Havoc

（Volume I）

by E. Phillips Oppenheim

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. CROWNED HEADS MEET

Bellamy, King's Spy, and Dorward, journalist, known to fame in every English speaking country, stood before the double window of their spacious sitting room, looking down upon the thoroughfare beneath. Both men were laboring under a bitter sense of failure. Bellamy's face was dark with forebodings; Dorward was irritated and nervous. Failure was a new thing to him a thing which those behind the great journals which he represented understood less, even, than he. Bellamy loved his country, and fear was gnawing at his heart.

Below, the crowds which had been waiting patiently for many hours broke into a tumult of welcoming voices. Down their thickly packed lines the volume of sound arose and grew, a faint murmur at first, swelling and growing to a thunderous roar. Myriads of hats were suddenly torn from the heads of the excited multitude, handkerchiefs waved

from every window. It was a wonderful greeting, this.

"The Czar on his way to the railway station," Bellamy remarked.

The broad avenue was suddenly thronged with a mass of soldiery guardsmen of the most famous of Austrian regiments, brilliant in their white uniforms, their flashing helmets. The small brougham with its great black horses was almost hidden within a ring of naked steel. Dorward, an American to the backbone and a bitter democrat, thrust out his under lip.

"The Anointed of the Lord!" he muttered.

Far away from some other quarter came the same roar of voices, muffled yet insistent, charged with that faint, exciting timbre which seems always to live in the cry of the multitude.

"The Emperor," declared Bellamy. "He goes to the West station."

The commotion had passed. The crowds in the street below were on the move, melting away now with a muffled

trampling of feet and a murmur of voices. The two men turned from their window back into the room. Dorward commenced to roll a cigarette with yellow stained, nervous fingers, while Bellamy threw himself into an easy chair with a gesture of depression.

"So it is over, this long talked of meeting," he said, half to himself, half to Dorward. "It is over, and Europe is left to wonder."

"They were together for scarcely more than an hour," Dorward murmured.

"Long enough," Bellamy answered. "That little room in the Palace, my friend, may yet become famous."

"If you and I could buy its secrets," Dorward remarked, finally shaping a cigarette and lighting it, "we should be big bidders, I think. I'd give fifty thousand dollars myself to be able to cable even a hundred words of their conversation."

"For the truth," Bellamy said, "the whole truth, there could be no price sufficient. We made our effort in different directions, both of us. With infinite pains I planted I may

tell you this now that the thing is over seven spies in the Palace. They have been of as much use as rabbits. I don't believe that a single one of them got any further than the kitchens."

Dorward nodded gloomily.

"I guess they weren't taking any chances up there," he remarked. "There wasn't a secretary in the room. Carstairs was nearly thrown out, and he had a permit to enter the Palace. The great staircase was held with soldiers, and Dick swore that there were Maxims in the corridors."

Bellamy sighed.

"We shall hear the roar of bigger guns before we are many months older, Dorward," he declared.

The journalist glanced at his friend keenly. "You believe that?"

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you suppose that this meeting is for nothing?" he asked. "When Austria, Germany and Russia stand whispering in a corner, can't you believe it is across the

North Sea that they point? Things have been shaping that way for years, and the time is almost ripe."

"You English are too nervous to live, nowadays," Dorward declared impatiently. "I'd just like to know what they said about America."

Bellamy smiled with faint but delicate irony.

"Without a doubt, the Prince will tell you," he said. "He can scarcely do more to show his regard for your country. He is giving you a special interview you alone out of about two hundred journalists. Very likely he will give you an exact account of everything that transpired. first of all, he will assure you that this meeting has been brought about in the interests of peace. He will tell you that the welfare of your dear country is foremost in the thoughts of his master. He will assure you "

"Say, you're jealous, my friend," Dorward interrupted calmly. "I wonder what you'd give me for my ten minutes alone with the Chancellor, eh?"

"If he told me the truth," Bellamy asserted, "I'd give

my life for it. For the sort of stuff you're going to hear, I'd give nothing. Can't you realize that for yourself, Dorward? You know the man false as Hell but with the tongue of a serpent. He will grasp your hand; he will declare himself glad to speak through you to the great Anglo Saxon races to England and to his dear friends the Americans. He is only too pleased to have the opportunity of expressing himself candidly and openly. Peace is to be the watchword of the future. The white doves have hovered over the Palace. The rulers of the earth have met that the crash of arms may be stilled and that this terrible unrest which broods over Europe shall finally be broken up. They have pledged themselves hand in hand to work together for this object, Russia, broken and humiliated, but with an immense army still available, whose only chance of holding her place among the nations is another and a successful war; Austria, on fire for the seaboard Austria, to whom war would give the desire of her existence; Germany, with Bismarck's last but secret words written in letters of fire on

the walls of her palaces, in the hearts of her rulers, in the brain of her great Emperor. Colonies! Expansion! Empire! Whose colonies, I wonder? Whose empire? Will he tell you that, my friend Dorward?"

The journalist shrugged his shoulders and glanced at the clock.

"I guess he'll tell me what he chooses and I shall print it," he answered indifferently. "It's all part of the game, of course. I am not exactly chicken enough to expect the truth. All the same, my message will come from the lips of the Chancellor immediately after this wonderful meeting."

"He makes use of you," Bellamy declared, "to throw dust into our eyes and yours."

"Even so," Dorward admitted, "I don't care so long as I get the copy. It's good bye, I suppose?"

Bellamy nodded.

"I shall go on to Berlin, perhaps, to morrow," he said. "I can do no more good here. And you?"

"After I've sent my cable I'm off to Belgrade for a

week, at any rate," Dorward answered. "I hear the women are forming rifle clubs all through Servia."

Bellamy smiled thoughtfully.

"I know one who'll want a place among the leaders," he murmured.

"Mademoiselle Idiale, I suppose?"

Bellamy assented.

"It's a queer position hers, if you like," he said. "All Vienna raves about her. They throng the Opera House every night to hear her sing, and they pay her the biggest salary which has ever been known here. Three parts of it she sends to Belgrade to the Chief of the Committee for National Defence. The jewels that are sent her anonymously go to the same place, all to buy arms to fight these people who worship her. I tell you, Dorward," he added, rising to his feet and walking to the window, "the patriotism of these people is something we colder races scarcely understand. Perhaps it is because we have never dwelt under the shadow of a conqueror. If ever Austria is

given a free hand, it will be no mere war upon which she enters, it will be a carnage, an extermination!"

Dorward looked once more at the clock and rose slowly to his feet.

"Well," he said, "I mustn't keep His Excellency waiting. Good bye, and cheer up, Bellamy! Your old country isn't going to turn up her heels yet."

Out he went long, lank, uncouth, with yellow stained fingers and hatchet shaped, gray face a strange figure but yet a power. Bellamy remained. For a while he seemed doubtful how to pass the time. He stood in front of the window, watching the dispersal of the crowds and the marching by of a regiment of soldiers, whose movements he followed with critical interest, for he, too, had been in the service. He had still a military bearing, tall, and with complexion inclined to be dusky, a small black moustache, dark eyes, a silent mouth, a man of many reserves. Even his intimates knew little of him. Nevertheless, his was the reticence which befitted well his

profession.

After a time he sat down and wrote some letters. He had just finished when there came a sharp tap at the door. Before he could open his lips some one had entered. He heard the soft swirl of draperies and turned sharply round, then sprang to his feet and held out both his hands. There was expression in his face now as much as he ever suffered to appear there.

"Louise!" he exclaimed. "What good fortune!"

She held his fingers for a moment in a manner which betokened a more than common intimacy. Then she threw herself into an easy chair and raised her thick veil. Bellamy looked at her for a moment in sorrowful silence. There were violet lines underneath her beautiful eyes, her cheeks were destitute of any color. There was an abandonment of grief about her attitude which moved him. She sat as one broken spirited, in whom the power of resistance was dead.

"It is over, then," she said softly, "this meeting. The word has been spoken."

He came and stood by her side.

"As yet," he reminded her, "we do not know what that word may be."

She shook her head mournfully.

"Who can doubt?" she exclaimed. "For myself, I feel it in the air! I can see it in the faces of the people who throng the city! I can hear it in the peals of those awful bells! You know nothing? You have heard nothing?"

Bellamy shook his head.

"I did all that was humanly possible," he said, dropping his voice. "An Englishman in Vienna to day has very little opportunity. I filled the Palace with spies, but they hadn't a dog's chance. There wasn't even a secretary present. The Czar, the two Emperors and the Chancellor, not another soul was in the room."

"If only Von Behrling had been taken!" she exclaimed. "He was there in reserve, I know, as stenographer. I have but to lift my hand and it is enough. I would have had the truth from him, whatever it cost me."

Bellamy looked at her thoughtfully. It was not for nothing that the Press of every European nation had called her the most beautiful woman in the world. He frowned slightly at her last words, for he loved her.

"Von Behrling was not even allowed to cross the threshold," he said sharply.

She moved her head and looked up at him. She was leaning a little forward now, her chin resting upon her hands. Something about the lines of her long, supple body suggested to him the savage animal crouching for a spring. She was quiet, but her bosom was heaving, and he could guess at the passion within. With purpose he spoke to set it loose.

"You sing to night?" he asked.

"Before God, no!" she answered, the anger blazing out of her eyes, shaking in her voice. "I sing no more in this accursed city!"

"There will be a revolution," Bellamy remarked. "I see that the whole city is placarded with notices. It is to be a

gala night at the Opera. The royal party is to be present."

Her body seemed to quiver like a tree shaken by the wind.

"What do I care I I for their gala night! If I were like Samson, if I could pull down the pillars of their Opera House and bury them all in its ruins, I would do it!"

He took her hand and smoothed it in his.

"Dear Louise, it is useless, this. You do everything that can be done for your country."

Her eyes were streaming and her fingers sought his.

"My friend David," she said, "you do not understand. None of you English yet can understand what it is to crouch in the shadow of this black fear, to feel a tyrant's hand come creeping out, to know that your life blood and the life blood of all your people must be shed, and shed in vain. To rob a nation of their liberty, ah! it is worse, this, than murder, a worse crime than his who stains the soul of a poor innocent girl! It is a sin against nature herself!"

She was sobbing now, and she clutched his hands

passionately.

"Forgive me," she murmured, "I am overwrought. I have borne up against this thing so long. I can do no more good here. I come to tell you that I go away till the time comes. I go to your London. They want me to sing for them there. I shall do it."

"You will break your engagement?"

She laughed at him scornfully.

"I am Idiale," she declared. "I keep no engagement if I do not choose. I will sing no more to this people whom I hate. My friend David, I have suffered enough. Their applause I loathe their covetous eyes as they watch me move about the stage oh, I could strike them all dead! They come to me, these young Austrian noblemen, as though I were already one of a conquered race. I keep their diamonds but I destroy their messages. Their jewels go to my chorus girls or to arm my people. But no one of them has had a kind word from me save where there has been something to be gained. Even Von Behrling I have fooled

with promises. No Austrian shall ever touch my lips I have sworn it!"

Bellamy nodded.

"Yes," he assented, "they call you cold here in the capital! Even in the Palace "

She held out her hand.

"It is finished!" she declared. "I sing no more. I have sent word to the Opera House. I came here to be in hiding for a while. They will search for me everywhere. To night or to morrow I leave for England."

Bellamy stood thoughtfully silent.

"I am not sure that you are wise," he said. "You take it too much for granted that the end has come."

"And do you not yourself believe it?" she demanded. He hesitated.

"As yet there is no proof," he reminded her.

"Proof!"

She sat upright in her chair. Her hands thrust him from her, her bosom heaved, a spot of color flared in her cheeks.

"Proof!" she cried. "What do you suppose, then, that these wolves have plotted for? What else do you suppose could be Austria's share of the feast? Couldn't you hear our fate in the thunder of their voices when that miserable monarch rode back to his captivity? We are doomed betrayed! You remember the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, a blood stained page of history for all time. The world would tell you that we have outlived the age of such barbarous doings. It is not true. My friend David, it is not true. It is a more terrible thing, this which is coming. Body and soul we are to perish."

He came over to her side once more and laid his hand soothingly on hers. It was heart rending to witness the agony of the woman he loved.

"Dear Louise," he said, "after all, this is profitless. There may yet be compromises."

She suffered her hand to remain in his, but the bitterness did not pass out of her face or tone.

"Compromises!" she repeated. "Do you believe, then,

that we are like those ancient races who felt the presence of a conqueror because their hosts were scattered in battle, and who suffered themselves passively to be led into captivity? My country can be conquered in one way, and one way only, not until her sons, ay, and her daughters too, have perished, can these people rule. They will come to an empty and a stricken country a country red with blood, desolate, with blackened houses and empty cities. The horror of it! Think, my friend David, the horror of it!"

Bellamy threw his head back with a sudden gesture of impatience.

"You take too much for granted," he declared. "England, at any rate, is not yet a conquered race. And there is France Italy, too, if she is wise, will never suffer this thing from her ancient enemy."

"It is the might of the world which threatens," she murmured. "Your country may defend herself, but here she is powerless. Already it has been proved. Last year you declared yourself our friend you and even Russia. Of what

avail was it? Word came from Berlin and you were powerless."

Then tragedy broke into the room, tragedy in the shape of a man demented. For fifteen years Bellamy had known Arthur Dorward, but this man was surely a stranger! He was hatless, dishevelled, wild. A dull streak of color had mounted almost to his forehead, his eyes were on fire.

"Bellamy!" he cried. "Bellamy!"

Words failed him suddenly. He leaned against the table, breathless, panting heavily.

"For God’s sake, man," Bellamy began,

"Alone!" Dorward interrupted. "I must see you alone! I have news!"

Mademoiselle Idiale rose. She touched Bellamy on the shoulder.

"You will come to me, or telephone," she whispered. "So?"

Bellamy opened the door and she passed out, with a farewell pressure of his fingers. Then he closed it firmly

and came back.

CHAPTER II. ARTHUR DORWARD’S "SCOOP"

"What’s wrong, old man?" Bellamy asked quickly.

Dorward from a side table had seized the bottle of whiskey and a siphon, and was mixing himself a drink with trembling fingers. He tossed it off before he spoke a word. Then he turned around and faced his companion. "Bellamy," he ordered, "lock the door."

Bellamy obeyed. He had no doubt now but that Dorward had lost his head in the Chancellor’s presence had made some absurd attempt to gain the knowledge which they both craved, and had failed.

"Bellamy," Dorward exclaimed, speaking hoarsely and still a little out of breath, "I guess I’ve had the biggest slice of luck that was ever dealt out to a human being. If only I can get safe out of this city, I tell you I’ve got the greatest scoop that living man ever handled."

"You don’t mean that "

Dorward wiped his forehead and interrupted.

"It’s the most amazing thing that ever happened," he declared, "but I’ve got it here in my pocket, got it in black and white, in the Chancellor’s own handwriting."

"Got what?"

"Why, what you and I, an hour ago, would have given a million for," Dorward replied.

Bellamy’s expression was one of blank but wondering incredulity.

"You can’t mean this, Dorward!" he exclaimed. "You may have something just what the Chancellor wants you to print. You’re not supposing for an instant that you’ve got the whole truth?"

Dorward’s smile was the smile of certainty, his face that of a conqueror.

"Here in my pocket," he declared, striking his chest, "in the Chancellor’s own handwriting. I tell you I’ve got the original verbatim copy of everything that passed and was

resolved upon this afternoon between the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Austria and the Emperor of Germany. I've got it word for word as the Chancellor took it down. I've got their decision. I've got their several undertakings."

Bellamy for a moment was stricken dumb. He looked toward the door and back into his friend's face aglow with triumph. Then his power of speech returned.

"Do you mean to say that you stole it?"

Dorward struck the table with his fist.

"Not I! I tell you that the Chancellor gave it to me, gave it to me with his own hands, willingly, pressed it upon me. No, don't scoff!" he went on quickly. "Listen! This is a genuine thing. The Chancellor's mad. He was lying in a fit when I left the Palace. It will be in all the evening papers. You will hear the boys shouting it in the streets within a few minutes. Don't interrupt and I'll tell you the whole truth. You can believe me or not, as you like. It makes no odds. I arrived punctually and was shown up into the anteroom. Even from there I could hear loud voices in the inner

chamber and I knew that something was up. Presently a little fellow came out to me a dark bearded chap with gold rimmed glasses. He was very polite, introduced himself as the Chancellor's physician, regretted exceedingly that the Chancellor was unwell and could see no one, the excitement and hard work of the last few days had knocked him out. Well, I stood there arguing as pleasantly as I could about it, and then all of a sudden the door of the inner room was thrown open. The Chancellor himself stood on the threshold. There was no doubt about his being ill; his face was as pale as parchment, his eyes were simply wild, and his hair was all ruffled as though he had been standing upon his head. He began to talk to the physician in German. I didn't understand him until he began to swear, then it was wonderful! In the end he brushed them all away and, taking me by the arm, led me right into the inner room. For a long time he went on jabbering away half to himself, and I was wondering how on earth to bring the conversation round to the things I wanted to know about. Then, all of a sudden, he

turned to me and seemed to remember who I was and what I wanted. 'Ah!' he said, 'you are Dorward, the American journalist. I remember you now. Lock the door.' I obeyed him pretty quick, for I had noticed they were mighty uneasy outside, and I was afraid they'd be disturbing us every moment. 'Come and sit down,' he ordered. I did so at once. 'You're a sensible fellow,' he declared. 'To day every one is worrying me. They think that I am not well. It is foolish. I am quite well. Who would not be well on such a day as this?' I told him that I had never seen him looking better in my life, and he nodded and seemed pleased. 'You have come to hear the truth about the meeting of my master with the Czar and the Emperor of Germany?' he asked. 'That's so,' I told him. 'America 's more than a little interested in these things, and I want to know what to tell her.' Then he leaned across the table. 'My young friend,' he said, 'I like you. You are straightforward. You speak plainly and you do not worry me. It is good. You shall tell your country what it is that we have planned, what the

things are that are coming. Yours is a great and wise country. When they know the truth, they will remember that Europe is a long way off and that the things which happen there are really no concern of theirs.' 'You are right,' I assured him, 'dead right. Treat us openly, that's all we ask.' 'Shall I not do that, my young friend?' he answered. 'Now look, I give you this.' He fumbled through all his pockets and at last he drew out a long envelope, sealed at both ends with black sealing wax on which was printed a coat of arms with two tigers facing each other. He looked toward the door cautiously, and there was just that gleam in his eyes which madmen always have. 'Here it is,' he whispered, 'written with my own hand. This will tell you exactly what passed this afternoon. It will tell you our plans. It will tell you of the share which my master and the other two are taking. Button it up safely,' he said, 'and, whatever you do, do not let them know outside that you have got it. Between you and me,' he went on, leaning across the table, 'something seems to have happened to them all to day.

There's my old doctor there. He is worrying all the time, but he himself is not well. I can see it whenever he comes near me.' I nodded as though I understood and the Chancellor tapped his forehead and grinned. Then I got up as casually as I could, for I was terribly afraid that he wouldn't let me go. We shook hands, and I tell you his fingers were like pieces of burning coal. Just as I was moving, some one knocked at the door. Then he began to storm again, kicked his chair over, threw a paperweight at the window, and talked such nonsense that I couldn't follow him. I unlocked the door myself and found the doctor there. I contrived to look as frightened as possible. 'His Highness is not well enough to talk to me,' I whispered. 'You had better look after him.' I heard a shout behind and a heavy fall. Then I closed the door and slipped away as quietly as I could and here I am."

Bellamy drew a long breath.

"My God, but this is wonderful!" he muttered. "How long is it since you left the Palace?"

"About ten minutes or a quarter of an hour," Dorward answered.

"They'll find it out at once," declared the other. "They'll miss the paper. Perhaps he'll tell them himself that he has given it to you. Don't let us run any risks, Dorward. Tear it open. Let us know the truth, at any rate. If you have to part with the document, we can remember its contents. Out with it, man, quick!. They may be here at any moment."

Dorward drew a few steps back. Then he shook his head.

"I guess not," he said firmly.

Bellamy regarded his friend in blank and uncomprehending amazement.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "You're not going to keep it to yourself? You know what it means to me to England?"

"Your old country can look after herself pretty well," Dorward declared. "Anyhow, she'll have to take her chance.

I am not here as a philanthropist. I am an American journalist, and I'll part to nobody with the biggest thing that's ever come into any man's bands."

Bellamy, with a tremendous effort, maintained his self control.

"What are you going to do with it?" he asked quickly. "I tell you I'm off out of the country to night," Dorward declared. "I shall head for England. Pearce is there himself, and I tell you it will be just the greatest day of my life when I put this packet in his hand. We'll make New York hum, I can promise you, and Europe too."

Bellamy's manner was perfectly quiet too quiet to be altogether natural. His hand was straying towards his pocket.

"Dorward," he said, speaking rapidly, and keeping his back to the door, "you don't realize what you're up against. This sort of thing is new to you. You haven't a dog's chance of leaving Vienna alive with that in your pocket. If you trust yourself in the Orient Express to night, you'll never be

allowed to cross the frontier. By this time they know that the packet is missing; they know, too, that you are the only man who could have it, whether the Chancellor has told them the truth or not. Open it at once so that we get some good out of it. Then we'll go round to the Embassy. We can slip out by the back way, perhaps. Remember I have spent my life in the service, and I tell you that there's no other place in the city where your life is worth a snap of the fingers but at your Embassy or mine. Open the packet, man."

"I think not," Dorward answered firmly. "I am an American citizen. I have broken no laws and done no one any harm. If there's any slaughtering about, I guess they'll hesitate before they begin with Arthur Dorward. . . . Don't be a fool, man!"

He took a quick step backward, he was looking into the muzzle of Bellamy's revolver.

"Dorward," the latter exclaimed, "I can't help it! Yours is only a personal ambition I stand for my country. Share

the knowledge of that packet with me or I shall shoot."

"Then shoot and be d d to you!" Dorward declared fiercely. "This s my show, not yours. You and your country can go to "

He broke off without finishing his sentence. There was a thunderous knocking at the door. The two men looked at one another for a moment, speechless. Then Bellamy, with a smothered oath, replaced the revolver in his pocket.

"You've thrown away our chance," he said bitterly.

The knocking was repeated. When Bellamy with a shrug of the shoulders answered the summons, three men in plain clothes entered. They saluted Bellamy, but their eyes were traveling around the room.

"We are seeking Herr Dorward, the American journalist!" one exclaimed. "He was here but a moment ago."

Bellamy pointed to the inner door. He had had too much experience in such matters to attempt any prevarication. The three men crossed the room quickly and

Bellamy followed in the rear. He heard a cry of disappointment from the foremost as he opened the door. The inner room was empty!

CHAPTER III. "OURS IS A STRANGE COURTSHIP"

Louise looked up eagerly as he entered.

"There is news!" she exclaimed. "I can see it in your face."

"Yes," Bellamy answered, "there is news! That is why I have come. Where can we talk?"

She rose to her feet. Before them the open French windows led on to a smooth green lawn. She took his arm.

"Come outside with me," she said. "I am shut up here because I will not see the doctors whom they send, or any one from the Opera House. An envoy from the Palace has been and I have sent him away."

"You mean to keep your word, then?"

"Have I ever broken it? Never again will I sing in this City. It is so."

Bellamy looked around. The garden of the villa was enclosed by high gray stone walls. They were secure here, at least, from eavesdroppers. She rested her fingers lightly upon his arm, holding up the skirts of her loose gown with her other hand.

"I have spoken to you," he said, "of Dorward, the American journalist."

She nodded.

"Of course," she assented. "You told me that the Chancellor had promised him an interview for to day."

"Well, he went to the Palace and the Chancellor saw him.".

She looked at him with upraised eyebrows.

"The newspapers are full of lies as usual, then, I suppose. The latest telegrams say that the Chancellor is dangerously ill."

"It is quite true," Bellamy declared. "What I am going

to tell you is surprising, but I had it from Dorward himself. When he reached the Palace, the Chancellor was practically insane. His doctors were trying to persuade him to go to his room and lie down, but he heard Dorward's voice and insisted upon seeing him. The man was mad on the verge of a collapse and he handed over to Dorward his notes, and a verbatim report of all that passed at the Palace this morning."

She looked at him incredulously.

"My dear David!" she exclaimed.

