

# Harry Blount, the Detective

Author: T. J. Flanagan

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HARRY BLOUNT, The Detective.

BY T. J. Flanagan.

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Harry Blount, the Detective;  
OR, THE MARTIN MYSTERY SOLVED.  
BY T. J. FLANAGAN.  
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HARRY BLOUNT, THE DETECTIVE;  
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## CHAPTER I.

It was a beautiful May morning--the more especially in that part of Lancashire, immediately surrounding Hanley Hall, the magnificent residence of Mr. St. George Stafford. Yet Mr. Stafford--though an ardent lover of nature, sat down to breakfast, on this particular morning, with a frown on his brow. He was expecting an important letter, and the mail had been delayed--hence the frown.

Just as the coffee was brought in, the mail arrived, and with the receipt of the expected letter the frown vanished; to be replaced by an expression of surprise, as Mr. Stafford noticed an envelope bearing an American stamp, and curiosity led him to open this first.

It was not a long letter, and when he had finished, he found his wife and daughter, whose attention had been attracted, looking at him inquiringly.

Addressing the latter, a pretty, dark-eyed girl of about nineteen, he said, with great gravity:

"Well, Kate! You can prepare to receive your husband--to be--at almost any minute! This letter, mailed only two days prior to his departure from New York, informs me that he is coming to claim you."

"Why, papa! What do you mean?"

"Why, George! What do you mean?"

The astonishment expressed in the tones, and depicted in the features, of his "women folks," as he called them, was too much for Mr. Stafford. He could no longer retain his gravity, and burst into a hearty laugh.

Mrs. Stafford looked perplexed, Kate pouted, and as this only served to increase Mr. Stafford's merriment, it was with difficulty he replied:

"I mean exactly what I said: Kate's future husband may arrive at any time to-day or to-morrow!"

Mrs. Stafford looked still more perplexed and rather serious, while Kate looked exceedingly curious.

"Come, George!" said Mrs. Stafford. "Don't tease poor Kate! Tell us what this means--I'm sure I cannot understand you!"

"Well, my dear, I will relieve the terrible suspense. You, of course, remember my old partner Hall. Poor Dick is dead and gone, but a better friend or truer man never lived! But, no matter. When we decided to give up business, and had wound up all our affairs, we--that is, you and I and a little girl we called Kate--spent the night before we left New York for England at Dick's house. Well, Hall had a little boy, and he and this little girl of ours were great friends; and, as they played about the floor, Dick made some remark about it being a pity to part them; that it was probably their last night together--something of that sort. I, never dreaming he would take it seriously, said that we had better betroth them, as was done with children in olden times; but Dick seemed taken with the idea, and--well, the upshot of the matter was, that you, Miss Kate, and that little boy, were engaged before we left the topic, and although your mother and Mrs. Hall sat only a few feet

away, they knew nothing about it. I looked upon it as a joke, but poor Dick apparently took it in sober earnest; for next day, as he bade me good-bye, he put a ring in my hand--'For the little one,' he said, and showed me the mate of it. He's dead many a year, poor fellow; but his son is still living, and appears to be ready and willing to fulfill his part of the contract."

Mr. Stafford finished with a sly look at Kate, causing her to blush furiously, although she laughed merrily.

"What a ridiculous idea!" she exclaimed, while Mrs. Stafford, looking very serious, asked:

"Is this really true, or are you still jesting? I can scarcely credit what you say."

"Quite true--even to the ring Kate is now wearing!" and Mr. Stafford pointed to a pretty little amethyst on his daughter's finger.

Mrs. Stafford no longer doubted the story. She looked troubled, and during the remainder of the meal remained very quiet. Not so the father and daughter, who carried on a merry war--Kate declaring she was not at all curious, and certainly not anxious to see him, and scouting the idea of a ready-made husband, while Mr. Stafford kept teasing her on these points. Yet, when she retired to her room immediately after breakfast, and looked at her reflection in the glass, she did "wonder what he was like."

It was a beautiful form, and a face not only beautiful, but essentially good, that she gazed upon, and any he might be proud to have a claim upon it; but she was accustomed to the features before her, and not especially interested in any man. So wasting no time upon either, she set about that mysterious performance (to men) known as "changing her dress." This, at all events, must be a matter requiring time, for a full half-hour had elapsed when she appeared before her father in the library, arrayed in full out-door costume, and with a saucy smile invited his criticism, adding as she swung round before him:

"You can now see how curious I am to behold him!"

