from shame. I would have paid any price for the use of them. I would have paid with my life, if that had been possible. Think of the risk I ran the danger I am now in. I deposited those notes on the morrow as security at my bank, and I met all my engagements. The crisis is over! Those notes are in a safe deposit vault in Chancery Lane! I only wish to Heaven that I could find the owner!"

"And the document?" Bellamy asked. "The document?"

"It is in the hotel safe," Laverick answered.

Bellamy drew a long sigh of relief. Then he emptied his tumbler and lit a cigarette.

"Laverick," he declared, "I believe you."

"Thank God!" Laverick muttered.

"I am no crime investigator," Bellamy went on thoughtfully. "As to who killed Von Behrling, or why, I cannot now form the slightest idea. That twenty thousand pounds, Laverick, is Secret Service money, paid by me to

Von Behrling only half an hour before he was murdered, in a small restaurant there, for what I supposed to be the document. He deceived me by making up a false packet. The real one he kept. He deserved to die, and I am glad he is dead."

Laverick's face was suddenly hopeful.

"Then you can take these notes!" he exclaimed.

Bellamy nodded.

"In a few days," he said, "I shall take you with me to a friend of mine a Cabinet Minister. You shall tell him the story exactly as you've told it to me, and restore the money."

Laverick laughed like a child.

"Don't think I'm mad," he apologized, "but I am not a person like you, Bellamy, used to adventures and this sort of wild happenings. I'm a steady going, matter of fact Englishman, and this thing has been like a hateful nightmare to me. I can't believe that I'm going to get rid of it."

Bellamy smiled.

"It's a great adventure," he declared, "to come to any one like you. To tell you the truth, I can't imagine how you had the pluck don't misunderstand me, I mean the moral pluck to run such a risk. Why, at the moment you used those notes," Bellamy continued, "the odds must have been about twenty to one against your not being found out."

"One doesn't stop to count the odds," Laverick said grimly. "I saw a chance of salvation and I went for it. And now about this letter."

Bellamy rose to his feet.

"On the King's service!" he whispered softly.

They walked once more to the cashier's desk. A stranger greeted them. Laverick produced his receipt.

"I should like the packet I deposited here this evening," he said. "I am sorry to trouble you, but I find that I require it unexpectedly."

The clerk glanced at the receipt and up at the clock. "I am afraid, sir," he answered, "that we cannot get at it before

the morning."

"Why not?" Laverick demanded, frowning.

"Mr. Dean has just gone home," the man declared, "and he is the only one who knows the combination on the 'L' safe. You see, sir," he continued, "we keep this particular safe for documents, and we did not expect that anything would be required from it to night."

Bellamy drew Laverick away.

"After all," he said, "perhaps to morrow morning would be better. There's no need to get shirty with these fellows. As a matter of fact, I don't think that I should have dared to receive it without making some special preparations. I can get some plain clothes men here upon whom I can rely, at nine o'clock."

They strolled back into the hall.

"Tell me," Laverick asked, "do you know who the man was who forged my name to the order a few hours ago?"

Bellamy nodded.

"It was Adolf Kahn, an Austrian spy. I have been

watching him for days. If they'd given him the paper I had four men at the door, but it would have been touch and go. He is a very prince of conspirators, that fellow. To tell you the truth, I think I might as well go home."

Bellamy was drawing on his gloves when the hall porter brought a note to Laverick.

"A messenger has just left this for you, sir," he explained.

Laverick tore open the envelope. The contents consisted of a few words only, written on plain note paper and in a handwriting which was strange to him.

"Ring up 1232 Gerrard."

Laverick frowned, turned over the half sheet of paper and looked once more at the envelope. Then he passed it on to his companion.

"What do you make of that, Bellamy?" he asked.

Bellamy smiled as he perused and returned it.

"What could any one make of it?" he remarked, laconically. "Do you know the handwriting?"

"Never saw it before, to my knowledge," Laverick answered. "What should you do about it?"

"I think," Bellamy suggested, "that I should ring up number 1232 Gerrard."

They crossed the hall and Laverick entered one of the telephone booths.

"1232 Gerrard," he said.

The connection was made almost at once.

"Who are you?" Laverick asked.

"I am speaking for Miss Zoe Leneven," was the reply. "Are you Mr. Laverick?"

"I am," Laverick answered. "Is Miss Leneveu there? Can she speak to me herself?"

"She is not here," the voice continued. "She was fetched away in a hurry from the theatre we understood by her brother. She left two and sixpence with the doorkeeper here to ring you up and explain that she had been summoned to her brother's rooms, 25, Jermyn Street, and would you kindly go on there."

"Who are you?" Laverick demanded.

There was no reply. Laverick remained speechless, listening intently. He stood still with the receiver pressed to his ear. Was it his fancy, or was that really Zoe's protesting voice which he heard in the background? It was a woman or a child who was speaking he was almost sure that it was Zoe.

"Who are you?" he asked fiercely. "Miss Leneveu is there with you. Why does she not speak for herself?"

"Miss Leneveu is not here," was the answer. "I have done what she desired. You can please yourself whether you go or not. The address is 25, Jermyn Street. Ring off."

The connection was gone. Laverick laid down the receiver and stepped out of the booth.

"I must be off at once," he said to Bellamy. "You'll be round in the morning?"

Bellamy smiled.

"After all," he remarked, "I have changed my plans. I shall not leave the hotel. I am going to telephone round to

my man to bring me some clothes. By the bye, do you mind telling me whether this message which you have just received had anything to do with the little affair in which we are interested?"

"Not directly," Laverick answered, after a moment's hesitation. "The message was from a young lady. I have to go and meet her."

"A young lady whom you can trust?" Bellamy inquired quietly.

"Implicitly," Laverick assured him.

"She spoke herself?"

"No, she sent a message. Excuse me, Bellamy, won't you, but I must really go."

"By all means," Bellamy answered.

They stood at the entrance to the hotel together while a taxicab was summoned. Laverick stepped quickly in.

"25, Jermyn Street," he ordered.

Bellamy watched him drive off. Then he sighed.

"I think, my friend Laverick," he said softly, "that you

will need some one to look after you to night."

CHAPTER XXXII. MORRISON IS DESPERATE

Certainly it was a strange little gathering that waited in Morrison's room for the coming of Laverick. There was Lassen flushed, ugly, breathing heavily, and watching the door with fixed, beady eyes. There was Adolf Kahn, the man who had strolled out from the Milan Hotel as Laverick had entered it, leaving the forged order behind him. There was Streuss stern, and desperate with anxiety. There was Morrison himself, in the clothes of a workman, worn to a shadow, with the furtive gleam of terrified guilt shining in his sunken eyes, and the slouched shoulders and broken mien of the habitual criminal. There was Zoe, around whom they were all standing, with anger burning in her cheeks and gleaming out of her passion filled eyes. She, too, like the others, watched the door. So they waited.

Streuss, not for the first time, moved to the window

and drawing aside the curtains looked down into the street.

"Will he come this Englishman?" he muttered. "Has he courage?"

"More courage than you who keep a girl here against her will!" Zoe panted, looking at him defiantly. "More courage than my poor brother, who stands there like a coward!"

"Shut up, Zoe!" Morrison exclaimed harshly. "There is nothing for you to be furious about or frightened. No one wants to ill treat you. These gentlemen all want to behave kindly to us. It is Laverick they want."

"And you," she cried, "are content to stand by and let him walk into a trap you let them even use my name to bring him here! Arthur, be a man! Have nothing more to do with them. Help me to get away from this place. Call out. Do something instead of standing there and wasting the precious minutes."

He came towards her ugly and threatening.

"I'll do something in a minute," he declared savagely,

"something you won't like, either. Keep your mouth shut, I tell you. It's me or him, and, by Heavens, he deserves what he'll get!"

Streuss turned away from the window and looked towards Zoe.

"Young lady," he said quietly, "let me beg you not to distress yourself so. I sincerely trust that nothing unpleasant will happen. If it does, I promise you that we will arrange for your temporary absence. You shall not be disturbed in any way."

"And as regards your brother, have a care, young lady," Lassen growled. "If any one's in danger, it's he. He'll be lucky if he saves his own skin."

The young man glowered at her.

"You hear that, you little fool!" he muttered. Keep still, can't you?"

Her face was full of defiance. He came nearer to her and changed his tone.

"Zoe," he whispered hoarsely, "don't you understand ?

If they can't get what they want from Laverick, they'll visit it upon me. They're desperate, I tell you. They mean mischief all the time."

"Yet you let him be brought here, your partner who looked after you when you were ill, and who helped you to get away!" she cried indignantly.