"It is amazing," he admitted, "but it is the truth. I know it for a fact. The man was absolutely beside himself, he had no idea what he was doing."

"Where is it?" she asked quickly. "You have seen it?"

"Dorward would not give it up," he said bitterly. "While we argued in our sitting room at the hotel the police arrived. Dorward escaped through the bedroom and down the service stairs. He spoke of trying to catch the Orient Express to night, but I doubt if they will ever let him leave

the city."

"It is wonderful, this," she murmured softly. "What are you going to do?"

"Louise, you and I have few secrets from each other. I would have killed Dorward to obtain that sealed envelope, because I believe that the knowledge of its contents in London to day would save us from disaster. To know how far each is pledged, and from which direction the first blow is to come, would be our salvation."

"I cannot understand," she said, "why he should have refused to share his knowledge with you. He is an American it is almost the same thing as being an Englishman. And you are friends, I am sure that you have helped him often."

"It was a matter of vanity simply cursed vanity," Bellamy answered. "It would have been the greatest journalistic success of modern times for him to have printed that document, word for word, in his paper. He fights for his own hand alone."

"And you?" she whispered.

"He will have to reckon with me," Bellamy declared. "I know that he is going to try and leave Vienna to night, and if he does I shall be at his heels."

She nodded her head thoughtfully.

"I, too," she announced. "I come with you, my friend. I do no more good here, and they worry my life out all the time. I come to sing in London at Covent Garden. I have agreements there which only await my signature. We will go together; is it not so?"

"Very well," he answered, "only remember that my movements must depend very largely upon Dorward's. The train leaves at eight o'clock, station time. I have already a coupe reserved."

"I come with you," she murmured. "I am very weary of this city."

They walked on for a few paces in silence. Bellamy looked around the gardens, brilliant with flowering shrubs and rose trees, with here and there some delicate piece of

statuary half hidden amongst the wealth of foliage. The villa had once belonged to a royal favorite, and the grounds had been its chief glory. They reached a sheltered seat and sat down. A few yards away a tiny waterfall came tumbling over the rocks into a deep pool. They were hidden from the windows of the villa by the boughs of a drooping chestnut tree. Bellamy stooped and kissed her upon the lips.

"Ours is a strange courtship, Louise," he whispered softly.

She took his hand in hers and smoothed it. She had returned his kiss, but she drew a little further away from him.

"Ah! my dear friend," looking at him with sorrow in her eyes, "courtship is scarcely the word, is it? For you and me there is nothing to hope for, nothing beyond."

He leaned towards her.

"Never believe that," he begged. "These days are dark enough, Heaven knows, yet the work of every one has its

goal. Even our turn may come."

Something flickered for a moment in her face, something which seemed to make a different woman of her. Bellamy saw it, and hardened though he was he felt the slow stirring of his own pulses. He kissed her hand passionately and she shivered.

"We must not talk of these things," she said. "We must not think of them. At least our friendship has been wonderful. Now I must go in. I must tell my maid and arrange to steal away to night."

They stood up, and he held her in his arms for a moment. Though her lips met his freely enough, he was very conscious of the reserve with which she yielded herself to him, conscious of it and thankful, too. They walked up the path together, and as they went she plucked a red rose and thrust it through his buttonhole.

"If we had no dreams," she said softly, "life would not be possible. Perhaps some day even we may pluck roses together."

He raised her fingers to his lips. It was not often that they lapsed into sentiment. When she spoke again it was finished.

"You had better leave," she told him, "by the garden gate. There are the usual crowd in my anteroom, and it is well that you and I are not seen too much together."

"Till this evening," he whispered, as he turned away. "I shall be at the station early. If Dorward is taken, I shall still leave Vienna. If he goes, it may be an eventful journey."

CHAPTER IV. THE NIGHT TRAIN FROM VIENNA

Dorwood, whistling softly to himself, sat in a corner of his coupe rolling innumerable cigarettes. He was a man of unbounded courage and wonderful resource, but with a slightly exaggerated idea as to the sanctity of an American citizen. He had served his apprenticeship in his own

country, and his name had become a household word owing to his brilliant success as war correspondent in the Russo Japanese War. His experience of European countries, however, was limited. After the more obvious dangers with which he had grappled and which he had overcome during his adventurous career, he was disposed to be a little contemptuous of the subtler perils at which his friend Bellamy had plainly hinted. He had made his escape from the hotel without any very serious difficulty, and since that time, although he had taken no particular precautions, he had remained unmolested. From his own point of view, therefore, it was perhaps only reasonable that he should no longer have any misgiving as to his personal safety. ARREST as a thief was the worst which he had feared. Even that he seemed now to have evaded.

The coupe was exceedingly comfortable and, after all, he had had a somewhat exciting day. He lit a cigarette and stretched himself out with a murmur of immense satisfaction. He was close upon the great triumph of his life.

He was perfectly content to lie there and look out upon the flying landscape, upon which the shadows were now fast descending. He was safe, absolutely safe, he assured himself. Nevertheless, when the door of his coupe was opened, he started almost like a guilty man. The relief in his face as he recognized his visitor was obvious. It was Bellamy who entered and dropped into a seat by his side.

"Wasting your time, aren't you?" the latter remarked, pointing to the growing heap of cigarettes.

"Well, I guess not," Dorward answered. "I can smoke this lot before we reach London."

Bellamy smiled enigmatically.

"I don't think that you will," he said.

"Why not?"

"You are such a sanguine person," Bellamy sighed. "Personally, I do not think that there is the slightest chance of your reaching London at all."

Dorward laughed scornfully.

"And why not?" he asked.

Bellamy merely shrugged his shoulders. Dorward seemed to find the gesture irritating.

"You've got espionage on the brain, my dear friend," he declared dryly. "I suppose it's the result of your profession. I may not know so much about Europe as you do, but I am inclined to think that an American citizen traveling with his passport on a train like this is moderately safe, especially when he's not above a scrap by way of taking care of himself."

"You're a plucky fellow," remarked Bellamy.

"I don't see any pluck about it. In Vienna, I must admit, I shouldn't have been surprised if they'd tried to fake up some sort of charge against me, but anyhow they didn't. Guess they'd find it a pretty tall order trying to interfere with an American citizen."

Bellamy looked at his friend curiously.

"I suppose you're not bluffing, by any chance, Dorward?" he said. "You really believe what you say?"

"Why in thunder shouldn't I?" Dorward asked.

Bellamy sighed.

"My dear Dorward," he said, "it is amazing to me that a man of your experience should talk and behave like a baby. You've taken some notice of your fellow passengers, I suppose?"

"I've seen a few of them," Dorward answered carelessly. "What about them?"

"Nothing much," Bellamy declared, "except that there are, to my certain knowledge, three high officials of the Secret Police of Austria in the next coupe but one, and at least four or five of their subordinates somewhere on board the train."

Dorward withdrew his cigarette from his mouth and looked at his friend keenly.

"I guess you're trying to scare me, Bellamy," he remarked.

But Bellamy was suddenly grave. There had come into his face an utterly altered expression. His tone, when he spoke, was almost solemn.

"Dorward," he said, "upon my honor, I assure you that what I have told you is the truth. I cannot seem to make you realize the seriousness of your position. When you left the Palace with that paper in your pocket, you were, to all intents and purposes, a doomed man. Your passport and your American citizenship count for absolutely nothing. I have come in to warn you that if you have any last messages to leave, you had better give them to me now."

"This is a pretty good bluff you're putting up!" Dorward exclaimed contemptuously. "The long and short of it is, I suppose, that you want me to break the seal of this document and let you read it."

Bellamy shook his head.

"It is too late for that, Dorward," he said. "If the seal were broken, they'd very soon guess where I came in, and it wouldn't help the work I have in hand for me to be picked up with a bullet in my forehead on the railway track."

Dorward frowned uneasily.

"What are you here for, anyway, then?" he asked.

"Well, frankly, not to argue with you," Bellamy answered. "As a matter of fact, you are of no use to me any longer. I am sorry, old man. You can't say that I didn't give you good advice. I am bound to play for my own hand, though, in this matter, and if I get any benefit at all out of my journey, it will be after some regrettable accident has happened to you."

"Say, ring the bell for drinks and chuck this!" Dorward exclaimed. "I've had about enough of it. I am not denying anything you say, but if these fellows really are on board, they'll think twice before they meddle with me."

"On the contrary," Bellamy assured him, "they will not take the trouble to think at all. Their minds are perfectly made up as to what they are going to do. However, that's finished. I have nothing more to say.

Dorward gazed for a minute or two fixedly out of the window.

"Look here, Bellamy," he said, turning abruptly round, "supposing I change my mind, supposing I open this

precious document and let you read it over with me?"

Bellamy rose hastily to his feet.

"You must not think of it!" he exclaimed. "You would simply write my death warrant. Don't allude to that matter again. I have risked enough in coming in here to sit with you."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, don't stop any longer!" Dorward said irritably. "You get on my nerves with all this foolish talk. In an hour's time I am going to bolt my door and go to sleep. We'll breakfast together in the morning, if you like."

Bellamy said nothing. The steward had brought them the whiskies and sodas which Dorward had ordered. Bellamy raised his tumbler to his lips and set it down again.

"Forgive me," he said, "I do not think that I am thirsty."

Dorward drank his off at a gulp. Almost immediately he closed his eyes. Bellamy, with a little shrug of the

shoulders, left him alone. As he passed along to his own coupe, he met Louise in the corridor.

"You have seen Von Behrling?" he whispered. She nodded.

"He is in that coupe, number 7, alone," she said. "I invited him to come in with me but he seemed embarrassed. It is his companions who watch him all the time. He has promised to talk with me later."

In the middle of the night, Louise opened her eyes to find Bellamy bending over her.

"Louise," he whispered, "it is Von Behrling who will take possession of the packet. They have been discussing whether it will not be safer to go on to London instead of doubling back. See Von Behrling again. Do all you can to persuade him to come to London, all you can, Louise, remember."

"So!" she whispered. "I shall put on my dressing gown and sit in the corridor. It is hot here."

Bellamy glided out, closing the door softly behind him.

The train was rushing on now through the blackness of an unusually dark night. For some time he sat in his own compartment, listening. The voices whose muttered conversation he had overheard were silent now, but once he fancied that he heard shuffling footsteps and a little cry. In his heart he knew well that before morning Dorward would have disappeared. The man within him was hard to subdue. He longed to make his way to Dorward's side, to interfere in this terribly unequal struggle, yet he made no movement. Dorward was a man and a friend, but what was a life more or less? It was to a greater cause that he was pledged. Towards three o'clock he lay down on his bed and slept. . . .

The train attendant brought him his coffee soon after daylight. The man's hands were trembling.

"Where are we?" Bellamy asked sleepily.

"Near Munich, Monsieur," the man answered. "Monsieur noticed, perhaps, that we stopped for some time in the night?"

Bellamy shook his head.

"I sleep soundly," he said. "I heard nothing."

"There has been an accident," the man declared. "An American gentleman who got in at Vienna was drinking whiskey all night and became very drunk. In a tunnel he threw himself out upon the line."

Bellamy shuddered a little. He had been prepared, but none the less it was an awful thing, this.

"You are sure that he is dead?" he asked.

The man was very sure indeed.

"There is a doctor from Vienna upon the train, sir," he said. "He examined him at once, but death must have been instantaneous."

Bellamy drew a long breath and commenced to put on his clothes. The next move was for him.

CHAPTER V. "VON BEHRLING HAS THE PACKET"

Bellamy stole along the half lit corridors of the train until he came to the coup6 which had been reserved for Mademoiselle Idiale. Assured that he was not watched, he softly turned the handle of the door and entered. Louise was sitting up in her dressing gown, drinking her coffee. He held up his finger and she greeted him only with a nod.

"Forgive me, Louise," he whispered, "I dared not knock, and I was obliged to see you at once."

She smiled.

"It is of no consequence," she said. "One is always prepared here. The porter, the ticket man, and at the customs they all enter. Is anything wrong?"

"It has happened," he answered.

She shivered a little and her face became grave.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured.

"He simply sat still and asked for it," Bellamy

declared, still speaking in a cautious undertone. "He would not be warned. I could have saved him, if any one could, but he would not hear reason."

"He was what you call pig headed," she remarked.

"He has paid the penalty," Bellamy continued. "Now listen to me, Louise. I got into that small coupe next to Von Behrling's, and I feel sure, from what I overheard, that they will go on to London, all three of them."

"Who is there on the train?" she demanded.

"Baron Streuss, who is head of the Secret Police, Von Behrling and Adolf Kahn," Bellamy answered. "Then there are four or five Secret Service men of the rank and file, but they are all traveling separately. Von Behrling has the packet. The others form a sort of cordon around him."

"But why," she asked, "does he go on to London? Why not return to Vienna?"

"For one thing, " Bellamy replied, with a grim smile, "they are afraid of me. Then you must remember that this affair of Dorward will be talked about. They do not want to

seem in any way implicated. To return from any one of these stations down the line would create suspicion."

She nodded.

"Well?"

"I am going to leave the train at the next stop," he continued. "I find that I shall just catch the Northern Express to Berlin. From there I shall come on to London as quickly as I can. You know the address of my rooms?"

She nodded.

"15, Fitzroy Street."

"When I get there, let me have a line waiting to tell me where I can see you. While I am on the train you will find Von Behrling almost inaccessible. Directly I have gone it will be different. Play with him carefully. He should not be difficult. To tell you the truth, I am rather surprised that he has been trusted upon a mission like this. He was in disgrace with the Chancellor a short while ago, and I know that he was hurt at not being allowed to attend the conference. The others will watch him closely, but they

cannot overhear everything that passes between you two. Von Behrling is a poor man. You will know how to make him wish he were rich."

Very slowly her eyebrows rose up. She looked at him doubtfully.

"It is a slender chance, David," she remarked. "Von Behrling is a little wild, I know, and he pretends to be very much in love with me, but I do not think that he would sell his country. Then, too, see how he will be watched. I do not suppose that they will leave us alone for a moment."

Bellamy took her hands in his, gripping them with almost unnatural force.

"Louise," he declared earnestly, "you don't quite realize Von Behrling's special weakness and your extraordinary strength. You know that you are beautiful, I suppose, but you do not quite know what that means. I have heard men talk about you till one would think that they were children. You have something of that art or guile call it what you will which passes from you through a man's

blood to his brain, and carries him indeed to Heaven but carries him there mad. Louise, don't be angry with me for what I say. Remember that I know my sex. I know you, too, and I trust you, but you can turn Von Behrling from a sane, honorable man into what you will, without suffering even his lips to touch your fingers. Von Behrling has that packet in his possession. When I come to see you in London, I will bring you twenty thousand pounds in Bank of England notes. With that Von Behrling might fancy himself on his way to America with you."

She closed her eyes for a moment. Perhaps she wished to keep hidden from him the thoughts which chased one another through her brain. He wished to make use of her of her, the woman whom he loved. Then she remembered that it was for her country and his, and the anger passed.

"But I am afraid," she said softly, "that the moment they reach London this document will be taken to the Austrian Embassy."

"Before then," Bellamy declared, "Von Behrling must

not know whether he is in heaven or upon earth. It will not be opened in London. He can make up another packet to resemble precisely the one of which he robbed Dorward. Oh! it is a difficult game, I know, but it is worth playing. Remember, Louise, that we are not petty conspirators. It is your country's very existence that is threatened. It is for her sake as well as for England."

"I shall do my best," she murmured, looking into his face. "Oh, you may be sure that I shall do my best!"

Bellamy raised her fingers to his lips and stole away. The electric lamps had been turned out, but the morning was cloudy and the light dim. Back in his own berth, he put his things together, ready to leave at Munich. Then he rang for the porter.

"I am getting out at the next stop," he announced.

"Very good, Monsieur," the man answered.

Bellamy looked at him closely.

"You are a Frenchman?"

"It is so, Monsieur!"

"I may be wrong," Bellamy continued slowly, "but I believe that if I asked you a question and it concerned some Germans and Austrians you would tell me the truth."

The man’s gesture was inimitable. Englishmen to him were obviously the salt of the earth. Germans and Austrians why, they existed as the cattle in the fields nothing more. Bellamy gave him a sovereign.

"There were three Austrians who got in at Vienna," he said. "They are in numbers ten and eleven."

"But yes, Monsieur!" the man assented. "As yet I think they are fast asleep. Not one of them has rung for his coffee."

"Where are they booked for?"

"For London, Monsieur."

"You do not happen," Bellamy continued, "to have heard them say anything about leaving the train before then?"

"On the contrary, sir," the porter answered, "two of the gentlemen have been inquiring about the boat across to

Dover. They were very anxious to travel by a turbine."

Bellamy nodded.

"Thank you very much. You will be so discreet as to forget that I have asked you any questions concerning them. As for me, if one would know, I am on my way to Berlin."

The bell rang. The man looked outside and put his head once more in Bellamy's coupe.

"It is one of the gentleman who has rung," he declared. "If anything is said about leaving the train, I shall report it at once to Monsieur."

"You will do well," Bellamy answered.

The porter returned in a few moments.

"Two of the gentlemen, sir," he announced, "are undressed and in their pyjamas. They have ordered their breakfast to be served after we leave Munich."

Bellamy nodded.

"Further, sir," the man continued, coming a little closer, "one of them asked me whether the English gentleman meaning you was going through to London or not. I told

them that you were getting out at the next station and that I thought you were going to Berlin."

"Quite right," Bellamy said. "If they ask any more questions, let me know."

Mademoiselle Idiale, with the aid of one of the two maids who were traveling with her, was able to make a sufficiently effective toilette. At a few minutes before the time for luncheon, she walked down the corridor and recognized Von Behrling, who was sitting with his companions in one of the compartments.

"Ah, it is indeed you, then!" she exclaimed, smiling at him.

He rose to his feet and came out. Tall, with a fair moustache and blue eyes, he was often taken for an Englishman and was inclined to be proud of the fact.

"You have rested well, I trust, Mademoiselle?" he asked, bowing low over her fingers.

"Excellently," replied Louise. "Will you not take me in to luncheon? The car is full of men and I am not

comfortable alone. It is not pleasant, either, to eat with one’s maids."

"I am honored," he declared. "Will you permit me for one moment?"

He turned and spoke to his companions. Louise saw at once that they were protesting vigorously. She saw, too, that Von Behrling only became more obstinate and that he was very nearly angry. She moved a few steps on down the corridor, and stood looking out of the window. He joined her almost immediately.

"Come," he said, "they will be serving luncheon in five minutes. We will go and take a good place."

"Your friends, I am afraid," she remarked, "did not like your leaving them. They are not very gallant."

"To me it is indifferent," he answered, fiercely twirling his moustache. "Streuss there is an old fool. He has always some fancy in his brain."

Louise raised her eyebrows slightly.

"You are your own master, I suppose," she said. "The

Baron is used to command his policemen, and sometimes he forgets. There are many people who find him too autocratic."

"He means well," Von Behrling asserted. "It is his manner only which is against him."

They found a comfortable table, and she sat smiling at him across the white cloth.

"If this is not Sachers," she said, "it is at least more pleasant than lunching alone."

"I can assure you, Mademoiselle," he declared, with a vigorous twirl of his moustache, "that I find it so."

"Always gallant," she murmured. "Tell me, is it true of you the news which I heard just before I left Vienna? Have you really resigned your post with the Chancellor?"

"You heard that?" he asked slowly.

She hesitated for a moment.

"I heard something of the sort," she admitted. "To be quite candid with you, I think it was reported that the Chancellor was making a change on his own account."

"So that is what they say, is it? What do they know about it these gossipers?"

"You were not allowed at the conference yesterday," she remarked.

"No one was allowed there, so that goes for nothing."

"Ah! well," she said, looking meditatively out upon the landscape, "a year ago the thought of that conference would have driven me wild. I should not have been content until I had learned somehow or other what had transpired. Lately, I am afraid, my interest in my country seems to have grown a trifle cold. Perhaps because I have lived in Vienna I have learned to look at things from your point of view. Then, too, the world is a selfish place, and our own little careers are, after all, the most important part of it."

Von Behrling eyed her Curiously.

"It seems strange to hear you talk like this," he remarked.

She looked out of the window for a moment.

"Oh! I still love my country, in a way," she answered, "and I still hate all Austrians, in a way, but it is not as it used to be with me, I must admit. If we had two lives, I would give one to my country and keep one for myself. Since we have only one, I am afraid, after all, that I am human, and I want to taste some of its pleasures."

"Some of its pleasures," Von Behrling repeated, a little gloomily. "Ah, that is easy enough for you, Mademoiselle!"

"Not so easy as it may appear," she answered. "One needs many things to get the best out of life. One needs wealth and one needs love, and one needs them while one is young, while one can enjoy."

"It is true," Von Behrling admitted, "quite true."

"If one is not careful," she continued, "one lets the years slip by. They can never come again. If one does not live while one is young, there is no other chance."

Von Behrling assented with renewed gloom. He was twenty five years old, and his income barely paid for his

uniforms. Of late, this fact had materially interfered with his enjoyments.

"It is strange," he said, "that you should talk like this. You have the world at your feet, Mademoiselle. You have only to throw the handkerchief."

Her lips parted in a dazzling smile. The bluest eyes in the world grew softer as they looked into his. Von Behrling felt his cheeks burn.

"My friend, it is not so easy," she murmured. "Tell me," she continued, "why it is that you have so little self confidence. Is it because you are poor?"

"I am a beggar," bitterly.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Well," she said, glancing down the menu which the waiter had brought, "if you are poor and content to remain so, one must presume that you have compensations."

"But I have none!" he declared. "You should know that you, Mademoiselle. Life for me means one thing and one thing only!"

She looked at him, for a moment, and down upon the tablecloth. Von Behrling shook like a man in the throes of some great passion.

"We talk too intimately," she whispered, as the people began to file in to take their places. "After luncheon we will take our coffee in my coupe. Then, if you like, we will speak of these matters. I have a headache. Will you order me some champagne? It is a terrible thing, I know, to drink wine in the morning, but when one travels, what can one do? Here come your bodyguard. They look at me as though I had stolen you away. Remember we take our coffee together afterwards. I am bored with so much traveling, and I look to you to amuse me."

Von Behrling's journey was, after all, marked with sharp contrasts. The kindness of the woman whom he adored was sufficient in itself to have transported him into a seventh heaven. On the other hand, he had trouble with his friends. Streuss drew him on one side at Ostend, and talked to him plainly.

"Von Behrling," he said, "I speak to you on behalf of Kahn and myself. Wine and women and pleasure are good things. We two, we love them, perhaps, as you do, but there is a place and a time for them, and it is not now. Our mission is too serious."

"Well, well!" Von Behrling exclaimed impatiently, "what is all this? What do I do wrong? What have you to say against me? If I talk with Mademoiselle Idiale, it is because it is the natural thing for me to do. Would you have us three you and Kahn and myself travel arm in arm and speak never a word to our fellow passengers? Would you have us proclaim to all the world that we are on a secret mission, carrying a secret document, to obtain which we have already committed a crime? These are old fashioned methods, Streuss. It is better that we behave like ordinary mortals. You talk foolishly, Streuss!"

"It is you," the older man declared, "who play the fool, and we will not have it! Mademoiselle Idiale is a Servian and a patriot. She is the friend, too, of Bellamy, the

Englishman. She and he were together last night."

"Bellamy is not even on the train," Von Behrling protested. "He went north to Berlin. That itself is the proof that they know nothing. If he had had the merest suspicion, do you not think that he would have stayed with us?"

"Bellamy is very clever," Streuss answered. "There are too many of us to deal with, he knew that. Mademoiselle Idiale is clever, too. Remember that half the trouble in life has come about through false women.

"What is it that you want?" Von Behrling demanded.

"That you travel the rest of the way with us, and speak no more with Mademoiselle."

Von Behrling drew himself up. After all, it was he who was noble; Streuss was little more than a policeman.

"I refuse!" he exclaimed. "Let me remind you, Streuss, that I am in charge of this expedition. It was I who planned it. It was I" he dropped his voice and touched his chest "who struck the first blow for its success. I think that we need talk no more," he went on. "I welcome your

companionship. It makes for strength that we travel together. But for the rest, the enterprise has been mine, the success so far has been mine, and the termination of it shall be mine. Watch me, if you like. Stay with me and see that I am not robbed, if you fear that I am not able to take care of myself, but do not ask me to behave like an idiot."