## CHAPTER II.

Despite the fact that her "betrothed" was liable to arrive at any minute, Kate started immediately after breakfast to visit a friend--one Jennie Fleming, living about ten miles from Hanley Hall--and did not return until evening. Passing the parlor door, she saw her mother in conversation with a strange gentleman, and at once surmised it was the expected visitor from America.

As her pony was in good condition and anxious to go, she had given him his head on the way home, and the road being rather muddy, she arrived in a bespattered condition--although looking decidedly the better for her rapid drive.

Kate would have gone on to her room to make herself "presentable," but for her father, who came from behind, and before she could object she was being introduced to "Mr. Harry Hall."

Standing before her "betrothed," Kate looked very charming in her embarrassment, and Mr. Hall could not altogether conceal his admiration.

He was quite a handsome fellow of about twenty-three, tall and slender, sported a moustache of the most approved style, and dressed in exquisite taste. A cool, elegant fellow was Harry Hall, and before a week had elapsed Kate found herself thinking more about him than she would have cared to acknowledge. What particularly pleased her was his refraining from hinting, in any way, at the "betrothal." Mr. Hall, however, was too good a general to make any such mistake--he knew how to wait. The French say--"Everything comes to him who waits," and it soon became evident to Mr. Stafford that, unless something unforeseen happened, his old partner's son would carry out his father's wishes, and carry off his daughter.

It is, however, the unforeseen which usually does happen, and one afternoon Kate upset the little boat in which she was in the habit of going rowing.

The boat, built for herself, was just large enough to hold one person, and Hall, who now accompanied her almost everywhere, had to be content with walking along the bank.

They had traversed but a short distance, when, in answering some remark of Hall's, one of the oars slipped from Kate's grasp. In the instinctive move to recover it, she upset the boat, and sank, with a loud scream for help.

Though but thirty feet away, Hall made no effort to assist or rescue the drowning girl. He stood on the bank as though rooted to the spot. Great beads of perspiration stood on his brow, and he wrung his hands in agony--none the less great for its silence.

Almost every one fears some particular being or thing more than any other. In Hall's case it was water; he had a perfect horror of it, in bulk, and for that reason could not swim a stroke.

It would have been all over with Kate in a minute or two, had not a passer-by, attracted by her cry for help, come to the rescue. Taking in the situation at a glance, he plunged into the stream, and, from the very impetus of his spring, reached the fast drowning girl.

An ordinary man would have found it no easy task--burdened as the rescuer was with all his clothes, and the weight of a strong, healthy girl--to reach and scramble up the bank unaided; but the stranger managed to do so, and with a contemptuous smile asked Hall if the lady was known to him.

Like one awaking from some horrible dream, Hall replied that he did.

"Show the way then--quick!" was the command, and Hall leading the way at a rapid pace, they quickly reached the house.

Mrs. Stafford, who was rather nervous, was not present when the party entered; but the family physician, who lived near by, fortunately was; and taking charge of Kate, ordered the stranger to change his clothing.

"Come with me," said Mr. Stafford. "There's some clothes up-stairs which, I think, will just about fit you;" adding as he laid them out before the stranger, "They belong to my nephew, but Fred was in such

hurry to get away to Australia, he wouldn't wait for the tailor to finish them. Regular Carden temper!"

"What! Fred Carden!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Yes! Do you know him?"

"Quite well, sir. And you, I presume, are Mr. Stafford, whom I promised Fred to call on. I had not intended to do so to-day, but----"

"But," interrupted Mr. Stafford, "in saving my daughter's life, you were forced to do so! And now tell me to whom are we so deeply indebted?"

The stranger appeared confused for a minute or two, even irritated, and when he answered, spoke almost angrily.

"My name, sir, is Martin--Richard Martin--and I will feel very grateful, if you will allow me to try how my friend's clothes will fit me!" and thus shutting off Mr. Stafford's thanks, and promising to come down and "take something" as soon as possible, Mr. Martin proceeded very leisurely with the changing of his clothing.

"So this is Fred's pretty cousin," he said, after Mr. Stafford had gone. "She must have been quite young when he left."