He laughed unpleasantly.

"When it comes to a matter of life or death, it's every man for himself. Besides, if I'd known as much about Laverick as I know now, I'm not sure that I should have been so ready to go not empty handed, by any manner of means."

"What have you done that you should be so much in the power of these people?" she demanded, fixing her dark eyes upon him searchingly.

The terror whitened his face once more. The perspiration stood out in beads upon his forehead.

"Don't dare to ask me questions!" he exclaimed nervously. "I should like to know what Laverick is to you,

eh, that you take so much interest in him? Listen here, my fine young lady. If I've been mug enough to do the dirty work, he hasn't made any bones about taking advantage of it. He's a nice sort of sportsman, I can tell you."

The man at the window suddenly dropped the curtain and spoke across the room to them all.

"He is here," he announced.

"Alone?" Lassen asked thickly.

"Alone," Streuss echoed.

A little thrill seemed to pass through the room. Zoe made no attempt to cry out. Instead she leaned forward towards the door, as though listening. Her attitude seemed harmless enough. No one took any more notice of her. They all watched the entrance to the apartment. Zoe remembered the two flights of stairs. She was absorbed in a breathless calculation. Now now he should be coming quite close. Her whole being was concentrated upon one effort of listening. At last she raised her head. The room resounded with her cries.

"Don't come in! Don't come in here!" she shrieked. "Mr. Laverick, do you hear? Go away! Don't come in here alone!"

Her brother was the first to reach her, his hand fell upon her mouth brutally. Her little effort was naturally a failure defeating, in fact, its own object. Laverick, hearing her cries, simply hastened his coming, threw open the door without waiting to knock, and stepped quickly across the threshold. He saw a man dressed in shabby workman's clothes, unshaven, dishevelled, holding Zoe in a rough grasp, and with a single well directed blow he sent him reeling across the room. Then something in the man's cry, a momentary glimpse of his white face, revealed his identity.

"Morrison!" he cried. "Good God, it's Morrison!"

Arthur Morrison was crouching in a corner of the room, his evil face turned upon his aggressor. Laverick took quick stock of his surroundings. There was the tall, fair young man Adolf Kahn whom he had seen at the Milan a few hours ago the man who had unsuccessfully forged his

name. There was Lassen, the man who, under pretence of being her manager, had been a spy upon Louise. There was Streuss, with blanched face and hard features, standing with his back to the door. There was Zoe, and, behind, her brother. She held out her hands timidly towards him, and her eyes were soft with pleading.

"I did not want you to come here, Mr. Laverick," she cried softly. "I tried so hard to stop you. It was not I who sent that message."

He took her cold little fingers and raised them to his lips.

"I know it, dear," he murmured.

Then a movement in the room warned him, and he was suddenly on guard. Lassen was close to his side, some evil purpose plainly enough written in his pasty face and unwholesome eyes. Laverick gave him his left shoulder and sent him staggering across the floor. He was angry at having been outwitted and his eyes gleamed ominously.

"Well, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "you seem to have

taken unusual pains to secure my presence here! Tell me now, what can I do for you?"

It was Streuss who became spokesman. He addressed Laverick with the consideration of one gentleman addressing another. His voice had many agreeable qualities. His demeanor was entirely amicable.

"Mr. Laverick," he answered, "let us first apologize if we used a little subterfuge to procure for us the pleasure of your visit. We are men who are in earnest, and across whose path you have either wilfully or accidentally strayed. An understanding between us has become a necessity."

"Go on," Laverick interrupted. "Tell me exactly who you are and what you want."

"As to who we are," Streuss answered, "does that really matter? I repeat that we are men who are in earnest let that be enough. As to what we want, it is a certain document to which we have every claim, and which has come into your possession I flatter you somewhat, Mr. Laverick, if I say by chance."

Laverick shrugged his shoulders.

"Let that go," he said. "I know all about the document you refer to, and the notes. They were contained in a pocket book which it is perfectly true has come into my possession. Prove your claim to both and you shall have them."

Streuss smiled.

"You will admit that our claim, since we know of its existence," he asked suavely, "is equal to yours?"

"Certainly," Laverick answered, "but then I never had any idea of keeping either the document or the money. That your claim is better than mine is no guarantee that there is not some one else whose title is better still."

Streuss frowned.

"Be reasonable, Mr. Laverick," he begged. "We are men of peace when peace is possible. The money of which you spoke you can consider as treasure trove, if you will, but it is our intention to possess ourselves of the document. It is for that reason that we are here in London. I, personally, am committed to the extent of my life and my honor to its

recovery."

A declaration of war, courteously veiled but decisive. Laverick looked around him a little defiantly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"You know very well that I do not carry it about with me," he said. "The gentleman on my left," he added, pointing to Kahn, "can tell you where it is kept."

"Quite so," Streuss admitted. "We are not doing you the injustice to suppose that you would be so foolhardy as to trust yourself anywhere with that document upon your person. It is in the safe at the Milan Hotel. I may add that probably, if it had not occurred to you to change your quarters, it would have been in our possession before now. We are hoping to persuade you to return to the hotel with one of our friends here, and procure it."

"As it happens," Laverick remarked, "that is impossible. The man who set the combination for that particular safe has gone off duty, and will not be back again at the hotel till to morrow morning."

"But he is to be found," Streuss answered easily. "His present whereabouts and his address are known to us. He lives with his family at Harvard Court, Hampstead. We shall assist you in making it worth his while to return to the hotel or to give you the combination word for the safe."

"You are rather great on detail!" Laverick exclaimed.

"It is our business. The question for you to decide, and to decide immediately, is whether you are ready to end this, in some respects, constrained situation, and give your word to place that document in our hands."

"You are ready to accept my word, then?" Laverick asked.

"We have a certain hold upon you," Streuss continued slowly. "Your partner Mr. Morrison's position in connection with the murder in Crooked Friars' Alley is, as you may have surmised, a somewhat unfortunate one. Your own I will not allude to. I will simply suggest that for both your sakes publicity any measure of publicity, in fact, as regards this little affair would not be desirable."

Laverick hesitated. He understood all that was implied. Morrison's eyes were fixed upon him the eyes of a craven coward. He felt the intensity of the moment. Then Zoe turned suddenly towards him.

"You are not to give it up!" she cried, with trembling lips. "They cannot hurt you, and it is not true about Arthur."

Kahn, who was nearest, clapped his hand over her mouth and Laverick knocked him down. Instantly the pacific atmosphere of the room was changed. Lassen and Morrison closed swiftly upon Laverick from different sides. Streuss covered him with the shining barrel of a revolver.

"Mr. Laverick," he said, "we are not here to be trifled with. Keep your sister quiet, Morrison, or, by God, you'll swing!"

Laverick looked at the revolver fascinated, for an instant, by its unexpected appearance. The face of the man who held it had changed. There was lightning playing about the room.

"It’s the dock for you both!" Streuss exclaimed fiercely, "for you, Laverick, and you, Morrison, too, if you play with us any longer! One of you’s a murderer and the other receives the booty. Who are you to have scruples criminals, both of you? Your place is in the dock, and you shall be there within twenty four hours if there are any more evasions. Now, Laverick, will you fetch that document? It is your last chance."

Upon the breathless silence that followed a quiet voice intervened a voice calm and emotionless, tinged with a measure of polite inquiry. Yet its level utterance fell like a bomb among the little company. The curtain separating this from the inner room had been drawn a few feet back, and Bellamy was standing there, in black overcoat and white muffler, his silk hat on the back of his head, his left hand, carefully gloved, resting still upon the curtain which he had drawn aside.

"I hope I am not disturbing you at all?" he murmured softly.

For a moment the development of the situation remained uncertain. The gleaming barrel of Streuss's revolver changed its destination. Bellamy glanced at it with the pleased curiosity of a child.

"I really ought not to have intruded," he continued amiably. "I happened to hear the address my friend Laverick gave to the taxicab driver, and I was particularly anxious to have a word or two with him before I left for the Continent."

Streuss was surely something of a charlatan! His revolver had disappeared. The smile upon his lips was both gracious and unembarrassed.

"One is always only too pleased to welcome Mr. Bellamy anywhere anyhow," he declared. "If apologies are needed at all," he continued, "it is to our friend and host Mr. Morrison here. Permit me Mr. Arthur Morrison the Honorable David Bellamy! These are Mr. Morrison's rooms."

Morrison could do no more than stare. Bellamy, on the

contrary, with a little bow came further into the apartment, removing his hat from his head. Lassen glided round behind him, remaining between Bellamy and the heavy curtains. Adolf Kahn moved as though unconsciously in front of the door of the room in which they were.