Von Behrling stepped away quickly. The siren was already blowing from the steamer.

CHAPTER VI. VON BEHRLING IS TEMPTED

The night was dark but fine, and the crossing smooth. Louise, wrapped in furs, abandoned her private cabin directly they had left the harbor, and had a chair placed on the upper deck. Von Behrling found her there, but not before they were nearly half way across. She beckoned him to her side. Her eyes glowed at him through the darkness.

"You are not looking after me, my friend," she declared. "By myself I had to find this place."

Von Behrling was ruffled. He was also humbly apologetic.

"It is those idiots who are with me," he said. "All the time they worry."

She laughed and drew him down so that she could whisper in his ear.

"I know what it is," she said. "You have secrets which you are taking to London, and they are afraid of me because I am a Servian. Tell me, is it not so? Perhaps, even, they think that I am a spy."

Von Behrling hesitated. She drew him closer towards her.

"Sit down on the deck," she continued, "and lean against the rail. You are too big to talk to up there. So! Now you can come underneath my rug. Tell me, are they afraid of me, your friends?"

"Is it without reason?" he asked. "Would not any one be afraid of you if, indeed, they believed that you wished to know our secrets? I wonder if there is a man alive whom

you could not turn round your little finger."

She laughed at him softly.

"Ah, no!" she said. "Men are not like that, nowadays. They talk and they talk, but it is not much they would do for a woman’s sake."

"You believe that?" he asked, in a low tone.

"I do, indeed. One reads love stories no, I do not mean romances, but memoirs memoirs of the French and Austrian Courts memoirs, even, written by Englishmen. Men were different a generation ago. Honor was dear to them then, honor and position and wealth, and yet there were many, very many then who were willing to give all these things for the love of a woman.

"And do you think there are none now?" he whispered hoarsely.

"My friend," she answered, looking down at him, "I think that there are very few."

She heard his breath come fast between his teeth, and she realized his state of excitement.

"Mademoiselle Louise," he said, "my love for you has made me a laughing stock in the clubs of Vienna. I the poverty stricken, who have nothing but a noble name, nothing to offer you have dared to show others what I think, have dared to place you in my heart above all the women on earth."

"It is very nice of you," she murmured. "Why do you tell me this now?"

"Why, indeed?" he answered. "What have I to hope for?"

She looked along the deck. Not a dozen yards away, two cigar ends burned red through the gloom. She knew very well that those cigar ends belonged to Streuss and his friend. She laughed softly and once more she bent her head.

"How they watch you, those men!" she said. "Listen, my friend Rudolph. Supposing their fears were true, supposing I were really a spy, supposing I offered you wealth and with it whatever else you might claim from me,

for the secret which you carry to England!"

"How do you know that I am carrying a secret?" he asked hoarsely.

She laughed.

"My friend," she said, "with your two absurd companions shadowing you all the time and glowering at me, how could one possibly doubt it? The Baron Streuss is, I believe, the Chief of your Secret Service Department, is he not? To me he seems the most obvious policeman I ever saw dressed as a gentleman."

"You don't mean it!" he muttered. "You can't mean what you said just now!"

She was silent for a few moments. Some one passing struck a match, and she caught a glimpse of the white face of the man who sat by her side strained now and curiously intense.

"Supposing I did!"

"You must be mad!" he declared. "You must not talk to me like this, Mademoiselle. I have no secret. It is your

humor, I know, but it is dangerous."

"There is no danger," she murmured, "for we are alone. I say again, Rudolph, supposing this were true?"

His hand passed across his forehead. She fancied that he made a motion as though to rise to his feet, but she laid her hand upon his.

"Stay here," she whispered. "No, I do not wish to drive you away. Now you are here you shall listen to me."

"But you are not in earnest!" he faltered. "Don't tell me that you are in earnest. It is treason. I am Rudolph Von Behrling, Secretary to the Chancellor."

Again she leaned towards him so that he could see into her eyes.

"Rudolph," she said, "you are indeed Rudolph Von Behrling, you are indeed the Chancellor's secretary. What do you gain from it? A pittance! Many hours work a day and a pittance. What have you to look forward to? A little official life, a stupid official position. Rudolph, here am I, and there is the world. Do I not represent other things?"

"God knows you do!" he muttered.

"I, too, am weary of singing. I want a long rest a long rest and a better name than my own. Don't shrink away from me. It isn't so wonderful, after all. Bellamy, the Englishman, came to me a few hours ago. He was Dorward's friend. He knew well what Dorward carried. It was not his affair, he told me, and interposition from him was hopeless, but he knew that you and I were friends."

"You must stop!" Von Behrling declared. "You must stop! I must not listen to this!"

"He offered me twenty thousand pounds," she went on, "for the packet in your pocket. Think of that, my friend. It would be a start in life, would it not? I am an extravagant woman. Even if I would, I dared not think of a poor man. But twenty thousand pounds is sufficient. When I reach London, I am going to a flat which has been waiting for me for weeks 15, Dover Street. If you bring that packet to me instead of taking it to the Austrian Embassy, there will be twenty thousand pounds and "

Her fingers suddenly held his. She could almost hear his heart beating. Her eyes, by now accustomed to the gloom, could see the tumult which was passing within the man, reflected in his face. She whispered a warning under her breath. The two cigar ends had moved nearer. The forms of the two men were now distinct. One was leaning over the side of the ship by Von Behrling's side. The other stood a few feet away, gazing at the lights of Dover. Von Behrling staggered to his feet. He said something in an angry undertone to Streuss. Louise rose and shook out her furs.

"My friend," she said, turning to Von Behrling, "if your friends can spare you so long, will you fetch one of my maids? You will find them both in my cabin, number three. I wish to walk for a few moments before we arrive."

Von Behrling turned away like a man in a dream. Mademoiselle Idiale followed him slowly, and behind her came Von Behrling's companions.

The details of the great singer's journey had been most

carefully planned by an excited manager who had received the telegram announcing her journey to London. There was an engaged carriage at Dover, into which she was duly escorted by a representative of the Opera Syndicate, who had been sent down from London to receive her. Von Behrling seemed to be missing. She had seen nothing of him since he had descended to summon her maids. But just as the train was starting, she heard the sound of angry voices, and a moment later his white face was pressed through the open window of the carriage.

"Louise," he muttered, "I am on fire! I cannot talk to you! I fear that they suspect something. They have told me that if I travel with you they will force their way in. Even now, Streuss comes. Listen for your telephone to night or whenever I can. I must think I must think!"

He passed on, and Louise, leaning back in her seat, closed her eyes.

CHAPTER VII. "WE PLAY FOR GREAT STAKES "

Bellamy, travel stained and weary, arrived at his rooms at two o’clock on the following afternoon to find amongst a pile of correspondence a penciled message awaiting him in a handwriting he knew well. He tore open the envelope.

DAVID DEAR, I have just arrived and I am sending you these few lines at once. As to what progress I have made, I cannot say for certain, but there is a chance. You had better get the money ready and come to me here. If R. could only escape from Streuss and those who watch him all the time, I should be quite sure, but they are suspicious. What may happen I cannot tell. I do my best and I have hated it. Get the money ready and come to me. LOUISE.

Bellamy drew a little breath and tore the note into pieces. Then he rang for his servant. "A bath and some clean clothes quickly," he ordered. "While I am changing, ring up Downing Street and see if Sir James is there. If not,

find out exactly where he is. I must see him within half an hour. Afterwards, get me a taxicab."

The man obeyed with the swift efficiency of the thoroughly trained servant. In rather less than the time which he had stated, Bellamy had left his rooms. Before four o’clock he had arrived at the address which Louise had given him. A commissionaire telephoned his name to the first floor, and in a very few moments a pale faced French man servant, in sombre black livery, descended and bowed to Bellamy.

"Monsieur will be so good as to come this way," he directed.

Bellamy followed him into the lift, which stopped at the first floor. He was ushered into a small boudoir, already smothered with roses.

"Mademoiselle will be here immediately," the man announced. "She is engaged with a gentleman from the Opera, but she will leave him to receive Monsieur."

Bellamy nodded.

"Pray let Mademoiselle understand," he said, "that I am entirely at her service. My time is of no consequence."

The man bowed and withdrew. Louise came to him almost directly from an inner chamber. She was wearing a loose gown, but the fatigue of her journey seemed already to have passed away. Her eyes were bright, and a faint color glowed in her cheeks.

"David," she exclaimed, "thank Heaven that you are here!"

She took both his hands and held them for a moment. Then she walked to the door, made sure that it was securely fastened, and stood there listening for a moment.

"I suppose I am foolish," she said, coming back to him, "and yet I cannot help fancying that I am being watched on every side since we landed in England. I detest my new manager, and I don't trust any of the servants he has engaged for me. You got my note?"

"Yes," he answered, "I had your note and I am here."

The restraint of his manner was obvious. He was

standing a little away from her. She came suddenly up to him, her hands fell upon his shoulders, her face was upturned to his. Even then he made no motion to embrace her.

"David," she whispered softly, "what I am doing what I have done was at your suggestion. I do it for you, I do it for my country, I do it against every natural feeling I possess. I hate and loathe the lies I tell. Are you remembering that? Is it in your heart at this moment?"

He stooped and kissed her.

"Forgive me," he said, "it is I who am to blame, but I am only human. We play for great stakes, Louise, but sometimes one forgets."

"As I live," she murmured, "the kiss you gave me last is still upon my lips. What I have promised goes for nothing. What he has promised is this the papers to night."

"Unopened?"

"Unopened," she repeated, softly.

"But how is it to be done?" Bellamy asked. "He must

have arrived in London when you did last night. How is it they are not already at the Embassy?"

"The Ambassador was commanded to Cowes," she explained. "He cannot be back until late to night. No one else has a key to the treaty safe, and Von Behrling declined to give up the document to any one save the Ambassador himself."

Bellamy nodded.

"What about Streuss?"

"Streuss and the others are all furious," Louise said. "Yet, after all, Behrling has a certain measure of right on his side. His orders were to see with his own eyes this envelope deposited in the safe by the Ambassador himself."

"He returns to night!" Bellamy exclaimed quickly.

She nodded.

"Before he comes," she declared, "I think that the document will be in your hands."

"How is it to be done?"

"The report is written," she explained, "on five pages of foolscap. They are contained in a long envelope, scaled with the Chancellor's crest. Von Behrling, being one of the family, has the same crest. He has prepared another envelope, the same size and weight, and signed it with his seal. It is this which he will hand over to the Ambassador if he should return unexpectedly. The real one he has concealed."

"Is he here?" Bellamy inquired.

"Thank Heavens, no!" she answered. "My dear David, what are you thinking of? He is not here and he dare not come here. You are to go to your rooms," she added, glancing at the clock, "and between five and six o'clock this evening you will be rung up on the telephone. A rendezvous will be given you for later on to night. You must take the money there and receive the packet. Von Behrling will be disguised and prepared for flight."

Bellamy's eyes glowed.

"You believe this?" he exclaimed.

"I believe it," she replied. "He is going to do it. After he has seen you, he will make his way to Plymouth. I have promised don't look at me, David I have promised to join him there."

Bellamy was grave.

"There will be trouble," he said. "He will come back. He will want to shoot you. He may be slow witted in some things, but he is passionate."

"Am I a coward?" she asked, with a scornful laugh. "Have I ever shown fear of my life? No, David! It is not that of which I am afraid. It is the memory of the man's touch, it is the look which was in your face when you came into the room. These are the things I fear not death."

Bellamy drew her into his arms and kissed her.

"Forgive me," he begged. "At such times a man is a weak thing a weak and selfish thing. I am ashamed of myself. I should have known better than to have doubted you for a moment. I know you so well, Louise. I know what you are."

She smiled.

"Dear," she said, "you have made me happy. And now you must go away. Remember that these few minutes are only an interlude. Over here I am Mademoiselle Idiale who sings to night at Covent Garden. See my roses. There are two rooms full of reporters and photographers in the place now. The leader of the orchestra is in my bedroom, and two of the directors are drinking whiskies and sodas with this new manager of mine in the dining room. Between five and six o'clock this afternoon you will get the message. It is somewhere, I think, in the city that you will have to go. There will be no trouble about the money? Nothing but notes or gold will be of any use."

"I have it in my pocket," he answered. "I have it in notes, but he need never fear that they will be traced. The numbers of notes given for Secret Service purposes are expunged from every one's memory."

She drew a little sigh.

"It is a great sum," she said. "After all, he should be

grateful to me. If only he would be sensible and get away to the United States or to South America! He could live there like a prince, poor fellow. He would be far happier."

"I only hope that he will go," Bellamy agreed. "There is one thing to be remembered. If he does not go, if he stays for twenty four hours in this country, I do not believe that he will live to do you harm. The men who are with him are not the sort to stop short at trifles. Besides Streuss and Kahn, they have a regular army of spies at their bidding here. If they find out that he has tricked them, they will hunt him down, and before long."

Louise shivered.

"Oh, I hope," she exclaimed, "that he gets away! He is a traitor, of course, but he is a traitor to a hateful cause, and, after all, I think it is less for the money than for my sake that he does it. That sounds very conceited, I suppose," she added, with a faint smile. "Ah! well, you see, for five years so many have been trying to turn my head. No wonder if I begin to believe some of their stories. David, I must go. I

must not keep Dr. Henschell waiting any longer."

"To morrow," he said, "to morrow early I shall come. I am afraid I shall miss your first appearance in England, Louise."

The sound of a violin came floating out from the inner room.

"That is my signal," she declared smiling. "De. Henschell was almost beside himself that I came away. I come, Doctor," she called out. "David, good fortune!" she added, giving him her hands. "Now go, dear."

CHAPTER VIII. THE HAND OF MISFORTUNE

Between the two men, seated opposite each other in the large but somewhat barely furnished office, the radical differences, both in appearance and mannerisms, perhaps, also, in disposition, had never been more strongly evident. They were partners in business and face to face with ruin. Stephen Laverick, senior member of the firm, although an

air of steadfast gloom had settled upon his clean cut, powerful countenance, retained even in despair something of that dogged composure, temperamental and wholly British, which had served him well along the road to fortune. Arthur Morrison, the man who sat on the other side of the table, a Jew to his finger tips notwithstanding his altered name, sat like a broken thing, with tears in his terrified eyes, disordered hair, and parchment pale face. Words had flown from his lips in a continual stream. He floundered in his misery, sobbed about it like a child. The hand of misfortune had stripped him naked, and one man, at least, saw him as he really was.

"I can't stand it, Laverick, I couldn't face them all. It's too cruel too horrible! Eighteen thousand pounds gone in one week, forty thousand in a month! Forty thousand pounds! Oh, my God!"

He writhed in agony. The man on the other side of the table said nothing.

"If we could only have held on a little longer! 'Unions'

must turn! They will turn! Laverick, have you tried all your friends? Think! Have you tried them all? Twenty thousand pounds would see us through it. We should get our own money back I am sure of it. There's Rendell, Laverick. He'd do anything for you. You're always shooting or playing cricket with him. Have you asked him, Laverick? He'd never miss the money."

"You and I see things differently, Morrison," Laverick answered. "Nothing would induce me to borrow money from a friend."

"But at a time like this," Morrison pleaded passionately. "Every one does it sometimes. He'd be glad to help you. I know he would. Have you ever thought what it will be like, Laverick, to be hammered?"

"I have," Laverick admitted wearily. "God knows it seems as terrible a thing to me as it can to you! But if we go down, we must go down with clean hands. I've no faith in your infernal market, and not one penny will I borrow from a friend."

The Jew's face was almost piteous. He stretched himself across the table. There were genuine tears in his eyes.

"Laverick," he said, "old man, you're wrong. I know you think I've been led away. I've taken you out of our depth, but the only trouble has been that we haven't had enough capital, and no backing. Those who stand up will win. They will make money."

"Unfortunately," Laverick remarked, "we cannot stand up. Please understand that I will not discuss this matter with you in any way. I will not borrow money from Rendell or any friend. I have asked the bank and I have asked Pages, who will be our largest creditors. To help us would simply be a business proposition, so far as they are concerned. As you know, they have refused. If you see any hope in that direction, why don't you try some of your own friends? For every one man I know in the House, you have seemed to be bosom friends with at least twenty."

Morrison groaned.

"Those I know are not that sort of friend," he answered. "They will drink with you and spend a night out or a week end at Brighton, but they do not lend money. If they would, do you think I would mind asking? Why, I would go on my knees to any man who would lend us the money. I would even kiss his feet. I cannot bear it, Laverick! I cannot! I cannot!"

Laverick said nothing. Words were useless things, wasted upon such a creature. He eyed his partner with a contempt which he took no pains to conceal. This, then, was the smart young fellow recommended to him on all sides, a few years ago, as one of the shrewdest young men in his own particular department, a person bound to succeed, a money maker if ever there was one! Laverick thought of him as he appeared at the office day by day, glossy and immaculately dressed, with a flower in his buttonhole, boots that were a trifle too shiny, hat and coat, gloves and manner, all imitation but all very near the real thing. What a collapse!

"You're going to stay and see it through?" he whined across the table.

"Certainly," Laverick answered.

The young man buried his face in his hands.

"I can't! I can't!" he moaned. "I couldn't bear seeing all the fellows, hearing them whisper things oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! . . . Laverick, we've a few hundreds left. Give me something and let me out of it. You're a stronger sort of man than I am. You can face it, I can't! Give me enough to get abroad with, and if ever I do any good I'll remember it, I will indeed."

Laverick was silent for a moment. His companion watched his face eagerly. After all, why not let him go? He was no help, no comfort. The very sight of him was contemptible.

"I have paid no money into the bank for several days," Laverick said slowly. "When they refused to help us, it was, of course, obvious that they guessed how things were."

"Quite right, quite right!" the young man interrupted

feverishly. "They would have stuck to it against the overdraft. How much have we got in the safe?"

"This afternoon," Laverick continued, "I changed all our cheques. You can count the proceeds for yourself. There are, I think, eleven hundred pounds. You can take two hundred and fifty, and you can take them with you to any place you like."

The young man was already at the safe. The notes were between them, on the table. He counted quickly with the fingers of a born manipulator of money. When he had gathered up two hundred and fifty pounds, Laverick's hand fell upon his.

"No more," he ordered sternly.

"But, my dear fellow," Morrison protested, "half of eleven hundred is five hundred and fifty. Why should we not go halves? That is only fair, Laverick. It is little enough. We ought to have had a great deal more."

Laverick pushed him contemptuously away and locked up the remainder of the notes.

"I am letting you take two hundred and fifty pounds of this money," he said, "for various reasons. For one, I can bear this thing better alone. As for the rest of the money, it remains there for the accountant who liquidates our affairs. I do not propose to touch a penny of it."

The young man buttoned up his coat with an hysterical little laugh. Such ways were not his ways. They were not, indeed, within the limit of his understanding. But of his partner he had learned one thing, at least. The word of Stephen Laverick was the word of truth. He shambled toward the door. On the whole, he was lucky to have got the two hundred and fifty pounds.

"So long, Laverick," he said from the door. "I'm I'm sorry."

It was characteristic of him that he did not venture to offer his hand. Laverick nodded, not unkindly. After all, this young man was as he had been made.

"I wish you good luck, Morrison," he said. "Try South Africa."

CHAPTER IX. ROBBING THE DEAD

The roar of the day was long since over. The rattle of vehicles, the tinkling of hansom bells, the tooting of horns from motor cars and cabs, the ceaseless tramp of footsteps, all had died away. Outside, the streets were almost deserted. An occasional wayfarer passed along the flagged pavement with speedy footsteps. Here and there a few lights glimmered at the windows of some of the larger blocks of offices. The bustle of the day was finished. There is no place in London so strangely quiet as the narrow thoroughfares of the city proper when the hour approaches midnight.

Laverick, who since his partner's departure had been studying with infinite care his private ledger, closed it at last with a little snap and leaned back in his chair. After all, save that he had got rid of Morrison, it had been a wasted evening. Not even he, whose financial astuteness no man had ever questioned, could raise from those piles of figures

any other answer save the one inevitable one, the knowledge of which had been like a black nightmare stalking by his side for the last thirty six hours. One by one during the evening his clerks had left him, and it was a proof not only of his wonderful self control but also of the confidence which he invariably inspired, that not a single one of them had the slightest idea how things were. Not a soul knew that the firm of Laverick & Morrison was already practically derelict, that they had on the morrow twenty five thousand pounds to find, neither credit nor balance at their bankers, and eight hundred and fifty pounds in the safe.

Laverick, haggard from his long vigil, locked up his books at last, turned out the lights, and locking the doors behind him walked into the silent street. Instinctively he turned his steps westwards. This might well be the last night on which he would care to show himself in his accustomed haunts, the last night on which he could mix with his fellows freely, and without that terrible sense

of consciousness which follows upon disaster. Already there was little enough left of it. It was too late to change and go to his club. The places of amusement were already closed. To morrow night, both club and theatres would lie outside his world. He walked slowly, yet he had scarcely taken, in fact, a dozen steps when, with a purely mechanical impulse, he paused by a stone flagged entry to light a cigarette. It was a passage, almost a tunnel for a few yards, leading to an open space, on one side of which was an old churchyard strange survival in such a part and on the other the offices of several firms of stockbrokers, a Russian banker, an actuary. It was the barest of impulses which led him to glance up the entry before he blew out the match. Then he gave a quick start and became for a moment paralyzed. Within a few feet of him something was lying on the ground a dark mass, black and soft the body of a man, perhaps. Just above it, a pair of eyes gleamed at him through the, semi darkness.

Laverick at first had no thought of tragedy. It might be

a tramp or a drunkard, perhaps, a fight, or a man taken ill. Then something sinister about the light of those burning eyes set his heart beating faster. He struck another match with firm fingers, and bent forward. What he saw upon the ground made him feel a little sick. What he saw racing away down the passage prompted him to swift pursuit. Down the arched court into the open space he ran, himself an athlete, but mocked by the swiftness of the shadowlike form which he pursued. At the end was another street empty. He looked up and down, seeking in vain for any signs of life. There was nothing to tell him which way to turn. Opposite was a very labyrinth of courts and turnings. There was not even the sound of a footfall to guide him. Slowly he retraced his steps, lit another match, and leaned over the prostrate figure. Then he knew that it was a tragedy indeed upon which he had stumbled.

The man was dead, and he had met with his death by unusual means. These were the first two things of which Laverick assured himself. Without any doubt, a savage and

a terrible crime had been committed. A hornhandled knife of unusual length had been driven up to the hilt through the heart of the murdered man. There had been other blows, notably about the head. There was not much blood, but the position of the knife alone told its ugly story. Laverick, though his nerves were of the strongest, felt his head swim as he looked. He rose to his feet and walked to the opening of the passage, gasping. The street was no longer empty.

About thirty yards away, looking westwards, a man was standing in the middle of the road. The light from the lamp post escaped his face. Laverick could only see that he was slim, of medium height, dressed in dark clothes, with his hands in the pockets of his overcoat. To all appearance, he was watching the entry. Laverick took a step towards him the man as deliberately took a step further away. Laverick held up his hand.

"Hullo!" he called out, and beckoned.

The person addressed took no notice. Laverick

advanced another two or three steps the man retreated a similar distance. Laverick changed his tactics and made a sudden spring forward. The man hesitated no longer he turned and ran as though for his life. In a few minutes he was round the corner of the street and out of sight. Laverick returned slowly to the entry.

A distant clock struck midnight. A couple of clerks came along the pavement on the other side, their hands and arms full of letters. Laverick hesitated. He was never afterwards able to account for the impulse which prevented his calling out to them. Instead he lurked in the shadows and watched them go by. When he was sure that they had disappeared, he bent once more over the body of the murdered man. Already that huddled up heap was beginning to exercise a nameless and terrible fascination for him. His first feelings of horror were mingled now with an insatiable curiosity. What manner of man was he? He was tall and strongly built; fair of almost florid complexion. His clothes were very shabby and apparently ready made.

His moustache was upturned, and his hair was trimmed closer than is the custom amongst Englishmen. Laverick stooped lower and lower until he found himself almost on his knees. There was something projecting from the man's pocket as though it had been half snatched out a large portfolio of brown leather, almost the size of a satchel. Laverick drew it out, holding it in one hand whilst with firm fingers he struck another match. Then, for the first time, a little cry broke from his lips. Both sides of the pocket book were filled with bank notes. As his match flickered out, he caught a glimpse of the figures in the left hand corner 500 pounds! great rolls of them! Laverick rose gasping to his feet. It was a new Arabian Nights, this! a dream! a continuation of the nightmare which had threatened him all day! Or was it, perhaps, the madness coming the madness which he had begun only an hour or so ago to fear!