Mr. Martin took so much time, between his thoughts and his dressing, that Kate was in the drawing-room when he descended, looking a little pale and decidedly interesting.

He was introduced to everybody, and everybody attempted to thank him, and failed--except Kate, who said nothing, but looked a great deal.

"So you know Fred?" said Mr. Stafford, finding it impossible to get in a word of thanks on the subject of the accident.

"Quite well, sir, and as I told you, he wished me to call on you, to let you know that physically and financially he is doing well. And now, (taking out his watch), if you will excuse me, I will go, as it is possible that news may await me in London which will compel me to leave at once for America," and with a promise to return shortly if he remained in England, Mr. Martin took his departure.

Shortly after Hall made his appearance. He was immediately besieged with questions by Mrs. Stafford, and two ladies who had come home with her; but on being informed that Kate knew nothing about what had occurred after the boat upset, and that the rescuer had positively declined to talk about the matter, wisely said that he, too, must decline to talk about it--he felt too much upset himself.

He certainly was pale and nervous, and the ladies kindly forbore further questioning; but Hall did not like the momentary smile which played about Kate's mouth while he was making this explanation.

At the table that evening, Mr. Stafford was full of praise for Mr. Martin, and rehearsed all he had managed to get out of him on the way to the station--which was very little--but Kate made one remark which surprised all present, and startled her mother and father.

"Did you notice, papa? Mr. Martin wore a ring exactly the same as mine!"

"By George! Kate, I believe it is the same! I did notice it as we shook

hands at the station--it looked so oddly familiar, I could not avoid noticing it."

The story of the rings not being known to the other ladies present, nothing further was said on the subject. Mr. Hall was not present, having an engagement in town, and thus missed something which might have interested him.

### CHAPTER III.

When Mr. Stafford retired from business in New York, and came back to England, he was very wealthy. He purchased quite an estate with the greater part of the money, and was living on it at the time our story opens.

Few men can retire from active business life and settle down to a quiet, humdrum existence; and, although such had been Mr. Stafford's ideal life during his business career, he soon began to speculate--at first successfully, but later disastrously.

In his efforts to regain what he had lost he gradually sunk deeper and deeper in the mire, until at length the entire estate was mortgaged. The interest on some of these mortgages was coming due about the time Richard Martin had come upon the scene, and as he was not quite ready to pay it, Mr. Stafford intended to go to London, and ask the attorney to whom he made his payments for time. There had been no difficulty about this previously, and he anticipated none now. He announced his intention of going, one morning at breakfast; but as his family were in blissful ignorance of the existence of any mortgages on their home, he gave them to understand that he was going to attend a stockholders' meeting.

Breakfast over, Mr. Stafford strolled out with his pipe and Hall to keep him company, and sat down under the trees near the spot where Kate had been upset.

They were hardly seated before Hall said:

"Mr. Stafford, I don't exactly know how you look upon that compact between yourself and my father, but I promised my father when only a child to keep my part. When I grew older, and realized its full significance, I must confess I looked upon it as nonsensical, and I came as much from curiosity as anything else, but now--now----"

"Proceed, Mr. Hall."

"Well, now--if you have no objection I should be only too happy to make your daughter my wife."

"None whatever--provided Kate is willing. Have you spoken to her?"

"No, but with your consent I will now."

Kate was coming toward them, and Hall went to meet her. He led her away to a seat nearer the river, and as Mr. Stafford returned to the house he saw Hall bending over Kate, who appeared to be paying great attention to what he was saying.

"It was a very fortunate idea--not a foolish one," muttered Mr. Stafford, as he gazed at them, "for unless I can get both time and money we may not be here long."

He left shortly afterwards for London, and had been gone a half hour when Hall returned alone. He had an unpleasant expression on his face, and when informed of Mr. Stafford's departure, said he must go to London also; that he had intended to accompany Mr. Stafford thither, but had forgotten the time.

On reaching the station, he sent the following despatch to Jones & Jones, No. 9 Queen Street, London.

"S will ask for time. Give none.

"BELDEN."

Mr. Hall smiled wickedly as he handed this despatch to the clerk, and seated himself in the train in somewhat better spirits than he appeared to be when he reached the station.

When Stafford arrived in London, he proceeded at once to the office where he paid his interest and was conducted to the private office of the senior member of the firm of Jones & Jones.