Bellamy smiled courteously.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I must not stay for more than a moment. I have a car full of friends below we are on our way, in fact, to the Covent Garden Ball and one or two of them, I fear," he added indulgently, "have already reached that stage of exhilaration which such an entertainment in England seems to demand. They will certainly come and rout me out if I am here much longer. There!" he exclaimed, "you hear that?"

There was the sound of a motor horn from the street below. Streuss, with an oath trembling upon his lips, lifted the blind. There were two motor cars waiting there large cars with Limousine bodies, and apparently full of men. After all, it was to be expected. Bellamy was no fool!

"Since we are to lose you, then Mr. Laverick," Streuss remarked with a gesture of farewell, "let us say good night. The little matter of business which we were discussing can be concluded with your partner."

Laverick turned toward Zoe. Their eyes met and he read their message of terror.

"You are coming back to your own rooms, Miss Leneveu," he said. "You must let me offer you my escort."

She half rose, but in obedience to a gesture from Streuss Morrison moved near to them.

"If you leave me here, Laverick," he muttered beneath his breath, "if you leave me to these hounds, do you know what they will do? They will hand me over to the police they have sworn it!"

"Why did you come back?" Laverick asked quickly.

"They stopped me as I was boarding the steamer," Morrison declared. "I tell you they have eyes everywhere. You cannot move without their knowledge. I had to come. Now that I am here they have told me plainly the price of

my freedom. It is that document. Laverick, it is my life! You must give in you must, indeed! Remember you're in it, too."

"Am I?" Laverick asked quietly.

"You fool, of course you are!" Morrison whispered hoarsely. "Didn't you come into the entry and take the pocket book? Heaven knows what possessed you to do it! Heaven knows how you found the pluck to use the money! But you did it, and you are a criminal a criminal as I am. Don't be a fool, Laverick. Make terms with these people. They want the document the document nothing but the document! They will let us keep the money."

"And you?" Laverick asked, turning suddenly to Zoe. "What do you say about all this?"

She looked at him fearlessly.

"I trust you," she said. "I trust you to do what is right.

CHAPTER XXXIII. LAVERICK S ARREST

"At last, David!"

Louise welcomed her visitor eagerly with outstretched hands, which Bellamy raised for a moment to his lips. Then she turned toward the third person, who had also risen at the opening of the door a short, somewhat thick set man, with swarthy complexion, close cropped black hair, and upturned black moustache.

"You remember Prince Rosmaran ?" she said to Bellamy. "He left Servia only the day before yesterday. He has come to England on a special mission to the King."

Bellamy shook hands.

"I think," he remarked, "I had the honor of meeting you once before, Prince, at the opening of the Servian Parliament two years ago. It was just then, I believe, that you were elected to lead the patriotic party."

Th e Prince bowed sadly.

"My leadership, I fear," he declared, "has brought little

good to my unhappy country."

"It is a terrible crisis through which your nation is passing," Bellamy reminded him sympathetically. "At the same time, we must not despair. Austria holds out her clenched hands, but as yet she has not dared to strike."

The face of the Prince was dark with passion.

"As yet, no!" he answered. "But how long how long, I wonder before the blow falls? We in Servia have been blamed for arming ourselves, but I tell you that to day the Austrian troops are being secretly concentrated on the frontier. Their arsenals are working night and day. Her soldiers are manoeuvering almost within sight of Belgrade. We have hoped against hope, yet in our hearts we know that our fate was sealed when the Czar of Russia left Vienna last week."

"Nothing is certain," Bellamy declared restlessly. "England has been ill governed for a great many years, but we are not yet a negligible Power."

Louise leaned a little towards him.

"David," she whispered, "the compact!"

He answered her unspoken question.

"It is arranged," he said, "finished. To morrow morning at nine o’clock I receive it."

"You are sure?" she begged. "Why need there be any delay?"

"It is locked up in a powerful safe," he explained, "and the clerk who has the combination will not be on duty again till nine. Laverick is there simply waiting for the hour. You were right, Louise, as usual. I should have trusted him from the first."

The Prince had been listening to their conversation with undisguised interest.

"There is a rumor," he said, "that some secret information concerning the compact of Vienna has found its way to this country."

Bellamy smiled.

"Hence, I presume, your mission, Prince."

"We three have no secrets from one another," the

Prince declared. "Our interests in this matter are absolutely identical. What you suggest, Mr. Bellamy, is the truth. There is a rumor that the Chancellor, in the first few moments of his illness, gave valuable information to some one who is likely to have communicated it to the Government here. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. That, I know, is one of your own mottoes. So I am here to know if there is anything to be learned."

Bellamy nodded.

"Your arrival is not inopportune, Prince. When did you come?"

"I reached Charing Cross at midnight," the Prince answered. "Our train was an hour late. I am presenting my credentials early this morning, and I am hoping for an interview during the afternoon."

Bellamy considered for a moment.

"It is true!" he said. "Between us three there is indeed no need for secrecy. The information you speak of will be in our hands within a few hours. I have no doubt whatever

but that your Minister will share in it."

"You know of what it Consists?" the Prince inquired curiously.

"I think so," Bellamy answered, glancing at the clock. "For my own part, although the information itself is invaluable, I see another and a profounder source of interest in that document. If, indeed, it is what we believe it to be, it amounts to a casus belli."

"You mean that you would provoke war?" Prince Rosmaran asked.

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders.

"I," said he, "I am not even a politician. But, you know, the lookers on see a good deal of the game, and in my opinion there is only one course open for this country, to work upon Russia so that she withdraws from any compact she may have entered into with Austria and Germany, to accept Germany's cooperation with Austria in the despoilment of your country as a casus belli, and to declare war at once while our fleet is invincible and our

Colonies free from danger."

The Prince nodded.

"It is good," he admitted, "to hear man's talk once more. Wherever one moves, people bow the head before the might of Germany and Austria. Let them alone but a little longer, and they will indeed rule Europe."

Three o'clock struck. The Prince rose.

"I go," he announced.

"And I," Bellamy declared. "Come to my rooms at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, Prince, and you shall hear the news.

Bellamy lingered behind. For a moment he held Louise in his arms and gazed sorrowfully into her weary face.

"Is it worth while, I wonder?" he asked bitterly.

"Worth while," she answered, opening her eyes and looking at him, "to feel the mother love? Who can help it who would not be ignoble?"

"But yours, dear," he murmured, "is all grief. Even

now I am afraid."

"We can do no more than toil to the end," she said. "David, you are sure this time?"

"I am sure," he replied. "I am going back now to the hotel where Laverick is staying. We are going to sit together and smoke until the morning. Nothing short of an army could storm the hotel. I was with them all only an hour ago, Streuss, that blackguard Lassen, and Adolf Kahn, the police spy. They are beaten men and they know it. They had Laverick, had him by a trick, but I made a dramatic entrance and the game was up."

"Telephone me directly you have taken it safely to Downing Street," she begged.

"I will," he promised.

Bellamy walked from Dover Street to the Strand. The streets were almost brilliant with the cold, hard moonlight. The air seemed curiously keen. Once or twice the fall of his feet upon the pavement was so clear and distinct that he fancied he was being followed and glanced sharply around.

He reached the Milan Hotel, however, without adventure, and looked towards the little open space in the hall where he had expected to find Laverick. There was no one there! He stood still for a moment, troubled with a sudden sense of apprehension. The place was deserted except for a couple of sleepy looking clerks and a small army of cleaners busy with their machines down in the restaurant, moving about like mysterious figures in the dim light.

Bellamy turned back to the hall porter who had admitted him.

"Do you happen to know what has become of the gentleman whom I was with about an hour ago?" he asked, "a tall, fair gentleman Mr. Laverick his name was?"

The hall porter recognized Bellamy and touched his hat.

"Why, yes, sir!" he answered with a somewhat mysterious air. "Mr. Laverick was sitting over there in an easy chair until about half an hour ago. Then two gentle men arrived in a taxicab and inquired for him. They talked

for a little time, and finally Mr. Laverick went away with them."

Bellamy was puzzled.

"Went away with them?" he repeated. "I don't understand that, Reynolds. He was to have waited here till I returned."

The man hesitated.

"It didn't strike me, sir," he said, "that Mr. Laverick was very wishful to go. It seemed as though he hadn't much choice about the matter."

Bellamy looked at him keenly.

"Tell me what is in your mind?" he asked.

"Mr. Bellamy, sir," the hall porter replied, "I knew one of those gentlemen by sight. He was a detective from Scotland Yard, and the one who was with him was a policeman in plain clothes."