He walked into the gaslit streets and looked up and down. The mysterious stranger had vanished. There was

not a soul in sight. He clutched the rough stone wall with his hands, he kicked the pavement with his heels. There was no doubt about it everything around him was real. Most real of all was the fact that within a few feet of him lay a murdered man, and that in his hands was that brown leather pocket book with its miraculous contents. For the last time Laverick retraced his steps and bent over that huddled up shape. One by one he went through the other pockets. There was a packet of Russian cigarettes; an empty card case of chased silver, and obviously of foreign workmanship; a cigarette holder stained with much use, but of the finest amber, with rich gold mountings. There was nothing else upon the dead man, no means of identification of any sort. Laverick stood up, giddy, half terrified with the thoughts that went tearing through his brain. The pocket book began to burn his hand; he felt the perspiration breaking out anew upon his forehead. Yet he never hesitated. He walked like a man in a dream, but his footsteps were steady and short. Deliberately, and without

any sign of hurry, he made his way towards his offices. If a policeman had come in sight up or down the street, he had decided to call him and to acquaint him with what had happened. It was the one chance he held against himself, the gambler's method of decision, perhaps, unconsciously arrived at. As it turned out, there was still not a soul in sight. Laverick opened the outer door with his latchkey, let himself in and closed it. Then he groped his way through the clerk's office into his own room, switched on the electric light and once more sat down before his desk.

He drew his shaded writing lamp towards him and looked around with a nervousness wholly unfamiliar. Then he opened the pocket book, drew out the roll of bank notes and counted them. It was curious that he felt no surprise at their value. Bank notes for five hundred pounds are not exactly common, and yet he proceeded with his task without the slightest instinct of surprise. Then he leaned back in his chair. Twenty thousand pounds in Bank of England notes! There they lay on the table before him. A

man had died for their sake, another must go through all the days with the price of blood upon his head a murderer a haunted creature for the rest of his life. And there on the table were the spoils. Laverick tried to think the matter out dispassionately. He was a man of average moral fibre that is to say, he was honest in his dealings with other men because his father and his grandfather before him had been honest, and because the penalty for dishonesty was shameful. Here, however, he was face to face with an altogether unusual problem. These notes belonged, without a doubt, to the dead man. Save for his own interference, they would have been in the hands of his murderer. The use of them for a few days could do no one any harm. Such risk as there was he took himself. That it was a risk he knew and fully realized. Laverick had sat in his place unmoved when his partner had poured out his wail of fear and misery. Yet of the two men it was probable that Laverick himself had felt their position the more keenly. He was a man of some social standing, with a large circle of

friends; a sportsman, and with many interests outside the daily routine of his city life. To him failure meant more than the loss of money; it would rob him of everything in life worth having. The days to come had been emptied of all promise. He had held himself stubbornly because he was a man, because he had strength enough to refuse to let his mind dwell upon the indignities and humiliation to come. And here before him was possible salvation. There was a price to be paid, of course, a risk to be run in making use even for an hour of this money. Yet from the first he had known that he meant to do it.

Quite cool now, he opened his private safe, thrust the pocket book into one of the drawers, and locked it up. Then he lit a cigarette, finally shut up the office and walked down the street. As he passed the entry he turned his head slowly. Apparently no one had been there, nothing had been disturbed. Straining his eyes through the darkness, he could even see that dark shape still lying huddled up on the ground. Then he walked on. He had burned his boats now

and was prepared for all emergencies. At the corner he met a policeman, to whom he wished a cheery good night. He told himself that the thing which he had done was for the best. He owed it to himself. He owed it to those who had trusted him. After all, it was the chief part of his life his city career. It was here that his friends lived. It was here that his ambitions flourished. Disgrace here was eternal disgrace. His father and his grandfather before him had been men honored and respected in this same circle. Disgrace to him, such disgrace as that with which he had stood face to face a few hours ago, would have been, in a certain sense, a reflection upon their memories. The names upon the brass plates to right and to left of him were the names of men he knew, men with whom he desired to stand well, whose friendship or contempt made life worth living or the reverse. It was worth a great risk this effort of his to keep his place. His one mistake this association with Morrison had been such an unparalleled stroke of bad luck. He was rid of the fellow now. For the future there should be no more partners.

He had his life to live. It was not reasonable that he should allow himself to be dragged down into the mire by such a creature. He found an empty taxicab at the corner of Queen Victoria Street, and hailed it.

"Whitehall Court," he told the driver.

CHAPTER X. BELLAMY IS OUTWITTED

Bellamy was a man used to all hazards, whose supreme effort of life it was to meet success and disaster with unvarying mien. But this was disaster too appalling even for his self control. He felt his knees shake so that he caught at the edge of the table before which he was standing. There was no possible doubt about it, he had been tricked. Von Behrling, after all, Von Behrling, whom he had looked upon merely as a stupid, infatuated Austrian, ready to sell his country for the sake of a woman, had fooled him utterly!

The man who sat at the head of the table the only other

occupant of the room was in Court dress, with many orders upon his coat. He had just been attending a Court function, from which Bellamy’s message had summoned him. Before him on the table was an envelope, hastily torn open, and several sheets of blank paper. It was upon these that Bellamy’s eyes were fixed with an expression of mingled horror and amazement. The Cabinet Minister had already pushed them away with a little gesture of contempt.

"Bellamy," he said gravely, "it is not like you to make so serious an error.

"I hope not, sir," Bellamy answered. "I yes, I have been deceived."

The Minister glanced at the clock.

"What is to be done?" he asked.

Bellamy, with an effort, pulled himself together. He caught up the envelope, looked once more inside, held up the blank sheets of paper to the lamp and laid them down. Then with clenched fists he walked to the other side of the

room and returned. He was himself again.

"Sir James, I will not waste your time by saying that I am sorry. Only an hour ago I met Von Behrling in a little restaurant in the city, and gave him twenty thousand pounds for that envelope."

"You paid him the money," the Minister remarked slowly, "without opening the envelope."

Bellamy admitted it.

"In such transactions as these," he declared, "great risks are almost inevitable. I took what must seem to you now to be an absurd risk. To tell you the honest truth, sir, and I have had experience in these things, I thought it no risk at all when I handed over the money. Von Behrling was there in disguise. The men with whom he came to this country are furious with him. To all appearance, he seemed to have broken with them absolutely. Even now

"Well?"

"Even now," Bellamy said slowly, with his eyes fixed upon the wall of the room, and a dawning light growing

stronger every moment in his face, "even now I believe that Von Behrling made a mistake. An envelope such as this had been arranged for him to show the others or leave at the Austrian Embassy in case of emergency. He had it with him in his pocket book. He even told me so. God in Heaven, he gave me the wrong one!"

The Minister glanced once more at the clock.

"In that case," he said, "perhaps he would not go to the Embassy to night, especially if he was in disguise. You may still be able to find him and repair the error.

"I will try," answered Bellamy. "Thank Heaven!" he added, with a sudden gleam of satisfaction, "my watchers are still dogging his footsteps. I can find out before morning where he went when he left our rendezvous. There is another way, too. Mademoiselle this man Von Behrling believed that she was leaving the country with him. She was to have had a message within the next few hours.

The Minister nodded thoughtfully.

"Bellamy, I have been your friend and you have done

us good service often. The Secret Service estimates, as you know, are above supervision, but twenty thousand pounds is a great deal of money to have paid for this."

He touched the sheets of blank paper with his forefinger. Bellamy's teeth were clenched.

"The money shall be returned, sir.

"Do not misunderstand me," Sir James went on, speaking a little more kindly. "The money, after all, in comparison with what it was destined to purchase, is nothing. We might even count it a fair risk if it was lost."

"It shall not be lost," Bellamy promised. "If Von Behrling has played the traitor to us, then he will go back to his country. In that case, I will have the money from him without a doubt. If, on the other hand, he was honest to us and a traitor to his country, as I firmly believe, it may not yet be too late."

"Let us hope not," Sir James declared. "Bellamy," he continued, a note of agitation trembling in his tone, "I need not tell you, I am sure, how important this matter is. You

work like a mole in the dark, yet you have brains, you understand. Let me tell you how things are with us. A certain amount of confidence is due to you, if to any one. I may tell you that at the Cabinet Council to day a very serious tone prevailed. We do not understand in the least the attitude of several of the European Powers. It can be understood only under certain assumptions. A note of ours sent through the Ambassador to Vienna has remained unanswered for two days. The German Ambassador has left unexpectedly for Berlin on urgent business. We have just heard, too, that a secret mission from Russia left St. Petersburg last night for Paris. Side by side with all this," Sir James continued, "the Czar is trying to evade his promised visit here. The note we have received speaks of his health. Well, we know all about that. We know, I may tell you, that his health has never been better than at the present moment."

"It all means one thing and one thing only," Bellamy affirmed. "In Vienna and Berlin to day they look at an

Englishman and smile. Even the man in the street seems to know what is coming."

Sir James leaned a little back in his seat. His hands were tightly clenched, and there was a fierce light in his hollow eyes. Those who were intimate with him knew that he had aged many years during the last few weeks.

"The cruel part is," he said softly, "that it should have come in my administration, when for ten years I have prayed from the Opposition benches for the one thing which would have made us safe to day."

"An army," murmured Bellamy.

"The days are coming," Sir James continued, "when those who prated of militarism and the security of our island walls will see with their own eyes the ruin they have brought upon us. Secretly we are mobilizing all that we have to mobilize," he added, with a little sigh. "At the very best, however, our position is pitiful. Even if we are prepared to defend, I am afraid that we shall see things on the Continent in which we shall be driven to interfere, or

else suffer the greatest blow which our prestige has ever known. If we could only tell what was coming!" he wound up, looking once more at those empty sheets of paper. "It is this darkness which is so alarming!"

Bellamy turned toward the door.

"You have the telephone in your bedroom, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, ring me up at any time in the night or morning, if you have news."

Bellamy drove at once to Dover Street. It was half past one, but he had no fear of not being admitted. Louise's French maid answered the bell.

"Madame has not retired?" Bellamy inquired.

"But no, sir," the woman assured him, with a welcoming smile. "It is only a few minutes ago that she has returned."

Bellamy was ushered at once into her room. She was gorgeous in blue satin and pearls. Her other maid was taking off her jewels. She dismissed both the women

abruptly.

"I absolutely couldn't avoid a supper party," she said, holding out her hands. "You expected that, of course. You were not at the Opera House?"

He shook his head, and walking to the door tried the handle. It was securely closed. He came back slowly to her side. Her eyes were questioning him fiercely.

"Well?" she exclaimed. "Well?"

"Have you heard from Von Behrling?"

"No," she answered. "He knew that I must sing to night. I have been expecting him to telephone every moment since I got home. You have seen him?"

"I have seen him," Bellamy admitted. "Either he has deceived us both, or the most unfortunate mistake in the world has happened. Listen. I met him where he appointed. He was there, disguised, almost unrecognizable. He was nervous and desperate; he had the air of a man who has cut himself adrift from the world. I gave him the money, twenty thousand pounds in Bank of England notes, Louise,

and he gave me the papers, or what we thought were the papers. He told me that he was keeping a false duplicate upon him for a little time, in case he was seized, but that he was going to Liverpool Street station to wait, and would telephone you from the hotel there later on. You have not heard yet, then?"

She shook her head.

"There has been no message, but go on."

"He gave me the wrong document the wrong envelope," continued Bellamy. "When I took it to to Downing Street, it was full of blank paper."

The color slowly left her cheeks. She looked at him with horror in her face.

"Do you think that he meant to do it?" she exclaimed.

"We cannot tell," Bellamy answered. "My own impression is that he did not. We must find out at once what has become of him. He might even, if he fancies himself safe, destroy the envelope he has, believing it to be the duplicate. He is sure to telephone you. The moment you

hear you must let me know."

"You had better stay here," she declared. "There are plenty of rooms. You will be on the spot then."

Bellamy shook his head.

"The joke of it is that I, too, am being watched whereever I go. That fellow Streuss has spies everywhere. That is one reason why I believe that Von Behrling was serious.

"Oh, he was serious!" Louise repeated.

"You are sure?" Bellamy asked. "You have never had even any doubt about him?"

"Never," she answered firmly. "David, I had not meant to tell you this. You know that I saw him for a moment this morning. He was in deadly earnest. He gave me a ring a trifle but it had belonged to his mother. He would not have done this if he had been playing us false."

Bellamy sprang to his feet.

"You are right, Louise!" he exclaimed. "I shall go back to my rooms at once. Fortunately, I had a man shadowing

Von Behrling, and there may be a report for me. If anything comes here, you will telephone at once?"

"Of course," she assented.

"You do not think it possible," he asked slowly, "that he would attempt to see you here?"

Louise shuddered for a moment.

"I absolutely forbade it, so I am sure there is no chance of that."

"Very well, then," he decided, "we will wait. Dear," he added, in an altered tone, "how splendid you look!"

Her face suddenly softened.

"Ah, David!" she murmured, "to hear you speak naturally even for a moment it makes everything seem so different!"

He held out his arms and she came to him with a little sigh of satisfaction.

"Louise," he said, "some day the time may come when we shall be able to give up this life of anxiety and terrors. But it cannot be yet not for your country's sake or mine.

She kissed him fondly.

"So long as there is hope!" she whispered.

CHAPTER XI. VON BEHRLING'S FATE

It seemed to Louise that she had scarcely been in bed an hour when the more confidential of her maids Annette, the Frenchwoman woke her with a light touch of the arm. She sat up in bed sleepily.

"What is it, Annette?" she asked. "Surely it is not mid day yet? Why do you disturb me?"

"It is barely nine o'clock, Mademoiselle, but Monsieur Bellamy Mademoiselle told me that she wished to receive him whenever he came. He is in the boudoir now, and very impatient."

"Did he send any message?"

"Only that his business was of the most urgent," the maid replied.

Louise sighed, she was really very sleepy. Then, as the

thoughts began to crowd into her brain, she began also to remember. Some part of the excitement of a few hours ago returned.

"My bath, Annette, and a dressing gown," she ordered. "Tell Monsieur Bellamy that I hurry. I will be with him in twenty minutes."

To Bellamy, the twenty minutes were minutes of purgatory. She came at last, however, fresh and eager; her hair tied up with ribbon, she herself clad in a pink dressing gown and pink slippers.

"David!" she cried, "my dear David !"

Then she broke off.

"What is it?" she asked, in a different tone.

He showed her the headlines of the newspaper he was carrying.

"Tragedy!" he answered hoarsely. "Von Behrling was true, after all, at least, it seems so."

"What has happened?" she demanded.

Bellamy pointed once more to the newspaper.

"He was murdered last night, within fifty yards of the place of our rendezvous."

A little exclamation broke from Louise's lips. She sat down suddenly. The color called into her cheeks by the exercise of her bath was rapidly fading away.

"David," she murmured, "is this true?"

"It is indeed," Bellamy assured her. "Not only that, but there is no mention of his pocket book in the account of his murder. It must have been engineered by Streuss and the others, and they have got away with the pocket book and the money."

"What can we do?" she asked.

"There is nothing to be done," Bellamy declared calmly. "We are defeated. The thing is quite apparent. Von Behrling never succeeded, after all, in shaking off the espionage of the men who were watching him. They tracked him to our rendezvous, they waited about while I met him. Afterwards, he had to pass along a narrow passage. It was there that he was found murdered."

"But, David, I don't understand! Why did they wait until after he had seen you? How did they know that he had not parted with the paper in the restaurant? To all intents and purposes he ought to have done so."

"I cannot understand that myself," Bellamy admitted. "In fact, it is inexplicable."

She took up the newspaper and glanced at the report. Then, "You are sure, I suppose, that this does refer to Von Behrling? He is quite unidentified, you see."

"There is no doubt about it," Bellamy declared. "I have been to the Mortuary. It is certainly he. All our work has been in vain just as I thought, too, that we had made a splendid success of it."

She looked at him compassionately.

"It is hard lines, dear," she admitted. "You are tired, too. You look as though you had been up all night."

"Yes, I am tired," he answered, sinking into a chair. "I am worse than tired. This has been the grossest failure of my career, and I am afraid that it is the end of everything. I

have lost twenty thousand pounds of Secret Service money; I have lost the one chance which might have saved England. They will never trust me again."

"You did your best," she said, coming over and sitting on the arm of his chair. "You did your best, David."

She laid her hands upon his forehead, her cheek against his smooth and cold exquisitely refreshing it seemed to his jaded nerves.

"Ah, Louise!" he murmured, "life is getting a little too strenuous. Perhaps we have given too much of it up to others. What do you think?"

She shook her head.

"Dear, I have felt like that sometimes, yet what can we do? Could we be happy, you and I, in exile, if the things which we dread were coming to pass? Could I go away and hide while my countrymen were being butchered out of existence? And you you are not the sort of man to be content with an ignoble peace. No, it isn't possible. Our work may not be over yet "

There was a knock at the door, and Annette entered with many apologies.

"Mademoiselle," she explained, "a thousand pardons, and to Monsieur also, but there is a gentleman here who says that his business is of the most urgent importance, and that he must see you at once. I have done all that I can, but he will not go away. He knows that Monsieur Bellamy is here, too," she added, turning to him, "and he says his business has to do with Monsieur as well as Mademoiselle."

Bellamy almost snatched the card from the girl's fingers. He read out the name in blank amazement.

"Baron de Streuss!"

There was a moment's silence. Louise and he exchanged wondering glances.

"What can this mean?" she asked hoarsely.

"Heaven knows!" he answered. "Let us see him together. After all after all "

"You can show the gentleman in, Annette," her

mistress ordered.

"If he has the papers," Bellamy continued slowly, "why does he come to us? It is not like these men to be vindictive. Diplomacy to them is nothing a game of chess. I do not understand."

The door opened. Annette announced their visitor. Streuss bowed low to Louise he bowed, also, to Bellamy.

"I need not introduce myself," he said. "With Mr. Bellamy I have the honor to be well acquainted. Madame is known to all the world."

Louise nodded, somewhat coldly.

"We can dispense with an introduction, I think, Monsieur le Baron," she said. "At the same time, you will perhaps explain to what I owe this somewhat unexpected pleasure?"

"Mademoiselle, an explanation there must certainly be. I know that it is an impossible hour. I know, too, that to have forced my presence upon you in this manner may seem discourteous. Yet the urgency of the matter, I am

convinced, justifies me.

Louise motioned him to a chair, but he declined with a little bow of thanks.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "and you, Mr. Bellamy, we need not waste words. We have played a game of chess together. You, Mademoiselle, and Mr. Bellamy on the one side I and my friends upon the other. The honor of Rudolph Von Behrling was the pawn for which we fought. The victory remains with you."

Bellamy never moved a muscle. Louise, on the contrary, could not help a slight start.

"Under the circumstances," the Baron continued smoothly, "the struggle was uneven. I do myself the justice to remember that from the first I realized that we played a losing game. Mademoiselle," he added, "from the days of Cleopatra ay, and throughout those shadowy days which lie beyond the diplomats of the world have been powerless when matched against your sex. Rudolph Von Behrling was an honest fellow enough until he looked into your eyes.

Mademoiselle, you have gifts which might, perhaps, have driven from his senses a stronger man.

Louise smiled, but there was no suggestion of mirth in the curl of her lips. Her eyes all the time sought his questioningly. She did not understand.

"You flatter me, Baron," she murmured.

"No, I do not flatter you, I speak the truth. This plain talking is pleasant enough when the time comes that one may indulge in it. That time, I think, is now. Rudolph Von Behrling, against my advice, but because he was the Chancellor's nephew, was associated with me in a certain enterprise, the nature of which is no secret to you, Mademoiselle, or to Mr. Bellamy here. We followed a man who, by some strange chance, was in possession of a few sheets of foolscap, the contents of which were alike priceless to my country and priceless to yours. The subsequent history of those papers should have been automatic. The first step was fulfilled readily enough. The man disappeared the papers were ours. Von Behrling was

the man who secured them, and Von Behrling it was who retained them. If my advice had been followed, I admit frankly that we should have ignored all possible comment and returned with them at once to Vienna. The others thought differently. They ruled that we should come on to London and deposit the packet with our Ambassador here. In a weak moment I consented. It was your opportunity, Mademoiselle, an opportunity of which you have splendidly availed yourself."

This time Louise held herself with composure. Bellamy's brain was in a whirl but he remained silent.

"I come to you both," the Baron continued, "with my hands open. I come I make no secret of it I come to make terms. But first of all I must know whether I am in time. There is one question which I must ask. I address it, sir, to you," he added, turning to Bellamy. "Have you yet placed in the hands of your Government the papers which you obtained from Von Behrling?"

Bellamy shook his head.

The Baron drew a long breath of relief. Though he had maintained his savoir faire perfectly, the fingers which for a moment played with his tie, as though to rearrange it, were trembling.

"Well, then, I am in time. Will you see my hand?"

"Mademoiselle and I," answered Bellamy, "are at least ready to listen to anything you may have to say."

"You know quite well," the Baron continued, "what it is that I have come to say, yet I want you to remember this. I do not come to bribe you in any ordinary manner. The things which are to come will happen; they must happen, if not this year, next, if not next year, within half a decade of years. History is an absolute science. The future as well as the past can be read by those who know the signs. The thing which has been resolved upon is certain. The knowledge of the contents of those papers by your Government might delay the final catastrophe for a short while; it could do no more. In the long run, it would be better for your country, Mr. Bellamy, in every way, that the

end come soon. Therefore, I ask you to perform no traitorous deed. I ask you to do that which is simply reasonable for all of us, which is, indeed, for the advantage of all of us. restore those papers to me instead of handing them to your Government, and I will pay you for them the sum of one hundred thousand pounds!"

"One hundred thousand pounds " Bellamy repeated.

"One hundred thousand pounds!" murmured Louise.

There was a brief, intense pause. Louise waited, warned by the expression in Bellamy’s face. Silence, she felt, was safest, and it was Bellamy who spoke.

"Baron," said he, "your visit and your proposal are both a little amazing. Forgive me if I speak alone with Mademoiselle for a moment."

"Most certainly," the Baron agreed. "I go away and leave you out of the room, if you will."

"It is not necessary," Bellamy replied. "Louise!" The Baron withdrew to the window, and Bellamy led Louise into the furthest corner of the room.

"What can it mean?" he whispered. "What do you suppose has happened?"

"I cannot imagine. My brain is in a whirl."

"If they have not got the pocket book," Bellamy muttered, "it must have gone with Von Behrling to the Mortuary. If so, there is a chance. Louise, say nothing; leave this to me."

"As you will," she assented. "I have no wish to interfere. I only hope that he does not ask me any questions."

They came once more into the middle of the room, and the Baron turned to meet them.

"You must forgive Mademoiselle," said Bellamy, "if she is a little upset this morning. She knows, of course, as I know and you know, that Von Behrling was playing a desperate game, and that he carried his life in his hands. Yet his death has been a shock has been a shock, I may say, to both of us. From your point of view," Bellamy went on, "it was doubtless deserved, but "

"What, in God’s name, is this that you say?" the Baron interrupted. "I do not understand at all! You speak of Von Behrling’s death! What do you mean?"

Bellamy looked at him as one who listens to strange words.

"Baron," he said, "between us who know so much there is surely no need for you to play a part. Von Behrling knew that you were watching him. Your spies were shadowing him as they have done me. He knew that he was running terrible risks. He was not unprepared and he has paid. It is not for us "

"Now, in God’s name, tell me the truth!" Baron de Streuss interrupted once more. "What is it that you are saying about Von Behrling’s death?"

Bellamy drew a little breath between his teeth. He leaned forward with his hands resting upon the table.

"Do you mean to say that you do not know?"

"Upon my soul, no!" replied the Baron.

Bellamy threw open the newspaper before him.

"Von Behrling was murdered last night, ten minutes after our interview."

CHAPTER XII. BARON DE STREUSS' PROPOSAL

The Baron adjusted his eyeglass with shaking fingers. His face now was waxen white as he spread out the newspaper upon the table and read the paragraph word by word.