Before Mr. Stafford could explain the nature of his business, Mr. Jones began:

"Well, Mr. Stafford, I suppose you've come to pay off that five thousand. You are a little ahead--two days, I think--but we will be all ready. In fact, if you can wait a short time--Eh! What's the matter?"

"Pay it off! Why, I thought--that is, I understood that there was no need--no danger of my having to pay the principal as long as the interest was paid up. I understood it was trust funds--your partner so informed me when making the loan."

"But the mortgage has changed hands, Mr. Stafford," replied Mr. Jones, "and the new mortgagee must have prompt payment of the interest."

He was feeling for the key to the telegram which lay upon his desk and now found it.

"That is just what brought me here. Formerly I have had no trouble in obtaining a little time, and I hope I shall have none now."

Mr. Stafford was terribly excited, and the lawyer really pitied him, although he replied:

"I can promise you none, Mr. Stafford. Indeed I have positive instructions to foreclose whenever the interest is not paid promptly."

With a weary sigh Mr. Stafford arose, and bidding Mr. Jones "good-day," passed into the street.

An hour after he left Mr. Hall arrived, and proceeded at once to Mr. Jones's private office. Fully an hour elapsed before he arose to depart, closing the conversation with, "Do nothing further until you hear from me--I will telegraph you when to go ahead."

From the solicitors' office Hall proceeded rapidly to a tumble-down



building in the worst quarter of London. Another hour was spent there and he emerged with the same ugly look on his face which it had worn during the forenoon. It was nearly dark and he passed unnoticed through the crowded alley, where a stranger usually excited considerable and not always pleasant interest, and was soon at the station and a few minutes later on his way to Manchester, from whence the ride home was but a few minutes.

It was nine o'clock when Hall arrived, and he was surprised to find Mr. Stafford had not returned. Mrs. Stafford not feeling well had retired, and Kate was invisible, and so Hall betook himself to the refuge of the lonely library, to await Mr. Stafford's arrival.

#### CHAPTER IV.

When Mr. Stafford left the solicitor's office he did not go directly home. His mind was too disturbed--he despaired of being able to raise immediately the money to pay even the interest, for his rents would not be due for some time, and then other interest would be due. He had one or two friends in the city, and with the hope of obtaining some relief through them, he spent the afternoon in trying to find them, and finally left London only a short time after Hall.

Mr. Stafford was thankful that neither of the members of his family met him on his return, and being informed that Hall was in the library, he sought distraction from his thoughts there. His own desperate circumstances caused Mr. Stafford to remember their conversation of that morning, and after a few minutes he asked what had been the result of Hall's interview with Kate.

"Very unsatisfactory. Your daughter appears to have taken a sudden dislike to me. I had reason, as I believed, to think I had found favor in her eyes, but it appears I was mistaken. I am sorry for it, both on my own account and yours!"

"Sorry for it on my account?"

"Yes, Mr. Stafford, on your account, because I've just learned from my attorney, Mr. Jones, that a mortgage which I have instructed him to convert into cash as soon as it becomes due, is on your property. Indeed, I should not be surprised to learn that I hold other mortgages on this property."

"What! You hold the mortgages on this property!" exclaimed Mr. Stafford. "And did you not know this until to-day?"

"No--I assure you I did not. You see, although an American, I was educated here, and returned again after my father's estate was settled on my coming of age. As I was traveling more or less all the time, I gave Mr. Jones a power of attorney and he invested my money as he thought best. Of course, if I were your son-in-law, the mortgage could stand as long as you wished--forever for that matter, and that too, without interest."

"And Kate refused you?" asked Mr. Stafford.

He was looking thoughtfully into the grate fire. What a difference that

answer made to all of them?

Hall was watching him sharply, and appeared to be studying his reply before saying:

"Yes--but I think her decision could be reversed if you would use your influence--and it would be decidedly to your advantage to do so."

The menace contained in the last words was quite plain to Mr. Stafford.

"I shall certainly advise Kate to accept your offer; but that is as far I shall go--she must do as she pleases."

"Very well," said Hall rising, "I will make another effort and trust to your influence for success." This last with a significant look as he left the room.

When he was alone Mr. Stafford began to pace the floor, talking to himself.