"Good God!" Bellamy exclaimed. "You think, then, "

"I am afraid there was no doubt about it, sir," the man answered. "Mr. Laverick was arrested on some charge."

CHAPTER XXXIV. MORRISON'S DISCLOSURE

Into New Oxford Street, one of the ceaseless streams of polyglot humanity, came Zoe from her cheerless day bound for the theatre. She was a little whiter, a little more tired than usual. All day long she had heard nothing of Laverick. All day long she had sat in her tiny room with the memory of that horrible night before her. She had tried in vain to sleep, she had made no effort whatever to eat. She knew now why Arthur Morrison had fled away. She knew the cause of that paroxysm of fear in which he had sought her out. The horror of the whole thing had crept into her blood like poison. Life was once more a dreary, profitless struggle. All the wonderful dreams, which had made existence seem almost like a fairy tale for this last week, had faded away. She was once more a mournful little waif among the pitiless crowds.

She turned to the left and past the Holborn Tube. Boys were shouting everywhere the contents of the evening

papers. Nearly every one seemed to be carrying one of the pink sheets. She herself passed on with unseeing eyes. News was nothing to her. Governments might rise and fall, war might come and go, she had still life to support, a friendless little life, too, on two pounds fifteen shillings a week. The news they shouted fell upon deaf ears, but one boy unfurled almost before her eyes the headlines of his sheet.

SENSATIONAL ARREST OF A WELL KNOWN STOCKBROKER. CHARGE OF MURDER.

She came to a sudden stop and pulled out her purse. Her fingers trembled so that the penny fell on to the pavement. The boy picked it up willingly enough, however, and she passed on with the paper in her hand. There it was on the front page staring her in the face:

Early yesterday morning Mr. Stephen Laverick, of the firm of Laverick & Morrison, Stockbrokers, Old Broad Street, was arrested at the Milan Hotel on the charge of being concerned in the murder of a person unknown, in

Crooked Friars' Alley, on Monday last. The accused, who made no reply to the charge, was removed to Bow Street Police Station. Particulars of his examination before the magistrates will be found on page 4.

There was a dull singing in her ears. An electric tram, coming up from the underground passage, seemed to bring with it some sort of thunder from an unknown world. She staggered on, unseeing, gasping for breath. If she could find somewhere to sit down! If she could only rest for a moment! Then a sudden wave of strength came to her, the blood flowed once more in her veins blood that was hot with anger, that stained her cheeks with a spot of red. It was the man she loved, this, being made to suffer falsely. It was the fulfilment of their threat a deliberate plot against him. The murderer of Crooked Friars' Alley she knew who that was! she knew! Perhaps she might help!

She had not the slightest recollection of the remainder of that walk, but she found herself presently sitting in a quiet corner of the theatre with the paper spread out before

her. She read that Stephen Laverick had been brought before Mr. Rawson, the magistrate of Bow Street Police Court, on a warrant charging him with having been concerned with the murder of a person unknown, and that he had pleaded "Not Guilty!" Her eyes glittered as she read that the first witness called was Mr. Arthur Morrison, late partner of the accused. She read his deposition that he had left Laverick at their offices at eleven o'clock on the night in question, that they were at that time absolutely without means, and had no prospect of meeting their engagements on the morrow. She read the evidence of Mr. Fenwick, bank manager, to the effect that Mr. Laverick had, on the following morning, deposited with him the sum of twenty thousand pounds in Bank of England notes, by means of which the engagements of the firm were duly met, that those notes had since been redeemed, and that he had no idea of their present whereabouts. She read, too, the evidence of Adolf Kahn, an Austrian visiting this country upon private business, who deposed that he was in

the vicinity just before midnight, that he saw a person, whom he identified as the accused, walking down the street and, after disappearing for a few minutes down the entry, return and re enter the offices from which he had issued. He explained his presence there by the fact that he was waiting for a clerk employed by the Goldfields' Corporation, Limited, whose offices were close by. Further formal evidence was given, and a remand asked for. The accused's solicitor was on the point of addressing the court when Mr. Rawson was unfortunately taken ill. After waiting for some time, the case was adjourned until the next day, and the accused man was removed in custody.

Zoe laid down the paper and rose to her feet. She made her way to where the stage manager was superintending the erection of some new scenery.

"Mr. Heepman," she exclaimed, "I cannot stay to rehearsal! I have to go out."

He turned heavily round and looked at her.

"Rehearsal postponed," he declared solemnly. "Shall

you be back for the evening performance, or shall we close the theatre?"

His clumsy irony missed its mark. Her thoughts were too intensely focussed upon one thing.

"I am sorry," she replied, turning away. "I will come back as soon as I can."

He called out after her and she paused.

"Look here," he said, "you were absent from the performance the other evening, and now you are skipping rehearsal without even waiting for permission. It can't be done, young lady. You must do your playing around some other time. If you're not here when you're called, you needn't trouble to turn up again. Do you understand?"

Her lips quivered and the sense of impending disaster which seemed to be brooding over her life became almost overwhelming.

"I'll come back as soon as I can," she promised, with a little break in her voice, "as soon as ever I can, Mr. Heepman."

She hurried out of the theatre and took her place once more among the hurrying throng of pedestrians. Several people turned round to look at her. Her white face, tight drawn mouth, and eyes almost unnaturally large, seemed to have become the abiding place for tragedy. She herself saw no one. She would have taken a cab, but a glimpse at the contents of her purse dissuaded her. She walked steadily on to Jermyn Street, walked up the stairs to the third floor, and knocked at her brother's door. No one answered her at first. She turned the handle and entered to find the room empty. There were sounds, however, in the further apartment, and she called out to him.

"Arthur," she cried, "are you there?"

"Who is it?" he demanded.

"It is I Zoe!" she exclaimed.

"What do you want?"

"I want to speak to you, Arthur. I must speak to you. Please come as quickly as you can."

He growled something and in a few moments he

appeared. He was wearing the morning clothes in which he had attended court earlier in the day, but the change in him was perhaps all the more marked by reason of this resumption of his old attire. His cheeks were hollow, his eyes scarcely for an instant seemed to lose that feverish gleam of terror with which he had returned from Liverpool. He knew very well what she had come about, and he began nervously to try and bully her.

"I wish you wouldn't come to these rooms, Zoe," he said. "I've told you before they're bachelors' apartments, and they don't like women about the place. What is it? What do you want?"

"I was brought here last time without any particular desire on my part," she answered, looking him in the face. "I've come now to ask you what accursed plot this is against Stephen Laverick? What were you doing in the court this morning, lying? What is the meaning of it, Arthur?"

"If you've come to talk rubbish like that," he declared

roughly, "you'd better be off."

"No, it is not rubbish!" she went on fearlessly. "I think I can understand what it is that has happened. They have terrified you and bribed you until you are willing to do any despicable thing even this. Your father was good to my mother, Arthur, and I have tried to feel towards you as though you were indeed a relation. But nothing of that counts. I want you to realize that I know the truth, and that I will not see an innocent man convicted while the guilty go free."

He moved a step towards her. They were on opposite sides of the small round table which stood in the centre of the apartment.

"What do you mean?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Isn't it plain enough?" she exclaimed. "You came to my rooms a week or so ago, a terrified, broken down man. If ever there was guilt in a man's face, it was in yours. You sent for Laverick. He pitied you and helped you away. At Liverpool they would not let you embark these men. They

have brought you back here. You are their tool. But you know very well, Arthur, that it was not Stephen Laverick who killed the man in Crooked Friars' Alley! You know very well that it was not Stephen Laverick!"

"Why the devil should I know anything about it?" he asked fiercely.

A note of passion suddenly crept into her voice. Her little white hand, with its accusing forefinger, shot out towards him.

"Because it was you, Arthur Morrison, who committed that crime," she cried, "and sooner than another man should suffer for it, I shall go to court myself and tell the truth."

He was, for the moment, absolutely speechless, pale as death, with nervously twitching lips and fingers. But there was murder in his eyes.

"What do you know about this?" he muttered.

"Never mind," she answered. "I know and I guess quite enough to convince me and I think anybody else that you are the guilty man. I would have helped you and

shielded you, whatever it cost me, but I will not do so at Stephen Laverick’s expense."

"What is Laverick to you?" he growled.

"He is nothing to me," she replied, "but the best of friends. Even were he less than that, do you suppose that I would let an innocent man suffer?"

He moistened his dry lips rapidly.

"You are talking nonsense, Zoe," he said, "nonsense! Even if there has been some little mistake, what could I do now? I have given my evidence. So far as I am concerned, the case is finished. I shall not be called again until the trial."

"Then you had better go to the magistrates tomorrow morning and take back your evidence," she declared boldly, "for if you do not, I shall be there and I shall tell the truth."