TERRIBLE CRIME IN THE CITY

Early this morning the body of a man was discovered in a narrow passageway leading from Crooked Friars to Royal Street, under circumstances which leave little doubt but that the man's death was owing to foul play. The deceased had apparently been stabbed, and had received several severe blows about the head. He was shabbily dressed but was well supplied with money, and he was

wearing a gold watch and chain when he was found.

LATER

There appears to be no further doubt but that the man found in the entry leading from Crooked Friars had been the victim of a particularly murderous assault. Neither his clothes nor his linen bore any mark by means of which he could be identified. The body has been removed to the nearest mortuary, and an inquest will shortly be held.

Streuss looked up from the newspaper and the reality of his surprise was apparent. He had all the appearance of a man shaken with emotion. While he looked at his two companions wonderingly, strange thoughts were forming in his mind.

"Von Behrling dead!" he muttered. "But who who could have done this?"

"Until this moment," Bellamy answered dryly, "it was not a matter concerning which we had any doubt. The only wonder to us was that it should have been done too late."

"You mean," Streuss said slowly, "that he was murdered after he had completed his bargain with you?"

"Naturally."

"I suppose," the Baron continued, "there is no question but that it was done afterwards? You smile," he exclaimed, "but what am I to think? Neither I nor my people had any hand in this deed. How about yours?"

Bellamy shook his head.

"We do not fight that way," he replied. "I had bought Von Behrling. He was of no further interest to me. I did not care whether he lived or died."

"There is something very strange about this," the Baron said. "If neither you nor I were responsible for his death, who was?"

"That I can't tell you. Perhaps later in the day we shall hear from the police. It is scarcely the sort of murder which would remain long undetected, especially as he was robbed of a large sum in bank notes."

"Supplied by His Majesty's Government, I presume?"

Streuss remarked.

"Precisely," Bellamy assented, "and paid to him by me."

"At any rate," Streuss said grimly, "we have now no more secrets from one another. I will ask you one last question. Where is that packet at the present moment?"

Bellamy raised his eyebrows.

"It is a question," he declared, "which you could scarcely expect me to answer."

"I will put it another way," Streuss continued. "Supposing you decide to accept my offer, how long will it be before the packet can be placed in my hands?"

"If we decide to accept," Bellamy answered, "there is no reason why there should be any delay at all."

Streuss was silent for several moments. His hands were thrust deep down into the pockets of his overcoat. With eyes fixed upon the tablecloth, he seemed to be thinking deeply, till presently he raised his head and looked steadily at Bellamy.

"You are sure that Von Behrling has not fooled you? You are sure that you have that identical packet?"

"I am absolutely certain that I have," Bellamy answered, without flinching.

"Then accept my price and have done with this matter," Streuss begged. "I will sign a draft for you here, and I will undertake to bring you the money, or honor it wherever you say, within twenty four hours."

"I cannot decide so quickly," said Bellamy, shaking his head. "Mademoiselle Idiale and I must talk together first. I am not sure," he added, "whether I might not find a higher bidder."

Streuss laughed mirthlessly.

"There is little fear of that," he said. "The papers are of no use except to us and to England. To England, I will admit that the foreknowledge of what is to come would be worth much, although the eventful result would be the same. It is for that reason that I am here, for that reason that I have made you this offer."

"Mademoiselle and I must discuss it," Bellamy declared. "It is not a matter to be decided upon off hand. Remember that it is not only the packet which you are offering to buy, but also my career and my honor."

"One hundred thousand pounds," Streuss said slowly. "From your own side you get nothing nothing but your beggarly salary and an occasional reprimand. One hundred thousand pounds is not immense wealth, but it is something."

"Your offer is a generous one," admitted Bellamy, "there is no doubt about that. On the other hand, I cannot decide without further consideration. It is a big thing for us, remember. I have worked very hard for the contents of that packet."

Once more Streuss felt an uneasy pang of incredulity. After all, was this Englishman playing with him? So he asked: "You are quite sure that you have it?"

"There is no means of convincing you of which I care to make use. You must be content with my word. I have the

packet. I paid Von Behrling for it and he gave it to me with his own hands."

"I must accept your word," Streuss declared. "I give you three days for reflection. Before I go, Mr. Bellamy, forgive me if I refer once more to this," touching the newspaper which still lay upon the table. "Remember that Rudolph Von Behrling moved about a marked man. Your spies and mine were most of the time upon his heels. Yet in the end some third person seems to have intervened. Are you quite sure that you know nothing of this?"

"Upon my honor," Bellamy replied, "I have not the slightest information concerning Von Behrling's death beyond what you can read there. It was as great a surprise to me as to you."

"It is incomprehensible," Streuss murmured.

"One can only conclude," Bellamy remarked thoughtfully, "that someone must have seen him with those notes. There were people moving about in the little restaurant where we met. The rustle of bank notes has cost

more than one man his life.

"For the present," Streuss said, "we must believe that it was so. Listen to me, both of you. You will be wiser if you do not delay. You are young people, and the world is before you. With money one can do everything. Without it, life is but a slavery. The world is full of beautiful dwelling places for those who have the means to choose. Remember, too, that not a soul will ever know of this transaction, if you should decide to accept my offer."

"We shall remember all those things," Bellamy assured him.

Streuss took up his hat and gloves.

"With your permission, then, Mademoiselle," he concluded, turning to Louise, "I go. I must try and understand for myself the meaning of this thing which has happened to Von Behrling."

"Do not forget," Bellamy said, "that if you discover anything, we are equally interested." . . .

They heard him go out. Bellamy purposely held the

door open until he saw the lift descend. Then he closed it firmly and came back into the room. Louise and he looked at each other, their faces full of anxious questioning.

"What does it mean?" Louise cried. "What can it mean?"

"Heaven alone knows!" Bellamy answered. "There is not a gleam of daylight. My people are absolutely innocent of any attempt upon Von Behrling. If Streuss tells the truth, and I believe he does, his people are in the same position. Who, then, in the name of all that is miraculous, can have murdered and robbed Von Behrling?"

"In London, too," Louise murmured. "It is not Vienna, this, or Belgrade."

"You are right," Bellamy agreed. "London is one of the most law abiding cities in Europe. Besides, the quarter where the murder occurred is entirely unfrequented by the criminal classes. It is simply a region of great banks and the offices of merchant princes.

"Is it possible that there is some one else who knew

about that document?" Louise asked, "some one else who has been watching Von Behrling?"

Bellamy shook his head.

"How can that be? Besides, if any one else were really on his track, they must have believed that he had parted with it to me. I shall go back now to Downing Street to ask for a letter to the Chief of Scotland Yard. If anything comes out, I must have plenty of warning."

"And I," she said, with an approving nod, "shall go back to bed again. These days are too strenuous for me. Won't you stay and take your coffee with me?"

Bellamy held her hand for a moment in his.

"Dear," he said, "I would stay, but you understand, don't you, what a maze this is into which we have wandered. Von Behrling has been murdered by some person who seems to have dropped from the skies. Whoever they may be, they have in their possession my twenty thousand pounds and the packet which should have been mine. I must trace them if I can, Louise. It is a

poor chance, but I must do my best. I myself am of the opinion that Von Behrling was murdered for the money, and for the money only. If so, that packet may be in the hands of people who have no idea what use to make of it. They may even destroy it. If Streuss returns and you are forced to see him, be careful. Remember, we have the document we are hesitating. So long as he believes that it is in our possession, he will not look elsewhere."

"I will be careful," Louise promised, with her arms around his neck. "And, dear, take care. When I think of poor Rudolph Von Behrling, I tremble, also, for you. It seems to me that your danger is no less than his."

"I do not go about with twenty thousand pounds in my pocket book," with a smile.

She shook her head.

"No, but Streuss believes that you have the document which he is pledged to recover. Be careful that they do not lead you into a trap. They are not above anything, these men. I heard once of a Bulgarian in Vienna who was

tortured tortured almost to death before he spoke. Then they thrust him into a lunatic asylum. Remember, dear, they have no consciences and no pity."

"We are in London," he reminded her.

"So was Von Behrling," she answered quickly, "not only in London but in a safe part of London. Yet he is dead."

"It was not their doing," he declared. "In their own country, they have the whole machinery of their wonderful police system at their backs, and no fear of the law in their hearts. Here they must needs go cautiously. I don't think you need be afraid," he added, smiling, as he opened the door. "I think I can promise you that if you will do me the honor we will sup together to night."

"You must fetch me from the Opera House," Louise insisted. "It is a bargain. I have suffered enough neglect at your hands. One thing, David, where do you go first from here?"

"To find the man," Bellamy answered gravely, "who

was watching Von Behrling when he left me. If any man in England knows anything of the murder, it must be he. He should be at my rooms by now."

CHAPTER XIII. STEPHEN LAVERICK'S CONSCIENCE

Stephen Laverick was a bachelor his friends called him an incorrigible one. He had a small but pleasantly situated suite of rooms in Whitehall Court, looking out upon the river. His habits were almost monotonous in their regularity, and the morning following his late night in the city was no exception to the general rule. At eight o'clock, the valet attached to the suite knocked at his door and informed him that his bath was ready. He awoke at once from a sound sleep, sat up in bed, and remembered the events of the preceding evening.

At first he was inclined to doubt that slowly stirring effort of memory. He was a man of unromantic

temperament, unimaginative, and by no means of an adventurous turn of mind. He sought naturally for the most reasonable explanation of this strange picture, which no effort of his will could dismiss from his memory. It was a dream, of course. But the dream did not fade. Slowly it spread itself out so that he could no longer doubt. He knew very well as he sat there on the edge of his bed that the thing was truth. He, Stephen Laverick, a man hitherto of upright character, with a reputation of which unconsciously he was proud, had robbed a dead man, had looked into the burning eyes of his murderer, had stolen away with twenty thousand pounds of someone else's money. Morally, at any rate, probably legally as well, he was a thief. A glimpse inside his safe on the part of an astute detective might very easily bring him under the grave suspicion of being a criminal of altogether deeper dye.

Stephen Laverick was, in his way, something of a philosopher. In the cold daylight, with the sound of the water running into his bath, this deed which he had done

seemed to him foolish and reprehensible. Nevertheless, he realized the absolute finality of his action. The thing was done; he must make the best of it. Behaving in every way like a sensible man, he did not send for the newspapers and search hysterically for their account of last night's tragedy, but took his bath as usual, dressed with more than ordinary care, and sat down to his breakfast before he even unfolded the paper. The item for which he searched occupied by no means so prominent a position as he had expected. It appeared under one of the leading headlines, but it consisted of only a few words. He read them with interest but without emotion. Afterwards he turned to the Stock Exchange quotations and made notes of a few prices in which he was interested.

He completed in leisurely fashion an excellent breakfast and followed his usual custom of walking along the Embankment as far as the Royal Hotel, where he called a taxicab and drove to his offices. A little crowd had gathered around the end of the passage which led

from Crooked Friars, and Laverick himself leaned forward and looked curiously at the spot where the body of the murdered man had lain. It seemed hard to him to reconstruct last night's scene in his mind now that the narrow street was filled with hurrying men and a stream of vehicles blocked every inch of the roadway. In his early morning mood the thing was impossible. In a moment or two he paid his driver and dismissed him.

He fancied that a certain relief was visible among his clerks when he opened the door at precisely his usual time and with a cheerful "Good morning!" made his way into the private office. He lit his customary cigarette and dealt rapidly with the correspondence which was brought in to him by his head clerk. Afterwards, as soon as he was alone, he opened the safe, thrust the contents of that inner drawer into his breast pocket, and took up once more his hat and gloves.

"I am going around to the bank," he told his clerk as he passed out. "I shall be back in half an hour perhaps

less."

"Very good, sir," the man answered. "Will Mr. Morrison be here this morning?"

Laverick hesitated.

"No, Mr. Morrison will not be here to day."

It was only a few steps to his bankers, and his request for an interview with the manager was immediately granted. The latter received him kindly but with a certain restraint. There are not many secrets in the city, and Morrison's big plunge on a particular mining share, notwithstanding its steady drop, had been freely commented upon.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Laverick?" the banker asked.

"I am not sure," answered Laverick. "To tell you the truth, I am in a somewhat singular position."

The banker nodded. He had not a doubt but that he understood exactly what that position was.

"You have perhaps heard," Laverick continued slowly, "that my late partner, Mr. Morrison, "

"Late partner?" the manager interrupted.

Laverick assented.

"We had a few words last night," he explained "and Mr. Morrison left the office with an understanding between us that he should not return. You will receive a formal intimation of that during the course of the next day or so. We will revert to the matter presently, if you wish. My immediate business with you is to discuss the fact that I have to provide something like twenty thousand pounds to day if I decide to take up the purchases of stock which Morrison has made."

"You understand the position, of course, Mr. Laverick, if you fail to do so?" the manager remarked gravely.

"Naturally," Laverick answered. "I am quite aware of the fact that Morrison acted on behalf of the firm and that I am responsible for his transactions. He has plunged pretty deeply, though, a great deal more deeply than our capital warranted. I may add that I had not the slightest idea as to the extent of his dealings."

The bank manager adopted a sympathetic but serious attitude.

"Twenty thousand pounds," he declared, "is a great deal of money, Mr. Laverick."

"It is a great deal of money," Laverick admitted. "I am here to ask you to lend it to me.

The bank manager raised his eyebrows.

"My dear Mr. Laverick!" he exclaimed reproachfully.

"Upon unimpeachable security," Laverick continued. The bank manager was conscious that he had allowed a little start of surprise to escape him, and bit his lip with annoyance. It was entirely contrary to his tenets to display at any time during office hours any sort of emotion.

"Unimpeachable security," he repeated. "Of course, if you have that to offer, Mr. Laverick, although the sum is a large one, it is our business to see what we can do for you."

"My security is of the best," Laverick declared grimly. "I have bank notes here, Mr. Fenwick, for twenty thousand pounds."

The bank manager was again guilty of an unprofessional action. He whistled softly under his breath. A very respectable client he had always considered Mr. Stephen Laverick, but he had certainly never suspected him of being able to produce at a pinch such evidence of means. Laverick smoothed out the notes and laid them upon the table.

"Mr. Fenwick," he said, "I believe I am right in assuming that when one comes to one's bankers, one enters, as it were, into a confessional. I feel convinced that nothing which I say to you will be repeated outside this office, or will be allowed to dwell in your own mind except with reference to this particular transaction between you and me. I have the right, have I not, to take that for granted?"

"Most certainly," the banker agreed.

"From a strictly ethical point of view," Laverick went on, "this money is not mine. I hold it in trust for its owner, but I hold it without any conditions . I have power to make what use I wish of it, and I choose to day to use it on my

own behalf. Whether I am justified or not is scarcely a matter, I presume, which concerns this excellent banking establishment over which you preside so ably. I do not pay these bank notes in to my account and ask you to credit me with twenty thousand pounds. I ask you to allow me to deposit them here for seven days as security against an overdraft. You can then advance me enough money to meet my engagements of to day."

The banker took up the notes and looked them through, one by one. They were very crisp, very new, and absolutely genuine.

"This is somewhat an extraordinary proceeding, Mr. Laverick," he said.

"I have no doubt that it must seem so to you," Laverick admitted. "At the same time, there the money is. You can run no risk. If I am exceeding my moral right in making use of these notes, it is I who will have to pay. Will you do as I ask?"

The banker hesitated. The transaction was somewhat a

peculiar one, but on the face of it there could be no possible risk. At the same time, there was something about it which he could not understand.

"Your wish, Mr. Laverick," he remarked, looking at him thoughtfully, "seems to be to keep these notes out of circulation."

Laverick returned his gaze without flinching.

"In a sense, that is so," he assented.

"On the whole," the banker declared, "I should prefer to credit them to your account in the usual way."

"I am sorry," Laverick answered, "but I have a sentimental feeling about it. I prefer to keep the notes intact. If you cannot follow out my suggestion, I must remove my account at once. This isn't a threat, Mr. Fenwick, you will understand that, I am sure. It is simply a matter of business, and owing to Morrison's speculations I have no time for arguments. I am quite satisfied to remain in your hands, but my feeling in the matter is exactly as I have stated, and I cannot change. If you are to retain my account,

my engagements for to day must be met precisely in the way I have pointed out."

The banker excused himself and left the room for a few moments. When he returned, he shrugged his shoulders with the air of one who is giving in to an unreasonable client.

"It shall be as you say, Mr. Laverick," he announced. "The notes are placed upon deposit. Your engagements to day up to twenty thousand pounds shall be duly honored."

Laverick shook hands with him, talked for a moment or two about indifferent matters, and strolled back towards his office. He had rather the sense of a man who moves in a dream, who is living, somehow, in a life which doesn't belong to him. He was doing the impossible. He knew very well that his name was in every one's mouth. People were looking at him sympathetically, wondering how he could have been such a fool as to become the victim of an irresponsible speculator. No one ever imagined that he would be able to keep his engagements. And he had done it.

The price might be a great one, but he was prepared to pay. At any moment the sensational news might be upon the placards, and the whole world might know that the man who had been murdered in Crooked Friars last night had first been robbed of twenty thousand pounds. So far he had felt himself curiously free from anything in the shape of direct apprehensions. Already, however, the shadow was beginning to fall. Even as he entered his office, the sight of a stranger offering office files for sale made him start. He half expected to feel a hand upon his shoulder, a few words whispered in his ear. He set his teeth tight. This was his risk and he must take it.

For several hours he remained in his office, engaged in a scheme for the redirection of its policy. With the absence of Morrison, too, there were other changes to be made, changes in the nature of the business they were prepared to handle, limits to be fixed. It was not until nearly luncheon time that the telephone, the simultaneous arrival of several clients, and the breathless entry of his own head clerk

rushing in from the house, told him what was going on.

"'Unions' have taken their turn at last!" the clerk announced, in an excited tone. "They sagged a little this morning, but since eleven they have been going steadily up. Just now there seems to be a boom. Listen."

Laverick heard the roar of voices in the street, and nodded. He was prepared to be surprised at nothing.

"They were bound to go within a day or two," he remarked. "Morrison wasn't an absolute idiot."

The luncheon hour passed. The excitement in the city grew. By three o'clock, ten thousand pounds would have covered all of Laverick's engagements. Just before closing time, it was even doubtful whether he might not have borrowed every penny without security at all. He took it all quite calmly and as a matter of course. He left the office a little earlier than usual, and every man whom he met stopped to slap him on the back and chaff him. He escaped as soon as he could, bought the evening papers, found a taxicab, and as soon as he had started spread them open.

It was a remarkable proof of the man's self restraint that at no time during the afternoon had he sent out for one of these early editions. He turned them over now with firm fingers. There was absolutely no fresh news. No one had come forward with any suggestion as to the identity of the murdered man. All day long the body had lain in the Mortuary, visited by a constant stream of the curious, but presumably unrecognized. Laverick could scarcely believe the words he read. The thing seemed ludicrously impossible. The twenty thousand pounds must have come from some one. Why did they keep silence? What was the mystery about it? Could it be that they were not in a position to disclose the fact? Curiously enough, this unnatural absence of news inspired him with something which was almost fear. He had taken his risks boldly enough. Now that Fate was playing him this unexpectedly good turn, he was conscious of a growing nervousness. Who could he have been, this man? Whence could he have derived this great sum? One person at least must know that

he had been robbed the man who murdered him must know it. A cold shiver passed through Laverick's veins at the thought. Somewhere in London there must be a man thirsting for his blood, a man who had committed a murder in vain and been robbed of his spoil.

Laverick had no engagements for that evening, but instead of going to his club he drove straight to his rooms, meaning to change a little early for dinner and go to a theatre, lie found there, however, a small boy waiting for him with a note in his hand. It was addressed in pencil only, and his name was printed upon it.

Laverick tore it open with a haste which he only imperfectly concealed. There was something ominous to him in those printed characters. Its contents, however, were short enough.

DEAR LAVERICK, I must see you. Come the moment you get this. Come without fail, for your own sake and mine. A. M.

Laverick looked at the boy. His fingers were trembling,

but it was with relief. The note was from Morrison.

"There is no address here," he remarked.

"The gent said as I was to take you back with me," the boy answered.

"Is it far?" Laverick asked.

"Close to Red Lion Square," the boy declared. "Not more nor five minutes in one of them taxicabs. The gent said we was to take one. He is in a great hurry to see you."

Laverick did not hesitate a moment."

"Very well," he said, "we'll start at once.

He put on his hat again and waited while the commissionaire called them a taxicab.

"What address?" he asked.

"Number 7, Theobald Square," the boy said. Laverick nodded and repeated the address to the driver.

"What the dickens can Morrison be doing in a part like that!" he thought, as they passed up Northumberland Avenue.

CHAPTER XIV. ARTHUR MORRISON'S COLLAPSE

The Square was a small one, and in a particularly unsavory neighborhood. Laverick, who had once visited his partner's somewhat extensive suite of rooms in Jermyn Street, rang the bell doubtfully. The door was opened almost at once, not by a servant but by a young lady who was obviously expecting him. Before he could open his lips to frame an inquiry, she had closed the door behind him.

"Will you please come this way?" she said timidly.

Laverick found himself in a small sitting room, unexpectedly neat, and with the plainness of its furniture relieved by certain undeniable traces of some cultured presence. The girl who had followed him stood with her back to the door, a little out of breath. Laverick contemplated her in surprise. She was under medium height, with small pale face and wonderful dark eyes. Her

brown hair was parted in the middle and arranged low down, so that at first, taking into account her obvious nervousness, he thought that she was a child. When she spoke, however, he knew that for some reason she was afraid. Her voice was soft and low, but it was the voice of a woman.

"It is Mr. Laverick, is it not?" she asked, looking at him eagerly.

"My name is Stephen Laverick," he admitted. "I understood that I should find Mr. Arthur Morrison here."

"Yes," the girl answered, "he sent for you. The note was from him. He is here."

She made no movement to summon him. She still stood, in fact, with her back to the door. Laverick was distinctly puzzled. He felt himself unable to place this timid, childlike woman, with her terrified face and beautiful eyes. He had never heard Morrison speak of having any relations. His presence in such a locality, indeed, was hard to understand unless he had met with an accident. Morrison

was one of those young men who would have chosen Hell with a "W" rather than Heaven E. C.

"I am afraid," Laverick said, "that for some reason or other you are afraid of me. I can assure you that I am quite harmless," he added smiling. "Won't you sit down and tell me what is the matter? Is Mr. Morrison in any trouble?"

"Yes," she answered, "he is. As for me, I am terrified."

She came a little away from the door. Laverick was a man who inspired trust. His tone, too, was unusually kind. He had the protective instinct of a big man toward a small woman.

"Come and tell me all about it," he suggested. "I expected to hear that he had gone abroad."

"Mr. Laverick," she said, looking up at him tremulously. "I was hoping that you could have told me what it was that had come to him."

"Well, that rather depends," Laverick answered. "We certainly had a terribly anxious time yesterday. Our

business has been most unfortunate "

"Yes, yes!" the girl interrupted. "Please go on. There have been business troubles, then."

"Rather," Laverick continued. "Last night they reached such a pitch that I gave Morrison some money and it was agreed that he should leave the firm and try his luck somewhere else. I quite understood that he was going abroad."

The girl seemed, for some reason, relieved.

"There was something, then," she said, half to herself. "There was something. Oh, I am glad of that! You were angry with him, perhaps, Mr. Laverick?"

Laverick stood with his back to the little fireplace and with his hands behind him a commanding figure in the tiny room full of feminine trifles. He looked a great deal more at his ease than he really was.

"Perhaps I was inclined to be short tempered," he admitted. "You see, to be frank with you, the department of our business that was going wrong was the one over which

Morrison has had sole control. He had entered into certain speculations which I considered unjustifiable. To day, however, matters took an unexpected turn for the better."

Almost as he spoke his face clouded. Morrison, of course, would be triumphant. Perhaps he would even expect to be reinstated. For many reasons, this was a thing which Laverick did not desire.

"Now tell me," he continued, "what is the matter with Morrison, and why has he sent for me, and, if you will pardon my saying so, why is he here instead of in his own rooms?"

"I will explain," she began softly.

"You will please explain sitting down," he said firmly. "And don't look so terrified," he added, with a little laugh. "I can assure you that I am not going to eat you, or anything of that sort. You make me feel quite uncomfortable."