"Poor Kate! She little knows what her refusal means. It is plain enough, that if it is 'no' to-morrow from her, it will be beggary the next day for us. Beggary! Beggary! The place will not bring a penny more than the mortgages--and what can I do! An old man like myself can get no employment, and I have not fifty--no, not twenty pounds in my possession! My God! What shall I do? I can't ask the poor girl to marry the man--to sell herself, if she dislikes him."

Hall returned to the library just then, and after taking a book from the case, said:

"Suppose you come up to my room, Mr. Stafford? I have some fine old port I should like you to try, and as the ladies are out you might as well spend an hour with me as not."

Mr. Stafford did not care particularly where he went or what he did that night, and went up-stairs with Hall.

The latter was mistaken in saying the ladies were out. Scarcely had they left the room when Kate, looking very pale and troubled, but also very determined, made her appearance between the curtains of the large bay-window, where she usually spent her afternoons reading. It was her favorite spot, and fitted up specially for her use.

"Poor papa!" she murmured, "you need not worry if my consent to marry Mr. Hall will save you."

## CHAPTER V.

Kate did not make her appearance next day until breakfast was over. Just as she came down, Hall entered the library with a paper--Kate followed. She was very pale, but looked very determined.

"Mr. Hall," she said, toying nervously with a paper-cutter, "I have reconsidered the offer which you made me yesterday, and, if you still wish it, I am willing to--to--" (the paper-cutter snapped in two) "to become your wife."

Hall looked at her curiously for a moment. He felt certain her father had not spoken to her, and attributed her agitation to any but the true cause.

"I am glad, Kate--I may call you Kate?" She bowed but did not look at him. "I am glad indeed! For I love you, Kate, as I never believed man could love woman!"

There was sincerity in the simple words and in the tone of his voice. He came over slowly--he felt half afraid of her now--and pressed his lips to her forehead just as Mr. Stafford entered.

"Mr. Stafford, I am happy to be able to tell you Kate has relented. She has consented to be mine!"

There was a ring of genuine pride and exultation in Hall's voice and--well, everybody loves a lover, and notwithstanding an unpleasant remembrance of the previous night, Mr. Stafford said heartily:

"Well, my boy, I'm glad you are out of your agony," adding in a jesting tone which caused Kate to shudder, "Has the day been fixed?"

"Not yet, but it might as well be done now! Come Kate! Name the day!"

By way of reply Kate fell back on a sofa. The strain was too great and she had fainted. Hastily summoning Mrs. Stafford the men adjourned to Hall's rooms. Both were honestly surprised at Kate's agitation.

"Had you spoken to her?" asked Hall.

"No, I have not. I had intended to, but it seems to be unnecessary."

During the remainder of the day Kate was invisible, and next morning both men started for London. Hall was generous in his happiness, apparently, for the object of the journey was to relieve Mr. Stafford of all farther strain for the present, in regard to the mortgage and interest then coming due.

It did not take long to transact the business in London, and after dining together, the men parted, Stafford starting for home, and Hall, having further business to transact, remained in London.

Hall's "business" during the afternoon, did not appear to be very pressing, as he spent the time drinking and playing billiards. Just about dusk he quit playing, paid his score, and after taking a parting drink, left the place.

His destination was the same tumble-down rookery which he visited on his previous trip to London. It had begun to rain during the afternoon, a drizzling, misty rain, with the regulation fog accompaniment, and no one would recognize in the man in the big rough coat and slouch hat, the collar of the one turned up and the brim of the other pulled down, the elegant and natty Mr. Hall.

Entering the house after a rapid though useless glance behind, useless because he could not see ten feet behind him, Hall ascended to the second floor. His knock was answered by a miserable looking old man, who peered cautiously at him through the partly-open door.

"Bah! Why, you fool, do you suppose if it was the police you could keep

them out!" and pushing the door open Hall entered.

The old man--he was certainly seventy--locked and bolted the door again, and then following the example of his visitor, sat down.

"Now then," said Hall, opening the conversation, "you promised to have a copy of this Carden's will the next time I called, which was to be to-night. Have you got it?"

The old man shook his head in the negative and Hall asked angrily, "Why not?"

"Thought I'd be a fool to trust anyone else 'n I can't do it myself--that's why."

"Well, how do you suppose I'm to trust you? Do you want me to buy a pig in a poke? What kind of property is this? Why hasn't some one tried to find this Carden's relatives?" And having fired this volley of questions, Hall threw himself back in his chair and looked at the old man sharply.