"Zoe," he gasped, "don’t try me too high. This thing has upset me. I’m ill. Can’t you see it, Zoe? Look at me. I haven’t slept for weeks. Night and day I’ve had the fear the fear always with me. You don’t know what it is you can’t

imagine. It’s like a terrible ghost, keeping pace with you wherever you go, laying his icy finger upon you whenever you would rest, mocking at you when you try to drown thought even for a moment. Don’t you try me too far, Zoe. I’m not responsible. Laverick isn’t the man you think him to be. He isn’t the man I believed. He did have that money he did, indeed."

"That," she said, "is to be explained. But he is not a murderer."

"Listen to me, Zoe," Morrison continued, leaning across the table. "Come and stay with me for a time and we will go away for a week somewhere to the seaside. e will talk about this and think it over. I want to get away from London. We will go to Brighton, if you like. must do something for you, Zoe. I’m afraid I’ve neglected you a good deal. Perhaps I could get you a better part at one of the theatres. I must make you an allowance. You ought to be wearing better clothes."

She drew a little away.

"I want nothing from you, Arthur," she said, "except this that you speak the truth."

He wiped his forehead and struck the table before her.

"But, good God, Zoe!" he exclaimed, "do you know what it is that you are asking me? Do you want me to go into court and say 'That isn't the man... It is I who am the murderer'? Do you want me to feel their hands upon my shoulder, to be put there in the dock and have all the people staring at me curiously because they know that before very long I am to stand upon the scaffold and have that rope around my neck and "

He broke off with a low cry, wringing his hands like a child in a fit of impotent terror. But the girl in front of him never flinched.

"Arthur," she said, "crime is a terrible thing, but nothing in the world can alter its punishment. If it is frightful for you to think of this, what must it be for him? And you are guilty and he is not."

"I was mad!" Morrison went on, now almost beside

himself. "Zoe, I was mad! I called there to have a drink. We were broke, the firm was broke. I'd a hundred or so in my pocket and I was going to bolt the next day. And there, within a few yards of me, was that man, with such a roll of notes as I had never seen in my life. Five hundred pounds, every one of them, and a wad as thick as my fists. Zoe, they fascinated me. I had two drinks quickly and I followed him out. Somehow or other, I found that I'd caught up a knife that was on the counter. I never meant to hurt him seriously, but I wanted some of those notes! I was leaving the next day for Africa and I hadn't enough money to make a fair start. I wanted it my God, how I wanted money!"

"It couldn't have been worth that!" she cried, looking at him wonderingly.

"I was mad," he continued. "I saw the notes and they went to my head. Men do wild things sometimes when they are drunk, or for love. I don't drink much, and I'm not over fond of women, but, my God, money is like the blood of my body to me! I saw it, and I wanted it and I wanted it,

and I went mad! Zoe, you won't give me away? Say you won't!"

"But what am I to do?" she protested. "He must not suffer."

"He'll get off," Morrison assured her thickly. "I tell you he'll get off. He's only to part with the document, which never belonged to him, and the charge will be withdrawn. They know who the murdered man was. They know where the money came from which he was carrying. I tell you he can save himself. You wouldn't dream of sending me to the gallows, Zoe!"

"Stephen Laverick will never give up that document to those people," she declared. "I am sure of that."

"It's his own lookout," Morrison muttered. "He has the chance, anyway."

She turned toward the door.

"I must go away," she said. "I must go away and think. It is all too horrible."

He came round the table swiftly and caught at her

wrists.

"Listen," he said, "I can’t let you go like this. You must tell me that you are not going to give me up. Do you hear?"

"I can make no promises, Arthur," she answered sadly, "only this I shall not let Stephen Laverick suffer in your stead."

He opened his hand and she shrank back, terrified, when she saw what it was that he was holding. Then he struck her down and without a backward glance fled out of the place.

CHAPTER XXXV. BELLAMY’S SUCCESS

Late that afternoon the hall porter at the Milan Hotel, the commissionaire, and the chief maitre d’hotel from the Caf? who happened to be in the hall, together with several others around the place who knew Stephen Laverick by sight, were treated to an unexpected surprise. A large closed

motor car drove up to the front entrance and several men descended, among whom was Laverick himself. He nodded to the hall porter, whose salute was purely mechanical, and making his way without hesitation to the interior of the hotel, presented his receipt at the cashier's desk and asked for his packet. The clerk looked up at him in amazement. He did not, for the moment, notice that the two men standing immediately behind bore the stamp of plain clothes policemen. He had only a few minutes ago finished reading the report of Laverick's examination before the magistrates and his remand until the morrow, upon the charge of murder. His knowledge of English law was by no means perfect, but he was at least aware that Laverick's appearance outside the purlieus of the prison was an unusual happening.

"Your packet, sir!" he repeated, in amazement. "Why, this is Mr. Laverick himself, is it not?"

"Certainly," was the quiet reply. "I am Stephen Laverick."

The clerk called the head cashier, who also stared at Laverick as though he were a ghost. They whispered together in the background for a moment, and their faces were a study in perplexity. Of Laverick's identity, however, there was no manner of doubt. Besides, the presence of what was obviously a very ample escort somewhat reassured them. The cashier himself came forward.

"We shall be exceedingly glad, Mr. Laverick," he said dryly, "to get rid of your packet. Your instructions were that we should disregard all orders to hand it over to any person whatsoever, and I may say that they have been strictly adhered to. We have, however, had two applications in your name this morning."

"They were both forgeries," Laverick declared.

The cashier hesitated. Then he leaned across the broad mahogany counter towards Laverick. One of the men who appeared to form part of the escort detached himself from them and approached a few steps nearer.

"This gentleman is your friend, sir?" the cashier asked, glancing towards him.

"He is my solicitor," Laverick answered, "and is entirely in my confidence. If you have anything to tell me, I should like Mr. Bellamy also to hear."

Bellamy, who was standing a little in the background, took his place by Laverick's side. The cashier, who knew him by sight, bowed.

"Beside these two forged orders, sir," he said, turning again to Laverick, "we have had a man who took a room in the hotel leave a small black bag here, which he insisted upon having deposited in our document safe. My assistant had accepted it and was actually locking it up when he noticed a faint sound inside which he could not understand. The bag was opened and found to contain an infernal machine which would have exploded in a quarter of an hour."

Bellamy drew his breath sharply between his teeth.

"We should have thought of that!" he exclaimed softly.

"That’s Kahn’s work!"

"I seem to have given you a great deal of trouble," Laverick remarked quietly. "I gather, however, from what you say, that my packet is still in your possession?"

"It is, sir," the man assented. "We have two detectives from Scotland Yard here at the present moment, though, and we had almost decided to place it in their charge for greater security."

"It will be well taken care of from now, I promise you," Laverick declared.

The cashier and his clerk led the way into the inner office. At their invitation Laverick and his solicitor followed, and a few yards behind came the two plain clothes policemen, Bellamy, and the superintendent. The safe was opened and the packet placed in Laverick’s hands. He passed it on at once to Bellamy, and immediately afterwards the doorway behind was thronged with men, apparently ordinary loiterers around the hotel. They made a slow and exceedingly cautious exit. Once outside,

Bellamy turned to Laverick with outstretched hand.

"Au revoir and good luck, old chap!" he said heartily. "I think you'll find things go your way all right to morrow morning."

He departed, forming one of a somewhat singular cavalcade two of his friends on either side, two in front, and two behind. It had almost the appearance of a procession. The whole party stepped into a closed motor car. Three or four men were lounging on the pavement and there was some excited whispering, but no one actually interfered. As soon as they had left the courtyard, Laverick and his solicitor, with his own guard, re entered the motor car in which they had arrived, and drove back to Bow Street. Very few words were exchanged during the short journey. His solicitor, however, bade him good night cheerfully, and Laverick's bearing was by no means the bearing of a man in despair.

In Downing Street, within the next half an hour, a somewhat remarkable little gathering took place. The two

men chiefly responsible for the destinies of the nation the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs sat side by side before a small table. Facing them was Bellamy, and spread out in front were those few pages of foolscap, released from their envelope a few minutes ago for the first time since the hand of the great Chancellor himself had pressed down the seal. The Foreign Minister had just finished a translation for the benefit of his colleague, and the two men were silent, as men are in the presence of big events.

"Bellamy," the Prime Minister said slowly, "you are willing to stake, I presume, your reputation upon the authenticity of this document?"

"My honor and my life, if you will," Bellamy answered earnestly. "That is no copy which you have there. On the contrary, the handwriting is the handwriting of the Chancellor himself."