She smiled for the first time, and Laverick thought that he had never seen anything so wonderful as the change in

her features. The strained rigidity passed away. An altogether softer light gleamed in her wonderful eyes. She was certainly by far the prettiest child he had ever seen. As yet he could not take her altogether seriously.

"Thank you," she said, sinking down upon the arm of an easy chair. "first of all, then, Arthur is here because he is my brother."

"Your brother!" Laverick repeated wonderingly.

Somehow or other, he had never associated Morrison with relations. Besides, this meant that she must be of his race. There was nothing in her face to denote it except the darkness of her eyes, and that nameless charm of manner, a sort of ultra sensitiveness, which belongs sometimes to the highest type of Jews. It was not a quality, Laverick thought, which he should have associated with Morrison’s sister.

"My brother, in a way," she resumed. "Arthur’s father was a widower and my mother was a widow when they were married. You are surprised?"

"There is no reason why I should be," he answered,

curiously relieved at her last statement. "Your brother and I have been connected in business for some years. We have seen very little of one another outside."

"I dare say," she continued, still timidly, "that Arthur's friends would not be your friends, and that he wouldn't care for the same sort of things. You see, my mother is dead and also his father, and as we aren't really related at all, I cannot expect that he would come to see me very often. Last night, though, quite late long after I had gone to bed he rang the bell here. I was frightened, for just now I am all alone, and my servant only comes in the morning. So I looked out of the window and I saw him on the pavement, huddled up against the door. I hurried down and let him in. Mr. Laverick," she went on, with an appealing glance at him, "I have never seen any one look like it. He was terrified to death. Something seemed to have happened which had taken away from him even the power of speech. He pushed past me into this room, threw himself into that chair," she added, pointing across the room, "and he sobbed and beat

his hands upon his knees as though he were a woman in a fit of hysterics. His clothes were all untidy, he was as pale as death, and his eyes looked as though they were ready to start out of his head."

"You must indeed have been frightened," Laverick said softly.

"Frightened! I shall never forget it! I did not sleep all night. He would tell me nothing he has scarcely spoken a sensible word. Early this morning I persuaded him to go upstairs, and made him lie down. He has taken two draughts which I bought from the chemist, but he has not slept. Every now and then he tries to get up, but in a minute or two he throws himself down on the bed again and hides his face. If any one rings at the bell, he shrieks. If he hears a footfall in the street, even, he calls out for me. Mr. Laverick, I have never been so frightened in my life. I didn't know whom to send for or what to do. When he wrote that note to you I was so relieved. You can't imagine how glad I am to think you have come!"

Laverick's eyes were full of sympathy. One could see that the scene of last night had risen up again before her eyes. She was shrinking back, and the terror was upon her once more. He moved over to her side, and with an impulse which, when he thought of it afterwards, amazed him, laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

"Don't worry yourself thinking about it," he said. "I will talk to your brother. We did have words, I'll admit, last night, but there wasn't the slightest reason why it should have upset him in this way. Things in the city were shocking yesterday, but they have improved a great deal to day. Let me go upstairs and I'll try and pump some courage into him."

"You are so kind," she murmured, suddenly dropping her hands from before her face and looking up at him with shining eyes, "so very kind. Will you come, then?"

She rose and he followed her out of the room, up the stairs, and into a tiny bedroom. Laverick had no time to look around, but it seemed to him, notwithstanding the

cheap white furniture and very ordinary appointments, that the same note of dainty femininity pervaded this little apartment as the one below.

"It is my room," she said shyly. "There is no other properly furnished, and I thought that he might sleep upon the bed."

"Perhaps he is asleep now," Laverick whispered.

Even as he spoke, the dark figure stretched upon the sheets sprang into a sitting posture. Laverick was conscious of a distinct shock. It was Morrison, still wearing the clothes in which he had left the office, his collar crushed out of all shape, his tie vanished. His black hair, usually so shiny and perfectly arranged, was all disordered. Out of his staring eyes flashed an expression which one sees seldom in life, an expression of real and mortal terror.

"Who is it?" he cried out, and even his voice was unrecognizable. "Who is that? What do you want?"

"It is I Laverick," Laverick answered. "What on earth is the matter with you, man?"

Morrison drew a quick breath. Some part of the terror seemed to leave his face, but he was still an alarming looking object. Laverick quietly opened the door and laid his hand upon the girl's shoulder.

"Will you leave us alone?" he asked. "I will come and talk to you afterwards, if I may."

She nodded understandingly, and passed out. Laverick closed the door and came up to the bedside.

"What in the name of thunder has come over you, Morrison?" he said. "Are you ill, or what is it?"

Morrison opened his lips opened them twice without any sort of sound issuing.

"This is absurd!" Laverick exclaimed protestingly. "I have been feeling worried myself, but there's nothing so terrifying in losing one's money, after all. As a matter of fact, things are altogether better in the city to day. You made a big mistake in taking us out of our depth, but we are going to pull through, after all. 'Unions' have been going up all day."

Laverick’s presence, and the sound of his even, matter of fact tone, seemed to act like a tonic upon his late partner. He made no reference, however, to Laverick’s words.

"You got my note?" he asked hoarsely.

"Naturally I got it," Laverick answered impatiently, "and I came at once. Try and pull yourself together. Sit up and tell me what you are doing here, frightening your sister out of her life."

Morrison groaned.

"I came here," he muttered, "because I dared not go to my own rooms. I was afraid!"

Laverick struggled with the contempt he felt.

"Man alive," he exclaimed, "what was there to be afraid of?"

"You don’t know!" Morrison faltered. "You don’t know!"

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Laverick that perhaps the financial crisis in their affairs was not the only thing which had reduced his late partner to this hopeless

state. He looked at him narrowly.

"Where did you go last night," he asked, "when you left me?"

"Nowhere," Morrison gasped. "I came here."

Laverick made a space for himself at the end of the bed, and sat down.

"Look here," he said," it's no use sending for me unless you mean to tell me everything. Have you been getting yourself into any trouble apart from our affairs, or is there anything in connection with them which I don't know?"

Again Morrison opened his lips, and again, for some reason or other, he remained speechless. Then a certain fear came also upon Laverick. There was something in Morrison's state which was in itself terrifying.

"You had better tell me all about it," Laverick persisted, "whatever it is. I will help you if I can."

Morrison shook his head. There was a glass of water by his side. He thrust his finger into it and passed it across

his lips. They were dry, almost cracking.

"Look here," he said, "I've got a breakdown that's what's the matter with me. My nerves were never good. I'm afraid of going mad. The anxiety of the last few weeks has been too much for me. I want to get out of the country quickly, and I don't know how to manage it. I can't think. Directly I try to think my head goes round."

"There is nothing in the world to prevent your going away," Laverick answered. "It is the simplest matter possible. Even if we had gone under to day, no one could have stopped your going wherever you chose to go. Ruin, even if it had been ruin, and I told you just now that business was better, is not a crime. Pull yourself together, for Heaven's sake, man! You should be ashamed to come here and frighten that poor little girl downstairs almost to death."

Morrison gripped his partner's arm.

"You must do as I ask," he declared hoarsely. "It doesn't matter about prices being better. I want to get away.

You must help me."

Laverick looked at him steadily. Morrison was an ordinary young man of his type, something of a swaggerer, probably at heart a coward. But this was no ordinary fear not even the ordinary fear of a coward. Laverick's face became graver. There was something else, then!

"I will get you out of the country if I can," said he. "There is no difficulty about it at all unless you are concealing something from me. You can catch a fast steamer to morrow, either for South Africa or New York, but before I make any definite plans, hadn't you better tell me exactly what happened last night?"

Once more Morrison's lips parted without the ability to frame words. Then a feeble moan escaped him. He threw up his hands and his head fell back. The ghastliness of his face spread almost to his lips, and he sank back among the pillows. Laverick strode across the room to the door.

"Are you anywhere about?" he called out.

The girl was by his side in a moment.

"There is nothing to be alarmed at," he said, "but your brother has fainted. Bring me some sal volatile if you have it, and I think that you had better run out and get a doctor. I will stay with him. I know exactly what to do."

She pointed to the dressing table, where a little bottle was standing, and ran downstairs without a word. Laverick mixed some of the spirit, and moved over to the side of the fainting man.

CHAPTER XV. LAVERICK's PARTNER FLEES

The doctor, a grave, incurious person, arrived within a few minutes to find Morrison already conscious but absolutely exhausted. He felt his patient's pulse, prescribed a draught, and followed Laverick. down into the sitting room.

"An ordinary case of nervous exhaustion," he pronounced. "The patient appears to have had a very severe shock lately. He will be all right with proper diet and

treatment, and a complete rest. I will call again to morrow."

He accepted the fee which Laverick slipped into his hand, and took his departure. Once more Laverick was alone with the girl, who had followed them downstairs.

"There is nothing to be alarmed at, you see," he remarked.

"It is not his health which frightens me. I am sure I am quite sure that he has something upon his mind. Did he tell you nothing?"

"Nothing at all," Laverick answered, with an inward sense of thankfulness. "To tell you the truth, though, I am afraid you are right and that he did get into some sort of trouble last night. He was just about to tell me something when he fainted."

Upstairs they could hear him moaning. The girl listened with pitiful face.

"What am I to do?" she asked. "I cannot leave him like this, and if I am not at the theatre in twenty minutes, I shall

be fined."

"The theatre?" Laverick repeated.

She nodded.

"I am on the stage," she said, "only a chorus girl at the Universal, worse luck. Still, they don't allow us to stay away, and I can't afford to lose my place."

"Do you mean to say that you have been keeping yourself here, then?" Laverick asked bluntly.

"Of course," she answered. "I do not like to be a burden on any one, and after all, you see, Arthur and I are really not related at all. He has always told me, too, that times have been so bad lately."

Laverick was on the point of telling her that bad though they had been Arthur Morrison had never drawn less than fifteen hundred a year, but he checked himself. It was not his business to interfere.

"I think," he said, "that your brother ought to have provided for you. He could have done so with very little effort."

"But what am I to do now?" she asked him. "If I am absent, I shall lose my place."

Laverick thought for a moment.

"If you went round there and told them," he suggested, "would that make any difference? I could stay until you came back."

"Do you mind?" she asked eagerly. "It would be so kind of you."

"Not at all," he answered. "Perhaps you would be good enough to bring a taxicab back, and I could take it on to my rooms. Take one from here, if you can find it. There are always some at the corner."

"I'd love to," she answered. "I must run upstairs and get my hat and coat."

He watched her go up on tiptoe for fear of disturbing her brother. Her feet seemed almost unearthly in the lightness of their pressure. Not a board creaked. She seemed to float down to him in a most becoming little hat but a shockingly shabby jacket, of whose deficiencies she

seemed wholly unaware. Her lips were parted once more in a smile.

"He is fast asleep and breathing quite regularly," she announced. "It is nice of you to stay."

He looked at her almost jealously.

"Do you know," he said, "you ought not to go about alone?"

She laughed, softly but heartily.

"Have you any idea how old I am?"

"I took you for fourteen when I came inside," he answered. "Afterwards I thought you might be sixteen. Later on, it seemed to me possible that you were eighteen. I am absolutely certain that you are not more than nineteen."

"That shows how little you know about it. I am twenty, and I am quite used to going about alone. Will you sit upstairs or here? I am so sorry that I have nothing to offer you."

"Thanks, I need nothing. I think I will sit upstairs in case he wakes."

She nodded and stole out, closing the door behind her noiselessly. Laverick watched her from the window until she was out of sight, moving without any appearance of haste, yet with an incredible swiftness. When she had turned the corner, he went slowly upstairs and into the room where Morrison still lay asleep. He drew a chair to the bedside and leaning forward opened out the evening paper. The events of the last hour or so had completely blotted out from his mind, for the time being, his own expedition into the world of tragical happenings. He glanced at the sleeping man, then opened his paper. There was very little fresh news except that this time the fact was mentioned that upon the body of the murdered man was discovered a sum larger than was at first supposed. It seemed doubtful, therefore, whether robbery, after all, was the motive of the crime, especially as it took place in a neighborhood which was by no means infested with criminals. There was a suggestion of political motive, a reference to the "Black Hand," concerning whose doings

the papers had been full since the murder of a well known detective a few weeks ago. But apart from this there was nothing fresh.

Laverick folded up the paper and leaned back in his chair. The strain of the last twenty four hours was beginning to tell even upon his robust constitution. The atmosphere of the room, too, was close. He leaned back in his chair and was suddenly weary. Perhaps he dozed. At any rate, the whisper which called him back to realization of where he was, came to him so unexpectedly that he sat up with a sudden start.

Morrison’s eyes were open, he had raised himself on his elbow, his lips were parted. His manner was quieter, but there were black lines deep engraven under his eyes, in which there still shone something of that haunting fear.

"Laverick!" he repeated hoarsely.

Laverick, fully awakened now, leaned towards him.

"Hullo," he said, "are you feeling more like yourself?"

Morrison nodded.

"Yes," he admitted, "I am feeling better. How did you come here? I can't remember anything."

"You sent for me," Laverick answered. "I arrived to find you pretty well in a state of collapse. Your sister has gone round to the theatre to ask them to excuse her this evening."

"I remember now that I sent for you," Morrison continued. "Tell me, has any one been around at the office asking after me?"

"No one particular," Laverick answered, "no one at all that I can think of. There were one or two inquiries through the telephone, but they were all ordinary business matters."

The man on the bed drew a little breath which sounded like a sigh of relief.

"I have made a fool of myself, Laverick," he said hoarsely .

"You are making a worse one of yourself by lying here and giving way," Laverick declared, "besides frightening your sister half to death.

Morrison passed his hand across his forehead.

"We talked some time ago," he went on, "about my getting away. You promised that you would help me. You said that I could get off to Africa or America to morrow."

"Not the slightest difficulty about that," Laverick answered. "There are half a dozen steamers sailing, at least. At the same time, I suppose I ought to remind you that the firm is going to pull through. Mind don't take this unkindly but the truth is best I will not have you back again. There may have to be a more definite readjustment of our affairs now, but the old business is finished with."

"I don't want to come back," Morrison murmured. "I have had enough of the city for the rest of my life. I'd rather get away somewhere and make a fresh start. You'll help me, Laverick, won't you?"

"Yes, I will help you," Laverick promised.

"You were always a good sort," Morrison continued, "much too good for me. It was a rotten partnership for you. We could never have pulled together."

"Let that go," Laverick interrupted. "If you really mean getting away, that simplifies matters, of course. Have you made any plans at all? Where do you want to go?"

"To New York," answered Morrison; "New York would suit me best. There is money to be made there if one has something to make a start with."

"There will be some more money to come to you," Laverick answered, "probably a great deal more. I shall place our affairs in the hands of an accountant, and shall have an estimate drawn up to yesterday. You shall have every penny that is due to you. You have quite enough, however, to get there with. I will see to your ticket to night, if possible. When you've arrived you can cable me your address, or you can decide where you will stay before you leave, and I will send you a further remittance."

"You're a good sort, Laverick," Morrison mumbled.

"You'd better give me the key of your rooms," Laverick continued, "and I will go back and put together some of your things. I suppose you will not want much to

go away with. The rest can be sent on afterwards. And what about your letters?"

Morrison, with a sudden movement, threw himself almost out of the bed. He clutched at Laverick's shoulder frantically.

"Don't go near my rooms, Laverick!" he begged. "Promise me that you won't! I don't want any letters! I don't want any of my things!"

Laverick was dumfounded.

"You mean you want to go away without "

"I mean just what I have said," Morrison continued hysterically. "If you go there they will watch you, they will follow you, they will find out where I am. I should be there now but for that."

Laverick was silent for a moment. The matter was becoming serious.

"Very well," he said, "I will do as you say. I will not go near your rooms. I will get you a few things somewhere to start with."

Morrison sank back upon his pillow.

"Thank you, Laverick," he said; "thank you. I wish I wish "

His voice seemed to die away. Laverick glanced towards him, wondering at the unfinished sentence. Once again the man's face seemed to be convulsed with horror. He flung himself face downward upon the bed and tore at the sheets with both his hands.

"Don't be a fool," Laverick said sternly. "If you've anything on your mind apart from business, tell me about it and I'll do what I can to help you."

Morrison made no reply. He was sobbing now like a child. Laverick rose to his feet and went to the window. What was to be done with such a creature! When he got back, Morrison had raised himself once more into a sitting posture. His appearance was absolutely spectral.

"Laverick," he said feebly, "there is something else, but I cannot tell you I cannot tell any one."

"Just as you please, of course," Laverick answered. "I

am simply anxious to help you."

"You can do that as it is!" Morrison exclaimed feverishly. "You must promise me something promise that if any one asks for me to morrow before I get away, you will not tell them where I am. Say you suppose that I am at my rooms, or that I have gone into the country for a few days. Say that you are expecting me back. Don't let any one know that I have gone abroad, until I am safely away. And then don't tell a soul where I have gone."

"Have you been up to any tricks with your friends?" Laverick asked sternly.

"I haven't I swear that I haven't," Morrison declared. "It's something quite outside business quite outside business altogether."

"Very well," answered Laverick, "I will promise what you have asked, then. Listen here is your sister back again," he added, as he heard the taxicab stop outside. "Pull yourself together and don't frighten her so much. I am going down to meet her. I shall tell her that you are better.

Try and buck up when she comes in to see you."

"I'll do my best," Morrison said humbly. "If you knew! If you only knew!"

He began to sob again. Laverick left the room and, descending the stairs, met the girl in the hall. Her white face questioned him before her lips had time to frame the speech.

"Your brother is very much better," Laverick said. "I am sure that you need not be anxious about him."

"I am so glad," she murmured. "They let me off but I had to pay a fine. I had no idea before that I was so important. Shall I go to him now?"

"One moment," Laverick answered, holding open the door of the sitting room. "Miss Morrison," he went on,

"Miss Leneven is my name," she interrupted.

"I beg your pardon. Your brother evidently has something on his mind apart from business. I am afraid that he has been getting into some sort of trouble. I don't think there is any object in bothering him about it, but the great

thing is to get him away."

"You will help?" she begged.

"I will help, certainly," Laverick answered. "I have promised to. You must see that he is ready to leave here at seven o'clock to morrow morning. He wants to go to New York, and the special to catch the German boat will leave Waterloo somewhere about eight to eight thirty."

"But his clothes!" she cried. "How can he be ready by then?"

"Your brother does not wish me or any one to go near his rooms or to send him any of his belongings," Laverick continued quietly.

"But how strange!" the girl exclaimed. "Do you mean to say, then, that he is going without anything?"

"I am afraid," Laverick said kindly, "that we must take it for granted that your brother has got mixed up in some undesirable business or other. He is nervously anxious to keep his whereabouts an entire secret. He has been asking me whether any one has been to the office to inquire for

him. Under the circumstances, I think the best thing we can do is to humor him. I shall buy him before to morrow morning a cheap dressing case and a ready made suit of clothes, and a few things for the voyage. Then I shall send a cab for you both at seven o'clock and meet you at the station.

"You are very kind," she murmured. "What should I have done without you? Oh, I cannot think!"

The protective instinct in the man was suddenly strong. Naturally unaffectionate, he was conscious of an almost overmastering desire to take her hands in his, even to lift her up and kiss away the tears which shone in her deep, childlike eyes. He reminded himself that she was a stranger, that her appearance of youth was a delusion, that she could only construe such an action as a liberty, an impertinence, offered under circumstances for which there could be no possible excuse.

He moved away towards the door.

"Naturally," he said, "I am glad to be of use to your

brother. You see," he explained, a little awkwardly, "after all, we have been partners in business."

He caught a look upon her face and smiled.

"Naturally, too," he continued, "it has been a great pleasure for me to do anything to relieve your anxiety."

She gave him her hands then of her own accord. The gratitude which shone out of her swimming eyes seemed mingled with something which was almost invitation. Laverick was suddenly swept off his feet. Something had come into his life something absurd, uncounted upon, incomprehensible. The atmosphere of the room seemed electrified. In a moment, he had done what only a second or two before he had told himself would be the action of a cad. He had taken her, unresisting, up into his arms, kissed her eyes and lips. Afterwards, he was never able to remember those few moments clearly, only it seemed to him that she had accepted his caress almost without hesitation, with the effortless serenity of a child receiving a natural consolation in a time of trouble. But

Laverick was conscious of other feelings as he leaned hard back in the corner of his taxicab and was driven swiftly away.

CHAPTER XVI. THE WAITER AT THE "BLACK POST"

Laverick, notwithstanding that the hour was becoming late, found an outfitter’s shop in the Strand still open, and made such purchases as he could on Morrison’s behalf. Then, with the bag ready packed, he returned to his rooms. Time had passed quickly during the last three hours. It was nearly nine o’clock when he stepped out of the lift and opened the door of his small suite of rooms with the latchkey which hung from his chain. He began to change his clothes mechanically, and he had nearly finished when the telephone bell upon his table rang.

"Who’s that?" he asked, taking up the receiver.

"Hall porter, sir," was the answer. "Person here wishes

to see you particularly."

"A person!" Laverick repeated. "Man or woman?"

"Man, sir.

"Better send him up," Laverick ordered.

"He's a seedy looking lot, sir," the porter explained "I told him that I scarcely thought you'd see him."

"Never mind," Laverick answered. "I can soon get rid of the fellow if he's cadging."

He went back to his room and finished fastening his tie. His own affairs had sunk a little into the background lately, but the announcement of this unusual visitor brought them back into his mind with a rush. Notwithstanding his iron nerves, his fingers shook as he drew on his dinner jacket and walked out to the passageway to answer the bell which rang a few seconds later. A man stood outside, dressed in shabby black clothes, whose face somehow was familiar to him, although he could not, for the moment, place it.

"Do you want to see me?" Laverick asked.

"If you please, Mr. Laverick," the man replied, "if you could spare me just a moment."

"You had better come inside, then," Laverick said, closing the door and preceding the way into the sitting room. At any rate, there was nothing threatening about the appearance of this visitor nor anything official.

"I have taken the liberty of coming, sir," the man announced, "to ask you if you can tell me where I can find Mr. Arthur Morrison."

Laverick’s face showed no sign of his relief. What he felt he succeeded in keeping to himself.

"You mean Morrison my partner, I suppose?" he answered.

"If you please, sir," the man admitted. "I wanted a word or two with him most particular. I found out his address from the caretaker of your office, but he don’t seem to have been home to his rooms at all last night, and they know nothing about him there."

"Your face seems familiar to me," Laverick remarked.

"Where do you come from?"

The man hesitated.

"I am the waiter, sir, at the 'Black Post,' little bar and restaurant, you know," he added, "just behind your offices, sir, at the end of Crooked Friars' Alley. You've been in once or twice, Mr. Laverick, I think. Mr. Morrison 's a regular customer. He comes in for a drink most mornings."

Laverick nodded.

"I knew I'd seen your face somewhere," he said. "What do you want with Mr. Morrison?"

The man was silent. He twirled his hat and looked embarrassed.

"It's a matter I shouldn't like to mention to any one except Mr. Morrison himself, sir," he declared finally. "If you could put me in the way of seeing him, I'd be glad. I may say that it would be to his advantage, too."

Laverick was thoughtful for a moment.

"As it happens, that's a little difficult," he explained. "Mr. Morrison and I disagreed on a matter of business last

night. I undertook certain responsibilities which he should have shared, and he arranged to leave the firm and the country at once. We parted well, not exactly the best of friends. I am afraid I cannot give you any information."

"You haven't seen him since then, sir?" the man asked.

Laverick lied promptly but he lied badly. His visitor was not in the least convinced.

"I am afraid I haven't made myself quite plain, sir," he said. "It's to do him a bit o' good that I'm here. I'm not wishing him any harm at all. On the contrary, it's a great deal more to his advantage to see me than it will be mine to find him."

"I think," Laverick suggested, "that you had better be frank with me. Supposing I knew where to catch Morrison before he left the country, I could easily deal with you on his behalf."

The man looked doubtful.

"You see, sir," he replied awkwardly, "it's a matter I

wouldn't like to breathe a word about to any one but Mr. Morrison himself. It's it's a bit serious."

The man's face gave weight to his words. Curiously enough, the gleam of terror which Laverick caught in his white face reminded him of a similar look which he had seen in Morrison's eyes barely an hour ago. To gain time, Laverick moved across the room, took a cigarette from a box and lit it. A conviction was forming itself in his mind. There was something definite behind these hysterical paroxysms of his late partner, something of which this man had an inkling.