The Prime Minister turned silently towards his colleague. The latter, whose eyes still seemed glued to

those fateful words, looked up.

"All I can say is this," he remarked impressively, "that never in my time have I seen written words possessed of so much significance. One moment, if you please."

He touched the bell, and his private secretary entered at once from an adjoining room.

"Anthony," he said, "telephone to the Great Western Railway Company at Paddington. Ask for the station master in my name, and see that a special train is held ready to depart for Windsor in half an hour. Tell the station master that all ordinary traffic must be held up, but that the destination of the special is not to be divulged."

The young man bowed and withdrew.

"The more I consider this matter," the Foreign Minister went on, "the more miraculous does the appearance of this document seem. We know now why the Czar is struggling so frantically to curtail his visit why he came, as it were, under protest, and seeks everywhere for an opportunity to leave before the appointed time. His

health is all right. He has had a hint from Vienna that there has been a leakage. His special mission only reached Paris this morning. The President is in the country and their audience is not fixed until to morrow. Rawson will go over with a copy of these papers and a dispatch from His Majesty by the nine o'clock train. It is not often that we have had the chance of such a 'coup' as this."

He drew his chief a few steps away. They whispered together for several moments. When they returned, the Foreign Minister rang the bell again for his secretary.

"Anthony," he said, "Sir James and I will be leaving in a few minutes for Windsor. Go round yourself to General Hamilton, telephone to Aldershot for Lord Neville, and call round at the Admiralty Board for Sir John Harrison. Tell them all to be here at ten o'clock tonight. If I am not back, they must wait. If either of them have royal commands, you need only repeat the word 'Finisterre.' They will understand."

The young man once more withdrew. The Prime

Minister turned back to the papers.

"It will be worth a great deal," he remarked, with a grim smile, "to see His Majesty's face when he reads this."

"It would be worth a great deal more," his fellow statesman answered dryly, "to be with his August cousin at the interview which will follow. A month ago, the thought that war might come under our administration was a continual terror to me. To day things are entirely different. To day it really seems that if war does come, it may be the most glorious happening for England of this century. You saw the last report from Kiel?"

Sir James nodded.

"There isn't a battleship or a cruiser worth a snap of the fingers south of the German Ocean," his colleague continued earnestly. "They are cooped up safe enough, they think under the shelter of their fortifications. Hamilton has another idea. Between you and me, Sir James, so have I. I tell you," he went on, in a deeper and more passionate tone, "it's like the passing of a terrible nightmare this. We have

had ten years of panic, of nervous fears of a German invasion, and no one knows more than you and I, Sir James, how much cause we have had for those fears. It will seem strange if, after all, history has to write that chapter differently."

The secretary re entered and announced the result of his telephone interview with the superintendent at Paddington. The two great men rose. The Prime Minister held out his hand to Bellamy.

"Bellamy," he declared, "you've done us one more important service. There may be work for you within the next few weeks, but you've earned a rest for a day or two, at any rate. There is nothing more we can do?"

"Nothing except a letter to the Home Secretary, Sir James," Bellamy answered. "Remember, sir, that although I have worked hard, the man to whom we really owe those papers is Stephen Laverick."

The Prime Minister frowned thoughtfully.

"It's a difficult situation, Bellamy," he said. "You are

asking a great deal when you suggest that we should interfere in the slightest manner with the course of justice. You are absolutely convinced, I suppose, that this man Laverick had nothing to do with the murder?"

"Absolutely and entirely, sir," Bellamy replied.

"The murdered man has never been identified by the police," Sir James remarked. "Who was he?"

"His name was Rudolph Von Behrling," Bellamy announced, "and he was actually the Chancellor's nephew, also his private secretary. I have told you the history, sir, of those papers. It was Von Behrling who, without a doubt, murdered the American journalist and secured them. It was he who insisted upon coming to London instead of returning with them to Vienna, which would have been the most obvious course for him to have adopted. He was a pauper, and desperately in love with a certain lady who has helped me throughout this matter. He agreed to part with the papers for twenty thousand pounds, and the lady incidentally promised to elope with him the same night. I

met him by appointment at that little restaurant in the city, paid him the twenty thousand pounds, and received the false packet which you remember I brought to you, sir. As a matter of fact, Von Behrling, either by accident or design, and no man now will ever know which, left me with those papers which I was supposed to have bought in his possession, and also the money. Within five minutes he was murdered. Doubtless we shall know sometime by whom, but it was not by Stephen Laverick. Laverick's share in the whole thing was nothing but this that he found the pocket book, and that he made use of the notes in his business for twenty four hours to save himself from ruin. That was unjustifiable, of course. He has made atonement. The notes at this minute are in a safe deposit vault and will be returned intact to the fund from which they came. I want, also, to impress upon you, Sir James, the fact that Baron de Streuss offered one hundred thousand pounds for that letter."

Sir James nodded thoughtfully. He stooped down and

scrawled a few lines on half a sheet of note paper.

"You must take this to Lord Estcourt at once," he said, "and tell him the whole affair, omitting all specific information as to the nature of the papers. The thing must be arranged, of course."

Half a dozen reporters, who had somehow got hold of the fact that the Prime Minister and his colleague from the Foreign Office were going down to Windsor on a special mission, followed them, but even they remained altogether in the dark as to the events which were really transpiring. They knew nothing of the interview between the Czar and his August host an interview which in itself was a chapter in the history of these times. They knew nothing of the reason of their royal visitor's decision to prolong his visit instead of shortening it, or of his autograph letter to the President of the French Republic, which reached Paris even before the special mission from St. Petersburg had presented themselves. The one thing which they did know, and that alone was significant enough, was that the Czar's

Foreign Minister was cabled for that night to come to his master by special train from St. Petersburg. At the Austrian and German Embassies, forewarned by a report from Baron de Streuss, something like consternation reigned. The Russian Ambassador, heckled to death, took refuge at Windsor under pretence of a command from his royal master. The happiest man in London was Prince Rosmaran.

CHAPTER XXXVI. LAVERICK ACQUITTED

At mid day on the following morning Laverick stepped down from the dock at Bow Street and, as the evening papers put it, "in company with his friends left the court." The proceedings altogether took scarcely more than half an hour. Laverick's solicitor first put Shepherd in the box, who gave his account of Morrison's visit to the restaurant, spoke of his hurried exit, and identified the knife which he had seen him snatch up. Cross examined as

to why he had kept silent, he explained that Mr. Morrison had been a good customer and he saw no reason why he should give unsolicited evidence which would cost a man his life. Directly, however, another man had been accused, the matter appeared to him to be altogether different. He had come forward the moment he had heard of Laverick's ARREST, to offer his evidence.

While the opinion of the court was still undecided, Laverick's solicitor called Miss Zoe Leneveu. A little murmur of interest ran though the court. Laverick himself started. Zoe stepped into the witness box, looking exceedingly pale, and with a bandage over the upper part of her head. She admitted that she was the half sister of Arthur Morrison, although there was no blood relationship. She described his sudden visit to her rooms on the night of the murder, and his state of great alarm. She declared that he had confessed to her on the previous afternoon that he had been guilty of the murder in question.

Her place in the witness box was taken by the

Honorable David Bellamy. He declared that the prisoner was an old friend of his, and that the twenty thousand pounds of which he had been recently possessed, had come from him for investment in Laverick's business. The circumstances, he admitted, were somewhat peculiar, and until negotiations had been concluded Mr. Laverick had doubtless felt uncertain how to make use of the money. But he assured the court that there was no person who had any claim to the sum of money in question save himself, and that he was perfectly aware of the use to which Laverick had put it.

Laverick was discharged within a very few minutes, and a warrant was issued for the apprehension of Morrison. Laverick found Bellamy waiting for him, and was hurried into his motor.

"Well, you see," the latter exclaimed, "we kept our word! That dear plucky little friend of yours turned the scale, but in any case I think that there would not have been much trouble about the matter. The magistrate had received

a communication direct from the Home Secretary concerning your case."

"I am very grateful indeed," Laverick declared. "I tell you I think I am very lucky. I wish I knew what had become of Miss Leneveu. The usher told me she left the court before we came out."

"I asked her to go straight back to her rooms," Bellamy said. "You must excuse me for interfering, Laverick, but I found her almost in a state of collapse last night in Jermyn Street. I was having Morrison watched, and my man reported to me that he had left his rooms in a state of great excitement, and that a young lady was there who appeared to be seriously injured."

"D d scamp!" Laverick muttered.

"I did everything I could," Bellamy continued. "I fetched her at once and sent her back to her house with a hospital nurse and some one to look after her. The wound wasn't serious, but the fellow must have been a brute indeed to have lifted his hand against such a child. I wonder

whether he'll get away."

"I should doubt it," Laverick remarked. "He hasn't the nerve. He'll probably get drunk and blow his brains out. He's a broken spirited cur, after all."

"You'll have some lunch?" Bellamy asked.

Laverick shook his head.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to go on and see Miss Leneveu."

"Put me down at the club, then, and take my car on, if you will."

Laverick walked up and down the pavement outside Zoe's little house for nearly half an hour. He had found the door closed and locked, and a neighbor had informed him that Miss Leneveu had gone out in a cab with the nurse, some time ago, and had not returned. Laverick sent Bellamy's car back and waited. Presently a four wheel cab came round the corner and stopped in front of her house. Laverick opened the door and helped Zoe out. She was as white as death, and the nurse who was with her was

looking anxious.

"You are safe, then?" she murmured, holding out her hands.

"Quite," he answered. "You dear little girl!"

Zoe had fainted, however, and Laverick hurried out for the doctor. Curiously enough, it was the same man who only a week or so ago had come to see Arthur Morrison.

"She has had a bad scalp wound," he declared, "and her nervous system is very much run down. There is nothing serious. She seems to have just escaped concussion. The nurse had better stay with her for another day, at any rate."

"You are sure that it isn't serious?" Laverick asked eagerly.

"Not in the least," the doctor answered dryly. "I see worse wounds every day of my life. I'll come again to morrow, if you like, but it really isn't necessary with the nurse on the spot."

His natural pessimism was for a moment lightened by

the fee which Laverick pressed upon him, and he departed with a few more encouraging words. Laverick stayed and talked for a short time with the nurse.

"She has gone off to sleep now, sir," the latter announced. "There isn't anything to worry about. She seems as though she had been having a hard time, though. There was scarcely a thing in the house but half a packet of tea and these."

She held up a packet of pawn tickets.

"I found these in a drawer when I came," she said. "I had to look round, because there was no money and nothing whatever in the house."

Laverick was suddenly conscious of an absurd mistiness before his eyes.

"Poor little woman!" he murmured. "I think she'd sooner have starved than ask for help."

The nurse smiled.

"I thought at first that she was rather a vain young lady," she remarked. "An empty larder and a pile of pawn

tickets, and a new hat with a receipted bill for thirty shillings," she added, pointing to the sofa.

Laverick placed some notes in her hands.

"Please keep these," he begged, "and see that she has everything she wants. I shall be here again later in the day. There is not the slightest need for all this. She will be quite well off for the rest of her life. Will you try and engage some one for a day or two to come in until she is able to be moved?"

"I'll look after her," the nurse promised.

Laverick went reluctantly away. The events of the last few days were becoming more and more like a dream to him. He went to his club almost from habit. Presently the excitement which all London seemed to be sharing drove his own personal feelings a little into the background. The air was full of rumors. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary were spoken of as one speaks of heroes. Nothing was definitely known, but there was a splendid feeling of confidence that for once in her history England

was preparing to justify her existence as a great Power.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE PLOT THAT FAILED

The progress of the Czar from Buckingham Palace to the Mansion House, where he had, after all, consented to lunch with the Lord Mayor, witnessed a popular outburst of enthusiasm absolutely inexplicable to the general public. It was known that affairs in Central Europe were in a dangerously precarious state, and it was felt that the Czar's visit here, and the urgent summons which had brought from St. Petersburg his Foreign Minister, were indications that the long wished for entente between Russia and this country was now actually at hand. There was in the Press a curious reticence with regard to the development of the political situation. One felt everywhere that it was the calm before the storm that at any moment the great black headlines might tell of some startling stroke of diplomacy, some dangerous peril averted or defied. The circumstances

themselves of the Czar's visit had been a little peculiar. On his arrival it was announced that, for reasons of health, the original period of his stay, namely a week, was to be cut down to two days. No sooner had he arrived at Windsor, however, than a change was announced. The Czar had so far recovered as to be able even to extend the period at first fixed for his visit. Simultaneously with this, the German and Austrian Press were full of bitter and barely veiled articles, whose meaning was unmistakable. The Czar had thrown in his lot at first with Austria and Germany. That he was going deliberately to break away from that arrangement there seemed now scarcely any manner of doubt.

Bellamy and Louise, from a window in Fleet Street, watched him go by. Prince Rosmaran had been specially bidden to the luncheon, but he, too, had been with them earlier in the morning. Afterwards they turned their backs upon the city, and as soon as the crowd had thinned made their way to one of the west end restaurants.

"It seems too good to be true," declared Louise. Bellamy nodded.

"Nevertheless I am convinced that it is true. The humor of the whole thing is that it was our friends in Germany themselves who pressed the Czar not to altogether cancel his visit for fear of exciting suspicion. That, of course, was when there seemed to be no question of the news of the Vienna compact leaking out. They would never have dared to expose a man to such a trial as the Czar must have faced when the resume of the Vienna proceedings, in the Chancellor's own handwriting, was read to him at Windsor."

"You saw the telegram from Paris?" Louise interposed. "The special mission from St. Petersburg has been recalled."

Bellamy smiled.

"It all goes to prove what I say," he went on. "Any morning you may expect to hear that Austria and Germany have received an ultimatum."

"I wonder," she remarked, "what became of Streuss."

"He is hiding somewhere in London, without a doubt," Bellamy answered. "There's always plenty of work for spies."

"Don't use that word," she begged.

He made a little grimace.

"You are thinking of my own connection with the profession, are you not?" he asked. "Well, that counts for nothing now. I hope I may still serve my country for many years, but it must be in a different way."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I heard from my uncle's solicitors this morning," Bellamy continued, "that he is very feeble and cannot live more than a few months. When he dies, of course, I must take my place in the House of Lords. It is his wish that I should not leave England again now, so I suppose there is nothing left for me but to give it up. I have done my share of traveling and work, after all," he concluded, thoughtfully.

"Your share, indeed," she murmured. "Remember that but for that document which was read to the Czar at Windsor, Servia must have gone down, and England would have had to take a place among the second class Powers. There may be war now, it is true, but it will be a glorious war."

"Louise, very soon we shall know. Until then I will say nothing. But I do not want you altogether to forget that there has been something in my life dearer to me even than my career for these last few years."

Her blue eyes were suddenly soft. She looked across towards him wistfully.

"Dear," she whispered, "things will be altered with you now. I am not fit to be the wife of an English peer I am not noble."

He laughed.

"I am afraid," he assured her, "that I am democrat enough to think you one of the noblest women on earth. Why should I not? Your life itself has been a study in

devotion. The modern virtues seem almost to ignore patriotism, yet the love of one's country is a splendid thing. But don't you think, Louise, that we have done our work that it is time to think of ourselves?"

She gave him her hand.

"Let us see," she said. "Let us wait for a little time and see what comes."

That night another proof of the popular feeling, absolutely spontaneous, broke out in one of the least expected places. Louise was encored for her wonderful solo in a modern opera of bellicose trend, and instead of repeating it she came alone on the stage after a few minutes' absence, dressed in Servian national dress. For a short time the costume was not recognized. Then the music the national hymn of Servia, and the recollection of her parentage, brought the thing home to the audience. They did not even wait for her to finish. In the middle of her song the applause broke like a crash of thunder. From the packed gallery to the stalls they cheered her wildly,

madly. A dozen times she came before the curtain. It seemed impossible that they would ever let her go. Directly she turned to leave the stage, the uproar broke out again. The manager at last insisted upon it that she should speak a few words. She stood in the centre of the stage amid a silence as complete as the previous applause had been unanimous. Her voice reached easily to every place in the House.

"I thank you all very much," she said. "I am very happy indeed to be in London, because it is the capital city of the most generous country in the world the country that is always ready to protect and help her weaker neighbors. I am a Servian, and I love my country, and therefore," she added, with a little break in her voice, "therefore I love you all."

It was nearly midnight before the audience was got rid of, and the streets of London had not been so impassable for years. Crowds made their way to the front of Buckingham Palace and on to the War Office, where men

were working late. Everything seemed to denote that the spirit of the country was roused: The papers next morning made immense capital of the incident, and for the following twenty four hours suspense throughout the country was almost at fever height. It was known that the Cabinet Council had been sitting for six hours. It was known, too, that without the least commotion, with scarcely any movements of ships that could be called directly threatening, the greatest naval force which the world had ever known was assembling off Dover. The stock markets were wildly excited. Laverick, back again in his office, found that his return to his accustomed haunts occasioned scarcely any comment. More startling events were shaping themselves. His own remarkable adventure remained, curiously enough, almost undiscussed.