"Look here," he said, throwing himself into an easychair, "I think you had better be frank with me. I must know more than I know at present before I help you to find Morrison, even if he is to be found. We didn't part very good friends, but I'm his friend enough for the sake of others," he added, after a moment's hesitation, "to do all that I could to help him out of any difficulty he may have stumbled into. So you see that so far as anything you may

have to say to him is concerned, I think you might as well say it to me."

"You couldn't see your way, then, sir," the man continued doggedly, "to tell me where I could find Mr. Morrison himself?"

"No, I couldn't," Laverick decided. "Even if I knew exactly where he was and I'm not admitting that I couldn't put you in touch with him unless I knew what your business was.

The man's eyes gleamed. He was a typical waiter pasty faced, unwholesome looking but he had small eyes of a greenish cast, and they were expressive.

"I think, sir," he said, "you've some idea yourself, then, that Mr. Morrison has been getting into a bit of trouble."

"We won't discuss that," Laverick answered. "You must either go away it's past nine o'clock and I haven't had my dinner yet or you must treat me as you would Mr. Morrison."

The man looked upon the carpet for several moments.

"Very well, sir," he said, "there's no great reason why I should put myself out about this at all. The only thing is "

He hesitated.

"Well, go on," Laverick said encouragingly.

"I think," the man continued, "that Mr. Morrison knowing, as I well do, sir, the sort of gent he is would be more likely to talk common sense with me about this matter than you, sir."

"I'll imagine I'm Morrison, for the moment," Laverick said smiling, "especially as I'm acting for him."

The man looked around the room. The door behind had been left ajar. He stepped backward and closed it.

"You'll pardon the liberty, sir," he said, "but this is a serious matter I'm going to speak about. I'll just tell you a little thing and you can form your own conclusions. Last night we was open late at the 'Black Post.' We keep open, sir, as you know, when you gentlemen at the Stock Exchange are busy. About nine o'clock there was a strange customer came in. He had two drinks and he sat as though

he were waiting. In about 'arf an hour another gent came in, and they went into a corner together and seemed to be doing some sort of business. Anyways, there was papers passed between them. I was fairly busy about then, as there were one or two more customers in the place, but I noticed these two talking together, and I noticed the dark gentleman leave. The others went out a few minutes afterwards, and the gent who had come first was alone in the place. He sat in the corner and he had a pocket book on the table before him. I had a sort of casual glance at it when I brought him a drink, and it seemed to me that it was full of bank notes. He sat there just like a man extra deep in thought. Just after eleven, in came Mr. Morrison. I could see he was rare and put out, for he was white, and shaking all over. 'Give me a drink, Jim,' he said, 'a big brandy and soda, big as you make 'em."'

The man paused for a moment as though to collect himself. Laverick was suddenly conscious of a strange thrill creeping through his pulses.

"Go on," he said. "That was after he left me. Go on."

"He was quite close to the other gent, Mr. Morrison was," the waiter continued, "but they didn't say nowt to each other. All of a sudden I see Mr. Morrison set down his glass and stare at the other chap as though he'd seen something that had given him a turn. I leaned over the counter and had a look, too. There he sat this tall, fair chap who had been in the place so long with his big pocket book on the table in front of him, and even from where I was I could see that there was a great pile of bank notes sticking out from it. All of a sudden he looks up and sees Mr. Morrison a watching him and me from behind the counter. Back he whisks the pocket book into his pocket, calls me for my bill, gives me two mouldy pennies for a tip, buttons up his coat and walks out."

"You know who he was?" Laverick inquired.

Again the waiter paused for a moment before he answered paused and looked nervously around the room. His voice shook.

"He was the man as was murdered about a hundred yards off the 'Black Post' last night, sir," he said.

"How do you know?" Laverick asked.

"I got an hour off to day," the waiter continued, "and went down to the Mortuary. There was no doubt about it. There he was same chap, same clothes. I could swear to him anywhere, and I reckon I '11 have to at the inquest."

Laverick's cigarette burned away between his fingers. It seemed to him that he was no longer in the room. He was listening to Big Ben striking the hour, he was back again in that tiny little bedroom with its spotless sheets and lace curtains. The man on the bed was looking at him. Laverick remembered the look and shivered.

"What has this to do with Morrison?" he demanded.

Once more the waiter looked around in that half mysterious, half terrified way.

"Mr. Morrison, sir," he said, dropping his voice to a hoarse whisper, "he followed the other chap out within thirty seconds. A sort of queer look he'd got in his face too,

and he went out without paying me. I've read the papers pretty careful, sir," the man went on, "but I ain't seen no word of that pocket book of bank notes being found on the man as was murdered."

Laverick threw the end of his burning cigarette away. He walked to the window, keeping his back deliberately turned on his visitor. His eyes followed the glittering arc of lights which fringed the Thames Embankment, were caught by the flaring sky sign on the other side of the river. He felt his heart beating with unaccustomed vigor. Was this, then, the secret of Morrison's terror? He wondered no longer at his collapse. The terror was upon him, too. He felt his forehead, and his hand, when he drew it away, was wet. It was not Morrison alone but he himself who might be implicated in this man's knowledge. The thoughts flitted through his brain like parts of a nightmare. He saw Morrison arrested, he saw the whole story of the missing pocket book in the papers, he imagined his bank manager reading it and thinking of that parcel of

mysterious bank notes deposited in his keeping on the morning after the tragedy. . . Laverick was a strong man, and his moment of weakness, poignant though it had been, passed. This was no new thing with which he was confronted. All the time he had known that the probabilities were in favor of such a discovery. He set his teeth and turned to face his visitor.

"This is a very serious thing which you have told me," he said. "Have you spoken about it to any one else?"

"Not a soul, sir," the man answered. "I thought it best to have a word or two first with Mr. Morrison."

"You were thinking of attending the inquest," Laverick said thoughtfully. "The police would thank you for your evidence, and there, I suppose, the matter would end."

"You've hit it precisely, sir," the man admitted. "There the matter would end."

"On the other hand," Laverick continued, speaking as though he were reasoning this matter out to himself, "supposing you decided not to meddle in an affair which

does not concern you, supposing you were not sure as to the identity of your customer last night, and being a little tired you could not rightly remember whether Mr. Morrison called in for a drink or not, and so, to cut the matter short, you dismissed the whole matter from your mind and let the inquest take its own course, Laverick paused. His visitor scratched the side of his chin and nodded.

"You've put this matter plainly, sir," he said, "in what I call an understandable, straightforward way. I'm a poor man I've been a poor man all my life and I've never seed a chance before of getting away from it. I see one now."

"You want to do the best you can for yourself?"

"So 'elp me God, sir, I do!" the man agreed.

Laverick nodded.

"You have done a remarkably wise thing," he said, "in coming to me and in telling me about this affair. The idea of connecting Mr. Morrison with the murder would, of course, be ridiculous, but, on the other hand, it would be

very disagreeable to him to have his name mentioned in connection with it. You have behaved discreetly, and you have done Mr. Morrison a service in trying to find him out. You will do him a further service by adopting the second course I suggested with regard to the inquest. What do you consider that service is worth?"

"It depends, sir," the man answered quietly, "at what price Mr. Morrison values his life!"

CHAPTER XVII. THE PRICE OF SILENCE

The man’s manner was expressive. Laverick repeated his phrase, frowning.

"His life!"

"Yes, sir!"

Laverick shrugged his shoulders.

"Come," he declared, "you must not go too far with this thing. I have admitted, so as to clear the way for anything you have to say, that Mr. Morrison would not care

to have his name mentioned in connection with this affair. But because he left your bar a few minutes after the murdered man, it is sheer folly to assume that therefore he is necessarily implicated in his death. I cannot conceive anything more unlikely."

The man smiled a slow, uncomfortable smile which suggested mirth less than anything in the world.

"There are a few other things, sir," he remarked, "one in especial."

"Well?" Laverick inquired. "Let’s have it. You had better tell me everything that is in your mind."

"The man was stabbed with a horn handled knife."

"I remember reading that," Laverick admitted.

"Well?"

"The knife was mine," his visitor affirmed, dropping his voice once more to a whisper. "It lay on the edge of the counter, close to where Mr. Morrison was leaning, and as soon as he’d gone I missed it."

Laverick was silent. What was there to be said?

"Horn handled knives," he muttered, "are not rare not uncommon things."

"One don't possess a knife for a matter of eight or nine years without being able to swear to it," the other remarked dryly.

"Is there anything more?"

"There don't need to be," was the quiet reply. "You know that, sir. So do I. There don't need to be any more evidence than mine to send Mr. Morrison to the gallows."

"We will waive that point," Laverick declared. "The jury sometimes are very hard to convince by circumstantial evidence alone. However, as I have said, let us waive that point. Your position is clear enough. You go to the inquest, you tell all you know, and you get nothing. You are a poor man, you have worked hard all your life. The chance has come in your way to do yourself a little good. Now take my advice. Don't spoil it all by asking for anything ridiculous. It won't do for you to come into a fortune a few days after this affair, especially if it ever comes out that the

murdered man was in your place. I am here to act for Mr. Morrison. What is it that you want?"

"You are talking like a gent, sir," the man said, "like a sensible gent, too. I'd have to keep it quiet, of course, that I'd come into a bit of money, just at present, at any rate. I could easy find an excuse for changing my job perhaps get away from London altogether. I've got a few pounds saved and I've always wanted to open a banking account. A gent like you, perhaps, could put me in the way of doing it."

"How much do you consider would be a satisfactory balance to commence with?" Laverick asked.

"I was thinking of a thousand pounds, sir."

Laverick was thoughtful for a few moments.

"By the way, what is your name?" he inquired at last.

"James Shepherd, sir," the man answered, "generally called Jim, sir."

"Well, you see, Shepherd," Laverick continued, "the difficulty is, in your case, as in all similar ones, that one never knows where the thing will end. A thousand pounds

is a considerable sum, but in four amounts, with three months interval between each, it could be arranged. This would be better for you, in any case. Two hundred and fifty pounds is not an unheard of sum for you to have saved or got together. After that your investments would be my lookout, and they would produce, as I have said, another seven hundred and fifty pounds. But what security have I has Mr. Morrison, let us say that you will be content with this sum?"

"He hasn't any, sir," the man admitted at once. "He couldn't have any. I'm a modest living man, and I've no desire to go shouting around that I'm independent all of a sudden. That wouldn't do nohow. A thousand pounds would bring me in near enough a pound a week if I invested it, or two pounds a week for an annuity, my health being none too good. I've no wife or children, sir. I was thinking of an annuity. With two pounds a week I'd have no cause to trouble any one again."

Laverick considered.

"It shall be done," he said. "To morrow I shall buy shares for you to the extent of two hundred and fifty pounds. They will be deposited in a bank. Some day you can look in and see me, and I will take you round there. You are my client who has speculated under my instructions successfully, and you will sign your name and become a customer. After that, you will speculate again. When your thousand pounds has been made, I will show you how to buy an annuity. Keep your mouth shut, and last night will be the luckiest night of your life. Do you drink?"

"A drop or two, sir," the man admitted. "If I didn't, I guess I'd go off my chump."

"Do you talk when you're drunk?" Laverick asked.

"Never, sir," the man declared. "I've a way of getting a drop too much when I'm by myself. Then I tumbles off to sleep and that's the end of it. I've no fancy for company at such times."

"It's a good thing," Laverick remarked, thrusting his

hand into his pocket. "Here's a five pound note on account. I daresay you can manage to keep sober to night, at any rate. That's all, isn't it?"

"That's all, sir," the man answered, "unless I might make so bold as to ask whether Mr. Morrison has really hooked it?"

"Mr. Morrison had decided to hook it, as you graphically say, before he came in for that drink to your bar, Shepherd," Laverick affirmed. "Business had been none too good with us, and we had had a disagreement."

The man nodded.

"I see, sir," he said, taking up his hat. "Good night, sir!"

"Good night!" Laverick answered. "You can find your way down?"

"Quite well, sir, and thank you," declared Mr. Shepherd, closing the door softly behind him.

Laverick sat down in his chair. He had forgotten that he was hungry. He was faced now with a new tragedy.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE LONELY CHORUS GIRL

They stood together upon the platform watching the receding train. The girl’s eyes were filled with tears, but Laverick was conscious of a sense of immense relief. Morrison had been at the station some time before the train was due to leave, and, although a physical wreck, he seemed only too anxious to depart. He had all the appearance of a broken spirited man. He looked about him on the platform, and even from the carriage, in the furtive way of a criminal expecting apprehension at any moment. The whistle of the train had been a relief as great to him as to Laverick.

We’11 write you to New York, care of Barclays," Laverick called out. "Good luck, Morrison! Pull yourself tog ether and make a fresh start.

"Morrison’s only reply was a somewhat feeble nod. Laverick had not attempted to shake hands. He felt himself

at the last moment, stirred almost to anger by the perfunctory farewell which was all this man had offered to the girl he had treated so inconsiderately. His thoughts were engrossed upon himself and his own danger. He would not even have kissed her if she had not drawn his face down to hers and whispered a reassuring little message. Laverick turned away. For some reason or other he felt himself shuddering. Conversation during those last few moments had been increasingly difficult. The train was off at last, however, and they were alone.

The girl drew a long breath, which might very well have been one of relief. They turned silently toward the exit.

"Are you going back home?" Laverick asked.

"Yes," she answered listlessly. "There is nothing else to do."

"Isn’t it rather sad for you there by yourself?"

She nodded.

"It is the first time," she said. "Another girl and her

mother have lived with me always. They started off last week, touring. They are paying a little toward the house or I should have to go into rooms. As it is, I think that it would be more comfortable."

Laverick looked at her wonderingly.

"You seem such a child," he said, "to be left all alone in the world like this."

"But I am not a child actually, you see," she answered, with an effort at lightness. "Somehow, though, I do miss Arthur's going. His father was always very good to me, and made him promise that he would do what he could. I didn't see much of him, but one felt always that there was somebody. It's different now. It makes one feel very lonely."

"I, too," Laverick said, with commendable mendacity, "am rather a lonely person. You must let me see something of you now and then."

She looked up at him quickly. Her gaze was altogether disingenuous, but her eyes those wonderful eyes spoke

volumes.

"If you really mean it," she said, "I should be so glad."

"Supposing we start to day," he suggested, smiling. "I cannot ask you to lunch, as I have a busy day before me, but we might have dinner together quite early. Then I would take you to the theatre and meet you afterwards, if you liked."

"If I liked!" she whispered. "Oh, how good you are."

"I am not at all sure about that. Now I'll put you in this taxi and send you home."

She laughed.

"You mustn't do anything so extravagant. I can get a 'bus just outside. I never have taxicabs."

"Just this morning," he insisted, "and I think he won't trouble you for his fare. You must let me, please. Remember that there's a large account open still between your half brother and me, so you needn't mind these trifles. Till this evening, then. Shall I fetch you or will you come to

me?"

"Let me fetch you, if I may," she said. "It isn't nice for you to come down to where I live. It's such a horrid part."

"Just as you like," he answered. "I'd be very glad to fetch you if you prefer it, but it would give me more time if you came. Shall we say seven o'clock? I've written the address down on this card so that you can make no mistake."

She laughed gayly.

"You know, all the time," she said, "I feel that you are treating me as though I were a baby. I'll be there punctually, and I don't think I need tie the card around my neck."

The cab glided off. Laverick caught a glimpse of a wan little face with a faint smile quivering at the corner of her lips as she leaned out for a moment to say good bye. Then he went back to his rooms, breakfasted, and made his way to his office.

The morning papers had nothing new to report concerning the murder in Crooked Friars' Alley. Evidently

what information the police had obtained they were keeping for the inquest. Laverick, from the moment when he entered the office, had little or no time to think of the tragedy under whose shadow he had come. The long predicted boom had arrived at last. Without lunch, he and all his clerks worked until after six o'clock. Even then Laverick found it hard to leave. During the day, a dozen people or so had been in to ask for Morrison. To all of them he had given the same reply, Morrison had gone abroad on private business for the firm. Very few were deceived by Laverick's dry statement. He was quite aware that he was looked upon either as one of the luckiest men on earth, or as a financier of consummate skill. The failure of Laverick & Morrison had been looked upon as a certainty. How they had tided over that twenty four hours had been known to no one to no one but Laverick himself and the manager of his bank.

Just before four o'clock, the telephone rang at his elbow.

"Mr. Fenwick from the bank, sir, is wishing to speak to you for a moment," his head clerk announced.

Laverick took up the telephone.

"Yes," he said, "I am Laverick. Good afternoon, Mr. Fenwick! Absolutely impossible to spare any time to day. What is it? The account is all right, isn't it?"

"Quite right, Mr. Laverick," was the answer. "At the same time, if you could spare me a moment I should be glad to see you concerning the deposit you made yesterday."

"I will come in to morrow," Laverick promised. "This afternoon it is quite out of the question. I have a crowd of people waiting to see me, and several important engagements for which I am late already."

The banker seemed scarcely satisfied.

"I may rely upon seeing you to morrow?" he pressed.

"To morrow," Laverick repeated, ringing off.

For a time this last message troubled him. As soon as the day's work was over, however, and he stepped into his

cab, he dismissed it entirely from his thoughts. It was curious how, notwithstanding this new seriousness which had come into his life, notwithstanding that sensation of walking all the time on the brink of a precipice, he set his face homeward and looked forward to his evening, with a pleasure which he had not felt for many months. The whirl of the day faded easily from his mind. He lived no more in an atmosphere of wild excitement, of changing prices, of feverish anxiety. How empty his life must have unconsciously grown that he could find so much pleasure in being kind to a pretty child! It was hard to think of her otherwise impossible. A strange heritage, this, to have been left him by such a person as Arthur Morrison. How in the world, he wondered, did he happen to have such a connection.

She was a little shy when she arrived. Laverick had left special orders downstairs, and she was brought up into his sitting room immediately. She was very quietly dressed except for her hat, which was large and wavy. He found it

becoming, but he knew enough to understand that her clothes were very simple and very inexpensive, and he was conscious of being curiously glad of the fact.

"I am afraid," she said timidly, with a glance at his evening attire, "that we must go somewhere very quiet. You see, I have only one evening gown and I couldn't wear that. There wouldn't be time to change afterwards. Besides, one's clothes do get so knocked about in the dressing rooms."

"There are heaps of places we can go to," he assured her pleasantly. "Of course you can't, dress for the evening when you have to go on to work, but you must remember that there are a good many other smart young ladies in the same position. I had to change because I have taken a stall to see your performance. Tell me, how are you feeling now?"

"Rather lonely," she admitted, making a pathetic little grimace. "That is to say I have been feeling lonely," she added softly. "I don't now, of course.

"You are a queer little person," he said kindly, as they

went down in the lift. "Haven't you any friends?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"What sort of friends could I have?" she asked. "The girls in the chorus with me are very nice, some of them, but they know so many people whom I don't, and they are always out to supper, or something of the sort."

"And you?"

She shook her head.

"I went to one supper party with the girl who is near me," she said. "I liked it very much, but they didn't ask me again."

"I wonder why?" he remarked.

"Oh, I don't know!" she went on drearily. "You see, I think the men who take out girls who are in the chorus, generally expect to be allowed to make love to them. At any rate, they behaved like that. Such a horrid man tried to say nice things to me and I didn't like it a bit. So they left me alone afterwards. The girl I lived with and her mother are quite nice, and they have a few friends we go to see

sometimes on Sunday or holidays. It’s dull, though, very dull, especially now they’re away."

"What on earth made you think of going on the stage at all?" he asked.

"What could one do?" she answered. "My mother’s money died with her she had only an annuity and my stepfather, who had promised to look after me, lost all his money and died quite suddenly. Arthur was in a stockbroker’s office and he couldn’t save anything. My only friend was my old music master, and he had given up teaching and was director of the orchestra at the Universal. All he could do for me was to get me a place in the chorus. I have been there ever since. They keep on promising me a little part but I never get it. It’s always like that in theatres. You have to be a favorite of the manager’s, for some reason or other, or you never get your chance unless you are unusually lucky."

"I don’t know much about theatres," he admitted. "I am afraid I am rather a stupid person. When I can get away

from work I go into the country and play cricket or golf, or anything that's going. When I am up in town, I am generally content with looking up a few friends, or playing bridge at the club. I never have been a theatre goer.

"I wonder," she asked, as they seated themselves at a small round table in the restaurant which he had chosen, "I wonder why every now and then you look so serious."

"I didn't know that I did," he answered. "We've had thundering hard times lately in business, though. I suppose that makes a man look thoughtful."

"Poor Mr. Laverick," she murmured softly. "Are things any better now?"

"Much better."

"Then you have nothing really to bother you?" she persisted.

"I suppose we all have something," he replied, suddenly grave. "Why do you ask that?"

She leaned across the table. In the shaded light, her oval face with its little halo of deep brown hair seemed to

him as though it might have belonged to some old miniature. She was delightful, like Watteau work upon a piece of priceless porcelain delightful when the lights played in her eyes and the smile quivered at the corner of her lips. Just now, however, she became very much in earnest.

"I will tell you why I ask that question," she said. "I cannot help worrying still about Arthur. You know you admitted last night that he had done something. You saw how terribly frightened he was this morning, and how he kept on looking around as though he were afraid that he would see somebody whom he wished to avoid. Oh! I don't want to worry you," she went on, "but I feel so terrified sometimes. I feel that he must have done something bad. It was not an ordinary business trouble which took the life out of him so completely."

"It was not," Laverick admitted at once. "He has done something, I believe, quite foolish; but the matter is in my hands to arrange, and I think you can assure yourself that

nothing will come of it."

"Did you tell him so this morning?" she asked eagerly.

"I did not," he answered. "I told him nothing. For many reasons it was better to keep him ignorant. He and I might not have seen things the same way, and I am sure that what I am doing is for the best. If I were you, Miss Leneveu, I think I wouldn't worry any more. Soon you will hear from your brother that he is safe in New York, and I think I can promise you that the trouble will never come to anything serious."

"Why have you been so kind to him?" she asked timidly. "From what he said, I do not think that he was very useful to you, and, indeed, you and he are so different."

Laverick was silent for a moment.

"To be honest," he said, "I think that I should not have taken so much trouble for his sake alone. You see," he continued, smiling, "you are rather a delightful young person, and you were very anxious, weren't you?"

Her hand came across the table an impulsive little gesture, which he nevertheless found perfectly natural and delightful. He took it into his, and would have raised the fingers to his lips but for the waiters who were hovering around.

"You are so kind," she said, "and I am so fortunate. I think that I wanted a friend."

"You poor child," he answered, "I should think you did. You are not drinking your wine."

She shook her head.

"Do you mind?" she asked. "A very little gets into my head because I take it so seldom, and the manager is cross if one makes the least bit of a mistake. Besides, I do not think that I like to drink wine. If one does not take it at all, there is an excuse for never having anything when the girls ask you."

He nodded sympathetically.

"I believe you are quite right," he said; "in a general way, at any rate. Well, I will drink by myself to your

brother’s safe arrival in New York. Are you ready?"

She glanced at the clock.

"I must be there in a quarter of an hour," she told him.

"I will drive you to the theatre," he said, "and then go round and fetch my ticket."

As he waited for her in the reception hall of the restaurant, he took an evening paper from the stall. A brief paragraph at once attracted his attention.

Murder in the City. We understand that very important information has come into the hands of the police. An ARREST is expected to night or to morrow at the latest.

He crushed the paper in his hand and threw it on one side. It was the usual sort of thing. There was nothing they could have found out nothing, he told himself.

CHAPTER XIX. MYSTERIOUS INQUIRIES

As soon as he had gone through his letters on the following morning, Laverick, in response to a second and more urgent message, went round to his bank. Mr. Fenwick greeted him gravely. He was feeling keenly the responsibilities of his position. Just how much to say and how much to leave unsaid was a question which called for a full measure of diplomacy.

"You understand, Mr. Laverick," he began, "that I wished to see you with regard to the arrangement we came to the day before yesterday."

Laverick nodded. It suited him to remain monosyllabic.

"Well?" he asked.

"The arrangement, of course, was most unusual," the manager continued. "I agreed to it as you were an old customer and the matter was an urgent one."

"I do not quite follow you," Laverick remarked,

frowning. "What is it you wish me to do? Withdraw my account?"

"Not in the least," the manager answered hastily.

"You know the position of our market, of course," Laverick went on. "Three days ago I was in a situation which might have been called desperate. I could quite understand that you needed security to go on making the necessary payments on my behalf. To day, things are entirely different. I am twenty thousand pounds better off, and if necessary I could realize sufficient to pay off the whole of my overdraft within half an hour. That I do not do so is simply a matter of policy and prices."

"I quite understand that, my dear Mr. Laverick," the bank manager declared. "The position is simply this. We have had a most unusual and a strictly private inquiry, of a nature which I cannot divulge to you, asking whether any large sum in five hundred pound banknotes has been passed through our account during the last few days."

"You have actually had this inquiry?" Laverick asked

calmly.

"We have. I can tell you no more. The source of the inquiry was, in a sense, amazing."

"May I ask what your reply was?"

"My reply was," Mr. Fenwick said slowly, "that no such notes had passed through our account. We asked them, however, without giving any reasons, to repeat their question in a few days' time. Our reply was perfectly truthful. Owing to your peculiar stipulations, we are simply holding a certain packet for you in our security chamber. We know it to contain bank notes, and there is very little doubt but that it contains the notes which have been the subject of this inquiry. I want to ask you, Mr. Laverick, to be so good as to open that packet, let me credit the notes to your account in the usual way, and leave me free to reply as I ought to have done in the first instance to this inquiry."

"The course which you suggest," replied the other, "is one which I absolutely decline to take. It is not for me to tell you the nature of the relations which should exist

between a banker and his client. All that I can say is that those notes are deposited with you and must remain on deposit, and that the transaction is one which must be treated entirely as a confidential one. If you decline to do this, I must remove my account, in which case I shall, of course, take the packet away with me. To be plain with you, Mr. Fenwick," he wound up, "I do not intend to make use of those notes, I never intended to do so. I simply deposited them as security until the turn in price of 'Unions' came.

"It is a very nice point, Mr. Laverick," the bank manager remarked. "I should consider that you had already made use of them."

"Every one to his own conscience," Laverick answered calmly.

"You place me in a very embarrassing position, Mr. Laverick."

"I cannot admit that at all," Laverick replied. "There is only one inquiry which you could have had which could justify you in insisting upon what you have suggested. It

emanated, I presume, from Scotland Yard?"

"If it had," Mr. Fenwick answered, "no considerations of etiquette would have intervened at all. I should have felt it my duty to have revealed at once the fact of your deposit. At the same time, the inquiry comes from an even more important source, a source which cannot be ignored."

Laverick thought for a moment.

"After all, the matter is a very simple one," he declared. "By four o'clock this afternoon my account shall be within its limits. You will then automatically restore to me the packet which you hold on my behalf, and the possession of which seems to embarrass you."

"If you do not mind," the banker answered, "I should be glad if you would take it with you. It means, I think, a matter of six or seven thousand pounds added to your overdraft, but as a temporary thing we will pass that."

"As you will," Laverick assented carelessly. "The charge of those documents is a trust with me as well as with yourself. I have no doubt that I can arrange for their being

held in a secure place elsewhere."

The usual formalities were gone through, and Laverick left the bank with the brown leather pocket book in his breast coat pocket. Arrived at his office, he locked it up at once in his private safe and proceeded with the usual business of the day. Even with an added staff of clerks, the office was almost in an uproar. Laverick threw himself into the struggle with a whole hearted desire to escape from these unpleasant memories. He succeeded perfectly. It was two hours before he was able to sit down even for a moment. His head clerk, almost as exhausted, followed him into his room.

"I forgot to tell you, sir," he announced, "that there s a man outside Mr. Shepherd was his name, I believe said he had a small investment to make which you promised to look after personally. He would insist on seeing you said he was a waiter at a restaurant which you visited sometimes."

"That’s all right," Laverick declared. "You can show him in. We’ll probably give him American rails."

"Can't we attend to it in the office for you, sir?" the clerk asked. "I suppose it's only a matter of a few hundreds."

"Less than that, probably, but I promised the fellow I'd look after it myself. Send him in, Scropes."

There was a brief delay and then Mr. Shepherd was announced. Laverick, who was sitting with his coat off, smoking a well earned cigarette, looked up and nodded to his visitor as the door was closed.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he remarked. "We're having a bit of a rush."

The man laid down his hat and came up to Laverick's side.

"I guess that, sir," he said, "from the number of people we've had in the 'Black Post' to day, and the way they've all been shouting and talking. They don't seem to eat much these days, but there's some of them can shift the drink."

"I've got some sound stocks looked out for you," Laverick remarked, "two hundred and fifty pounds' worth.

If you'll just approve that list as a matter of form," he added, pushing a piece of paper across, "you can come in to morrow and have the certificates. I shall tell them to debit the purchase money to my private account, so that if any one asks you anything, you can say that you paid me for them."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged, sir," the man said. "To tell you the truth," he went on, "I've had a bit of a scare to day."

Laverick looked up quickly.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"May I sit down, sir? I'm a bit worn out. I've been on the go since half past ten."

Laverick nodded and pointed to a chair. Shepherd brought it up to the side of the table and leaned forward.

"There's been two men in to day," he said, "asking questions. They wanted to know how many customers I had there on Monday night, and could I describe them. Was there any one I recognized, and so on."

"What did you say?"

"I declared I couldn't remember any one. To the best of my recollection, I told them, there was no one served at all after ten o'clock. I wouldn't say for certain it looked as though I might have had a reason."

"And were they satisfied?"

"I don't think they were," Shepherd admitted. "Not altogether, that is to say."

"Did they mention any names?" asked Laverick "Morrison's, for instance? Did they want to know whether he was a regular customer?"

"They didn't mention no names at all, sir," the man answered, "but they did begin to ask questions about my regular clients. Fortunate like, the place was so crowded that I had every excuse for not paying any too much attention to them. It was all I could do to keep on getting orders attended to."

"What sort of men were they?" Laverick asked. "Do you think that they came from the police?"

"I shouldn't have said so," Shepherd replied, "but one can't tell, and these gentlemen from Scotland Yard do make themselves up so sometimes on purpose to deceive. I should have said that these two were foreigners, the same kidney as the poor chap as was murdered. I heard a word or two pass, and I sort of gathered that they'd a shrewd idea as to that meeting in the 'Black Post' between the man who was murdered and the little dark fellow."

Laverick nodded.

"Jim Shepherd," he declared, "you appear to me to be a very sagacious person."

"I'm sure I'm much obliged, sir; I can tell you, though," he added, "I don't half like these chaps coming round making inquiries. My nerves ain't quite what they were, and it gives me the jumps."

Laverick was thoughtful for a few moments.

"After all, there was no one else in the bar that night," he remarked, "no one who could contradict you?"

"Not a soul," Jim Shepherd agreed.

"Then don't you bother," Laverick continued. "You see, you've been wise. You haven't given yourself away altogether. You've simply said that you don't recollect any one coming in. Why should you recollect? At the end of a day's work you are not likely to notice every stray customer. Stick to it, and, if you take my advice, don't go throwing any money about, and don't give your notice in for another week or so. Pave the way for it a bit. Ask the governor for a rise say you're not making a living out of it."

"I'm on," Jim Shepherd remarked, nodding his head. "I'm on to it, sir. I don't want to get into no trouble, I'm sure."

"You can't," Laverick answered dryly, "unless you chuck yourself in. You're not obliged to remember anything. No one can ever prove that you remembered anything. Keep your eyes open, and let me hear if these fellows turn up again."

"I'm pretty certain they will, sir," the man declared. "They sat about waiting for me to be disengaged, but when

my time off came, I hopped out the back way. They'll be there again to night, sure enough."

Laverick nodded.

"Well, you must let me know," he said, "what happens."

Jim Shepherd leaned across the corner of the table and dropped his voice.

"It's an awful thing to think of, sir," he whispered, blinking rapidly. "I wouldn't be that young Mr. Morrison for all that great pocketful of notes. But my! there was a sight of money there, sir! He'll be a rich man for all his days if nothing comes out."

"We won't talk any more about it," Laverick insisted. "It isn't a pleasant thing to think about or talk about. We won't know anything, Shepherd. We shall be better off."

The man took his departure and the whirl of business recommenced. Laverick turned his back upon the city only a few minutes before eight and, tired out, he dined at a restaurant on his homeward way. When at last he reached

his sitting room he threw himself on the sofa and lit a cigar. Once more the evening papers had no particular news. This time, however, one of them had a leading article upon the English police system. The fact that an undetected murder should take place in a wealthy neighborhood, away from the slums, a murder which must have been premeditated, was in itself alarming. Until the inquest had been held, it was better to make little comment upon the facts of the case so far as they were known. At the same time, the circumstance could not fail to incite a considerable amount of alarm among those who had offices in the vicinity of the tragedy. It was rumored that some mysterious inquiries were being circulated around London banks. It was possible that robbery, after all, had been the real motive of the crime, but robbery on a scale as yet unimagined. The whole interest of the case now was centred upon the discovery of the man's identity. As soon as this was solved, some very startling developments might be expected.

Laverick threw the paper away. He tried to rest upon the sofa, but tried in vain. He found himself continually glancing at the clock.

"To night," he muttered to himself, "no, I will not go to night! It is not fair to the child. It is absurd. Why, she would think that I was "

He stopped short.

"I'll change and go to the club," he decided.

He rose to his feet. Just then there was a ring at his bell. He opened the door and found a messenger boy standing in the vestibule.

"Note, sir, for Mr. Stephen Laverick," the boy announced, opening his wallet.

Laverick held out his hand. The boy gave him a large square envelope, and upon the back of it was "Universal Theatre." Laverick tried to assure himself that he was not so ridiculously pleased. He stepped back into the room, tore open the envelope, and read the few lines traced in rather faint but delicate handwriting.

Are you coming to fetch me to night? Don't let me be a nuisance, but do come if you have nothing to do. I have something to tell you. ZOE.

Laverick gave the boy a shilling for himself and suddenly forgot that he was tired. He changed his clothes, whistling softly to himself all the time. At eleven o'clock, he was at the stage door of the Universal Theatre, waiting in a taxicab.

CHAPTER XX. LAVERICK IS CROSS EXAMINED

One by one the young ladies of the chorus came out from the stage door of the Universal, in most cases to be assisted into a waiting hansom or taxicab by an attendant cavalier. Laverick stood back in the shadows as much as possible, smiling now and then to himself at this, to him, somewhat novel way of spending the evening. Zoe was among the last to appear. She came up to him with

a delightful little gesture of pleasure, and took his arm as a matter of course as he led her across to the waiting cab.

"This sort of thing is making me feel absurdly young," he declared. "Luigi’s for supper, I suppose?"

"Supper!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands. "Delightful! Two nights following, too! I did love last night."

"We had better engage a table at Luigi’s permanently," he remarked.

"If only you meant it!" she sighed.

He laughed at her, but he was thoughtful for a few minutes. Afterwards, when they sat at a small round table in the somewhat Bohemian restaurant which was the fashionable rendezvous of the moment for ladies of the theatrical profession, he asked her a question.

"Tell me what you meant in your note," he begged. "You said that you had some information for me.

"I’m afraid it wasn’t anything very much," she admitted. "I found out to day that some one had been

inquiring at the stage door about me, and whether I was connected in any way with a Mr. Arthur Morrison, the stockbroker."

"Do you know who it was?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"The man left no name at all. I tried to get the doorkeeper to tell me about him, but he's such a surly old fellow, and he's so used to that sort of thing, that he pretended he didn't remember anything."

"It seems odd," he remarked thoughtfully, "that any one should have found you out. You were so seldom with Morrison. I dare say," he added, "it was just some one to whom your brother owes some small sum of money."

"Very likely," she answered. "But I was going to tell you. He came again to night while the performance was on, and sent a note round. I have brought it for you to see."

The note it was really little more than a message was written on the back of a programme and enclosed in an envelope evidently borrowed from the box office. It read as

follows:

DEAR MISS LENEVEU,

I believe that Mr. Arthur Morrison is a connection of yours, and I am venturing to introduce myself to you as a friend of his. Could you spare me half an hour of your company after the performance of this evening? If you could honor me so much, you might perhaps allow me to give you some supper. Sincerely, PHILIP E. MILES.

Laverick felt an absurd pang of jealousy as he handed back the programme.

"I should say," he declared, "that this was simply some young man who was trying to scrape an acquaintance with you because he was or had been a friend of Morrison’s."

"In that case," answered Zoe, "he is very soon forgotten."

She tore the programme into two pieces, and Laverick was conscious of a ridiculous feeling of pleasure at her indifference.

"If you hear anything more about him," he said, "you

might let me know. You are a brave young lady to dismiss your admirers so summarily."

"Perhaps I am quite satisfied with one," laughing softly.

Laverick told himself that at his age he was behaving like an idiot, nevertheless his eyes across the table expressed his appreciation of her speech.

"Tell me something about yourself, Mr. Laverick," she begged.

"For instance?"

"First of all, then, how old are you?"

He made a grimace.

"Thirty eight thirty nine my next birthday. Doesn't that seem grandfatherly to you?"

"You must not be absurd!" she exclaimed. "It is not even middle aged. Now tell me how do you spend your time generally? Do you really mean that you go and play cards at your club most evenings?"

"I have a good many friends, and I dine out quite a

great deal."

"You have no sisters?"

"I have no relatives at all in London," he explained.

"It is to be a real cross examination," she warned him.

"I am quite content," he answered. "Go ahead, but remember, though, that I am a very dull person."

"You look so young for your years," she declared. "I wonder, have you ever been in love?"

He laughed heartily.

"About a dozen times, I suppose. Why? Do I seem to you like a misanthrope?"

"I don't know," she admitted, hesitatingly. "You don't seem to me as though you cared to make friends very easily. I just felt I wanted to ask you. Have you ever been engaged?"

"Never," he assured her.

"And when was the last time," she asked, "that you felt you cared a little for any one?"

"It dates from the day before yesterday," he declared,

filling her glass.

She laughed at him.

"Of course, it is nonsense to talk to you like this!" she said. "You are quite right to make fun of me."

"On the contrary," he insisted. "I am very much in earnest."

"Very well, then," she answered, "if you are in earnest you shall be in love with me. You shall take me about, give me supper every night, send me some sweets and cigarettes to the theatre oh, and there are heaps of things you ought to do if you really mean it!" she wound up.

"If those things mean being fond of you," he answered, "I'll prove it with pleasure. Sweets, cigarettes, suppers, taxicabs at the stage door."

"It all sounds very terrible," she sighed. "It's a horrid little life."

"Yet I suppose you enjoy it?" he remarked tentatively.

"I hate it, but I must do something. I could not live on charity. If I knew any other way I could make money, I

would rather, but there is no other way. I tried once to give music lessons. I had a few pupils, but they never paid they never do pay.

"I wish I could think of something," Laverick said thoughtfully. "Of course, it is occupation you want. So far as regards the monetary part of it, I still owe your brother a great deal "

She shook her head, interrupting him with a quick little gesture.

"No, no!" she declared. "I have never complained about Arthur. Sometimes he made me suffer, because I know that he was ashamed of having a relative in the chorus, but I am quite sure that I do not wish to take any of his money or of anybody else's," she added. "I want always to earn my own living."

"For such a child," he remarked, smiling, "you are wonderfully independent."

"Why not?" she answered softly. "It is years since I had any one to do very much for me. Necessity teaches us a

good many things. Oh, I was helpless enough when it began!" she added, with a little sigh. "I got over it. We all do. Tell me who is that woman, and why does she stare so at you?"

Laverick looked across the room. Louise and Bellamy were sitting at the opposite table. The former was strikingly handsome and very wonderfully dressed. Her closely clinging gown, cut slightly open in front, displayed her marvelous figure. She wore long pearl earrings, and a hat with white feathers which drooped over her fair hair. Laverick recognized her at once.

"It is Mademoiselle Idiale," he said, "the most wonderful soprano in the world."

"Why does she look so at you?" Zoe asked.

Laverick shook his head.

"I do not know her," he said. "I know who she is, of course, every one does. She is a Servian, and they say that she is devoted to her country. She left Vienna at a moment's notice, only a few days ago, and they say that it was

because she had sworn never to sing again before the enemies of her country. She had been engaged a long time to appear at Covent Garden, but no one believed that she would really come. She breaks her engagements just when she chooses. In fact, she is a very wonderful person altogether."

"I never saw such pearls in my life," Zoe whispered. "And how lovely she is! I do not understand, though, why she is so interested in you."

"She mistakes me for some one, perhaps."

It certainly seemed probable. Even at that moment she touched her escort upon the arm, and he distinctly looked across at Laverick. It was obvious that he was the subject of her conversation.

"I know the man," Laverick said. "He was at Harrow with me, and I have played cricket with him since. But I have certainly never met Mademoiselle Idiale. One does not forget that sort of person.

"Her figure is magnificent," Zoe murmured wistfully.

"Do you like tall women very much, Mr. Laverick?"

"I adore them," he answered, smiling, "but I prefer small ones."

"We are very foolish people, you and I," she laughed. "We came together so strangely and yet we talk such frivolous nonsense.

"You are making me young again," he declared.

"Oh, you are quite young enough!" she assured him. "To tell you the truth, I am jealous. Mademoiselle Idiale looks at you all the time. Look at her now. Is she not beautiful?"

There was no doubt about her beauty, but those who were criticising her and she was by far the most interesting person in the room thought her a little sad. Though Bellamy was doing his utmost to be entertaining, her eyes seemed to travel every now and then over his head and out of the room. Wherever her thoughts were, one could be very sure that they were not fixed upon the subject under discussion.

"She is like that when she sings," Laverick remarked.

"She has none of the vivacity of the Frenchwomen. Yet there was never anything so graceful in the world as the way she moves about the stage."

"If I were a man," Zoe sighed, "that is the sort of woman I would die for."

"If you were a man," he replied, "you would probably find some one whom you preferred to live for. Do you know, you are rather a morbid sort of person, Miss Zoe?"

"Ah, I like that!" she declared. "I will not be called Miss Leneveu any more by you. You must call me Miss Zoe, please, Zoe, if you like."

"Zoe, by all means. Under the circumstances, I think it is only fitting."

His eyes wandered across the room again.

"Ah!" she cried softly, "you, too, are coming under the spell, then. I was reading about her only the other day. They say that so many men fall in love with her so many men to whom she gives no encouragement at all."

Laverick looked into his companion’s face.

"Come," he said, "my heart is not so easily won. I can assure you that I never aspire to so mighty a personage as a Covent Garden star. Don't you know that she gets a salary of five hundred pounds a week, and wears ropes of pearls which would represent ten times my entire income? Heaven alone knows what her gowns cost!"

"After all, though," murmured Zoe, "she is a woman. See, your friend is coming to speak to you."

Bellamy was indeed crossing the room. He nodded to Laverick and bowed to his companion.

"Forgive my intruding, Laverick," he said. "You do remember me, I hope? Bellamy, you know."

"I remember you quite well. We used to play together at Lord's, even after we left school."

Bellamy smiled.

"That is so," he answered. "I see by the papers that you have kept up your cricket. Mine, alas! has had to go. I have been too much of a rolling stone lately. Do you know that I have come to ask you a favor?"

"Go ahead," Laverick interposed.

"Mademoiselle Idiale has a fancy to meet you," Bellamy explained. "You know, or I dare say you have heard, what a creature of whims she is. If you won't come across and be introduced like a good fellow, she probably won't speak a word all through supper time, go off in a huff, and my evening will be spoiled."

Laverick laughed heartily. A little smile played at the corner of Zoe's lips nevertheless, she was looking slightly anxious.

"Under those circumstances," remarked Laverick, "perhaps I had better go. You will understand," he added, with a glance at Zoe, "that I cannot stay for more than a second."

"Naturally," Bellamy answered. "If Mademoiselle really has anything to say to you, I will, if I am permitted, return for a moment."

Laverick introduced him to Zoe.

"I am sure I have seen you at the Universal," he

declared. "You're in the front row, aren't you? I have seen you in that clever little step dance and song in the second act."

She nodded, evidently pleased.

"Does it seem clever to you?" she asked wistfully. "You see, we are all so tired of it."

"I think it is ripping," Bellamy declared. "I shall have the pleasure again directly," he added, with a bow.

The two men crossed the room.

"What the dickens does Mademoiselle Idiale want with me?" Laverick demanded. "Does she know that I am a poor stockbroker, struggling against hard times?"

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders.

"She isn't the sort to care who or what you are," he answered. "And as for the rest, I suppose she could buy any of us up if she wanted to. Her interest in you is rather a curious one. No time to explain it now. She'll tell you."

Louise smiled as he paused before her. She was certainly exquisitely beautiful. Her dress, her carriage, her

delicate hands, even her voice, were all perfection. She gave him the tips of her fingers as Bellamy pronounced his name.

"It is so kind of you," she said, "to come and speak to me. And indeed you will laugh when I tell you why I thought that I would like to say one word with you."

Laverick bowed.

"I am thankful, Mademoiselle," he replied, "for anything which procures me such a pleasure."

She smiled.

"Ah! you, too, are gallant," she said. "But indeed, then, I fear you will not be flattered when I tell you why I was so interested. I read all your newspapers. I read of that terrible murder in Crooked Friars' Alley only a few days ago, is not that how you call the place?"

Laverick was suddenly grave. What was this that was coming?

"One of the reports," she continued, "says that the man was a foreigner. The maker's name upon his clothes was

Austrian. I, too, come from that part of Europe if not from Austria, from a country very near and I am always interested in my country people. A few moments ago I asked my friend Mr. Bellamy, 'Where is this Crooked Friars' Alley?' Just then he bowed to you, and he answered me, 'It is in the city. It is within a yard or two of the offices of the gentleman to whom I just have said good evening.' So I looked across at you and I thought that it was strange."

Laverick scarcely knew what to say.

"It was a terrible affair," he admitted, "and, as Mr. Bellamy has told you, it occurred within a few steps of my office. So far, too, the police seem completely at a loss."

"Ah!" she went on, shaking her head, "your police, I am afraid they are not very clever. It is too bad, but I am afraid that it is so. Tell me, Mr. Laverick, is this, then, a very lonely spot where your offices are?"

"Not at all," Laverick replied. "On the contrary, in the daytime it might be called the heart of the city of the money

making part of the city, at any rate. Only this thing, you see, seems to have taken place very late at night."

"When all the offices were closed," she remarked.

"Most of them," Laverick answered. "Mine, as it happened, was open late that night. I passed the spot within half an hour or so of the time when the murder must have been committed."

"But that is terrible!" she declared, shaking her head. "Tell me, Mr. Laverick, if I drive to your office some morning you will show me this place, yes?"

"If you are in earnest, Mademoiselle, I will certainly do so, but there is nothing there. It is just a passage."

"You give me your address," she insisted, "and I think that I will come. You are a stockbroker, Mr. Bellamy tells me. Well, sometimes I have a good deal of money to invest. I come to you and you will give me your advice. So! You have a card!"

Laverick found one and scribbled his city address upon it. She thanked him and once more held out the tips of

her fingers.

"So I shall see you again some day, Mr. Laverick."

He bowed and recrossed the room. Bellamy was standing talking to Zoe.

"Well," he asked,. as Laverick returned, "are you, too, going to throw yourself beneath the car?"

Laverick shook his head.

"I do not think so," he answered. "Our acquaintance promises to be a business one. Mademoiselle spoke of investing some money though me."

Bellamy laughed.

"Then you have kept your heart," he remarked. "Ah, well, you have every reason!"

He bowed to Zoe, nodded to Laverick, and returned to his place. Laverick looked after him a little compassionately.

"Poor fellow," he said.

"Who is he?"

"He has some sort of a Government appointment,"

Laverick answered. "They say he is hopelessly in love with Mademoiselle Idiale."

"Why not?" Zoe exclaimed. "He is nice. She must care for some one. Why do you pity him?"

"They say, too, that she has no more heart than a stone," Laverick continued, "and that never a man has had even a kind word from her. She is very patriotic, and all the thoughts and love she has to spare from herself are given to her country."

Zoe shuddered.

"Ah!" she murmured, "I do not like to think of heartless women. Perhaps she is not so cruel, after all. To me she seems only very, very sad. Tell me, Mr. Laverick, why did she send for you?"

"I imagine," said he, "that it was a whim. It must have been a whim."