He left the office shortly before his usual time, notwithstanding the rush of business, and drove at once to the little house in Theobald Square. Zoe was lying on the sofa, still white, but eager to declare that the pain had gone

and that she was no longer suffering.

"It is too absurd," she declared, smiling, "my having this nurse here. Really, there is nothing whatever the matter with me. I should have gone to the theatre, but you see it is no use."

She passed him the letter which she had been reading, and which contained her somewhat curt dismissal. He laughed as he tore it into pieces.

"Are you so sorry, Zoe? Is the stage so wonderful a place that you could not bear to think of leaving it?" She shook her head.

"It is not that," she whispered. "You know that it is not that."

He smiled as he took her confidently into his arms.

"There is a much more arduous life in front of you, dear," he said. "You have to come and look after me for the rest of your days. A bachelor who marries as late in life as I do, you know, is a trying sort of person."

She shrank away a little.

"You don’t mean it," she murmured.

"You know very well that I mean it," he answered, kissing her. "I think you knew from the very first that sooner or later you were doomed to become my wife."

She sighed faintly and half closed her eyes. For the moment she had forgotten everything. She was absolutely and completely happy.

Later on he made her dress and come out to dinner, and afterwards, as they sat talking, he laid an evening paper before her.

"Zoe," he declared, "the best thing that could has happened. You will not be foolish, dear, about it, I know. Remember the alternative and read that."

She glanced at the few lines which announced the finding of Arthur Morrison in a house in Bloomsbury Square. The police had apparently tracked him down, and he had shot himself at the final moment. The details of his last few hours were indescribable. Zoe shuddered, and her eyes filled with tears. She smiled bravely in his

face, however.

"It is terrible," she whispered simply, "but, after all, he was no relation of mine, and he tried to do you a frightful injury. When I think of that, I find it hard even to be sorry.

There was indeed almost a pitiless look in her face as she folded up the paper, as though she felt something of that common instinct of her sex which transforms a gentle woman so quickly into a hard, merciless creature when the being whom she loves is threatened.

Laverick smiled.

"Let us go out into the streets," he said, "and hear what all this excitement is about."

They bought a late edition, and there it was at last in black and white. An ultimatum had been presented at Berlin and Vienna. Certain treaty rights which had been broken with regard to Austria's action in the East were insisted upon by Great Britain. It was demanded that Austria should cease the mobilization of her troops upon the Servian frontier, and renounce all rights to a protectorate over that

country, whose independence Great Britain felt called upon, from that time forward, to guarantee. It was further announced that England, France, and Russia were acting in this matter in complete concert, and that the neutrality of Italy was assured. Further, it was known that the great English fleet had left for the North Sea with sealed orders.

Laverick took Zoe home early and called later at Bellamy's rooms. Bellamy greeted him heartily. He was on the point of going out, and the two men drove off together in the latter's car.

"See, my dear friend," Bellamy exclaimed, "what great things come from small means! The document which you preserved for us, and for which we had to fight so hard, has done all this."

"It is marvelous!" Laverick murmured.

"It is very simple," Bellamy declared. "That meeting in Vienna was meant to force our hands. It is all a question of the balance of strength. Germany and Austria together, with Russia friendly, even with Russia neutral, could have

defied Europe. Germany could have spread out her army westwards while Austria seized upon her prey. It was a splendid plot, and it was going very well until the Czar himself was suddenly confronted by our King and his Ministers with a revelation of the whole affair. At Windsor the thing seemed different to him. The French Government behaved splendidly, and the Czar behaved like a man. Germany and Austria are left plante la. If they fight, well, it will be no one sided affair. They have no fleet, or rather they will have none in a fortnight's time. They have no means of landing an army here. Austria, perhaps, can hold Russia, but with a French army in better shape than it has been for years, and the English landing as many men as they care to do, with ease, anywhere on the north coast of Germany, the entire scheme proved abortive. Come into the club and have a drink, Laverick. To day great things have happened to me."

"And to me," Laverick interposed.

"You can guess my news, perhaps," Bellamy said, as

they seated themselves in easy chairs. "Mademoiselle Idiale has promised to be my wife."

Laverick held out his hand.

"I congratulate you heartily!" he exclaimed. "I have been an engaged man myself for something like half an hour."

CHAPTER XXXVIII. A FAREWELL APPEARANCE

"One thing, at least, these recent adventures should teach whoever may be responsible for the government of this country," Bellamy remarked to his wife, as he laid down the morning paper. "For the first time in many years we have taken the aggressive against Powers of equal standing. We were always rather good at bullying smaller countries, but the bare idea of an ultimatum to Germany would have made our late Premier go lightheaded."

"And yet it succeeded," Louise reminded him.

"Absolutely," he affirmed. "To day's news makes peace a certainty. If your country knew everything, Louise, they'd give us a royal welcome next month."

"You really mean that we are to go there, then?" she asked.

"It isn't exactly one of my privileges," he declared, "to fix upon the spot where we shall take our belated honeymoon, but I haven't been in Belgrade for years, and I know you'd like to see your people."

"It will be more happiness than I ever dreamed of," she murmured. "Do you think we shall be safe in passing through Vienna?"

Bellamy laughed.

"Remember," he said, "that I am no longer David Bellamy, with a silver greyhound attached to my watch chain and an obnoxious reputation in foreign countries. I am Lord Denchester of Denchester, a harmless English peer traveling on his honeymoon. By the way, I hope you like

the title."

"I shall love it when I get used to it," she declared. "To be an English Countess is dazzling, but I do think that I ought not to go on singing at Covent Garden."

"To morrow will be your last night," he reminded her. "I have asked Laverick and the dear little girl he is going to marry to come with me. Afterwards we must all have supper together."

"How nice of you!" she exclaimed.

"I don't know about that," Bellamy said, smiling. "I really like Laverick. He is a decent fellow and a good sort. Incidentally, he was thundering useful to us, and pretty plucky about it. He interests me, too, in another way. He is a man who, face to face with a moral problem, acted exactly as I should have done myself!"

"You mean about the twenty thousand pounds?" she asked.

Bellamy assented.

"He was practically dishonest," he pointed out. "He

had no right to use that money and he ought to have taken the pocket book to the police station. If he had done so that is to say, if he had waited there for the police, if he had been seen to hold out that pocket book, to have discussed it with any one, it is ten to one that there would have been another tragedy that night. At any rate, the document would never have come to us."

She smiled.

"My moral judgment is warped," she asserted, "from the fact that Laverick's decision brought us the document."

He nodded.

"Perhaps so," he agreed, "and yet, there was the man face to face with ruin. The use of that money for a few hours did no one any harm, and saved him. I say that such a deed is always a matter of calculation, and in this case that he was justified."

"I wonder what he really thinks about it himself," she remarked.

"Perhaps I'll ask him."

But when the time came, and he sat in the box with Laverick and Zoe, he forgot everything else in the joy of watching the woman whom he had loved so long. She moved about the stage that night as though her feet indeed fell upon the air. She appeared to be singing always with restraint, yet with some new power in her voice, a quality which even in her simpler notes left the great audience thrilled. Already there was a rumor that it was her last appearance. Her marriage to Bellamy had been that day announced in the Morning Post. When, in the last act, she sang alone on the stage the famous love song, it seemed to them all that although her voice trembled more than once, it was a new thing to which they listened. Zoe found herself clasping Laverick's hand in tremulous excitement. Bellamy sat like a statue, a little back in the box, his clean cut face thrown into powerful relief by the shadows beyond. Yet, as he listened, his eyes, too, were marvelously soft. The song grew and grew till, with the last notes, the whole story of an exquisite and expectant passion seemed trembling in

her voice. The last note came from her lips almost as though unwillingly, and was prolonged for an extraordinary period. When it died away, its passing seemed something almost unrealizable. It quivered away into a silence which lasted for many seconds before the gathering roar of applause swept the house. And in those last few seconds she had turned and faced Bellamy. Their eyes met, and the light which flashed from his seemed answered by the quivering of her throat. It was her good bye. She was singing a new love song, singing her way into the life of the man whom she loved, singing her way into love itself. Once more the great house, packed to the ceiling, was worked up to a state of frenzied excitement. Bellamy was recognized, and the significance of her song sent a wave of sentiment through the house whose only possible form of expression took to itself shape in the frantic greetings which called her to the front again and again. But the three in the box were silent. Bellamy stood back in the shadows. Laverick and Zoe seemed suddenly to become immersed

in themselves. Bellamy threw open the door of the box and pointed outside.

"At Luigi’s in half an hour," said he softly. "You will excuse me for a few minutes? I am going to Louise."

・End・