"Well, in the first place this 'ere Carden was a curious kind of a customer. Kept away from everybody 'n nobody knowed who 'e wuz or where he come from. When he died I happened to be the first to find him. I felt sure he had plenty of coin, 'n he had. There was some dust--not much--but he had nearly £20,000 in diamonds sewed in his belt----"

"How do you know?" interrupted Hall.

"Because I seed 'em. I had just found these 'ere papers, an' just as I wuz goin' to undo the belt along comes a crowd from the camp. It wos lucky I didn't touch the dust--they'd a hung me sure! The papers wos down my bootleg, but only the body wos stone cold, an' they'd seen me in camp just afore, they'd swung me up anyhow."

"And you have--actually have these papers yourself? No third party business?"

"Yes, I've got 'em myself! Right here!"

The old man made an involuntary movement with his right hand toward his breast, but checked himself instantly. It was too late, however, for Hall, who was watching his every movement, noted the action and said, with a malicious laugh:

"Rather an unsafe place, isn't it?" and before the old man could reply, continued: "Was there anything else besides these diamonds--and what became of them?"

This question, asked simply to throw the old man off his guard, bore unexpected fruit.

"The Government took charge of the diamonds, but there was a lot of land 'round Melbourne worth twice as much as them."

Hall had now learned all he wanted and more than he expected.

"Well, you've been talking about this thing for over two years now, and it's time I saw something to prove all this. What do you want for the papers?"

"Five thousand pounds."

"Five thousand grandmothers! Why, you must be crazy!"

"Five thousand, and not a penny less," returned the old man, firmly.

Hall did not speak again for a few minutes. He looked thoughtfully at the old man as though considering his proposition. The latter, ever since Hall had located the papers, had watched him suspiciously, and had moved his chair so that they sat directly in front of each other. His hands were thrust into the pockets of his loose sack coat, and Hall as he gazed at him, saw the butt of a pistol peeping from the right hand pocket. He had heard or read somewhere of the Australian trick of shooting through the pocket, and he smiled wickedly when he caught sight of the pistol. It may be that what followed would not have happened had he not seen it.

The smile made the old man move nervously in his chair, and that recalled Hall.

"Well, since you will not take less, I suppose you must have the five thousand; but what will you do with it, you, an old man, who may be dead in an hour?"

Hall's face wore a perfectly devilish smile as he said this, and the old man felt anything but comfortable.

"Look-a-here, Mr. Hall," he said, nervously, "don't you try to play any games on me!"

"Oh, nonsense! Come! Let's have some of that black bottle of yours!"

The host's faith in his visitor's good intentions was shown by his backing up to the closet, from which he took the black bottle referred to and a couple of heavy bottom tumblers--watching Hall all the time. The latter laughed at this--not a pleasant laugh by any means.

"Why, man," he said, "what are you afraid of? Do you think I would be foolish enough to \_shoot you\_, as I see you are prepared to do for me, to obtain these precious papers of yours?"

The old man looked confused, but said nothing, and returned to his chair opposite Hall, to whom he handed the one glass which he filled. It was tossed off in an instant and extended for more, although the contents was brandy, stolen brandy. To a keen observer it would appear that Hall was nerving himself for something desperate. His smile was truly wonderful as he held forth his glass for refilling. The old man refilled it, and was about to fill his own when Hall said in a careless way:

"Those are not the papers behind you, are they?"

There was nothing on the table behind the old man except a couple of newspapers, but he turned his head for an instant, and in that instant a pinch of white powder, scarcely enough to be perceptible to the keen eyes of youth, was dropped into his glass.

"Gave you a scare, didn't I?" said Hall, with a harsh laugh; then changing his tone: "Come! Drink up! Drink my success!"

The old man filled the glass slowly--very slowly it seemed to the

watcher, who was holding his glass to his lips, waiting for the other, and looking very excited.

"Drink! Drink!" he repeated.

The old man had the glass to his lips, but set it down. "I won't," he replied, looking suspiciously at Hall.

"Then, d---- you, I'll make you!" exclaimed Hall, dashing his glass to the floor, and in an instant he had a pistol pointed at the old man's head, but suddenly recovered himself and restored it to his pocket.

"Blast you!" he said, in a quiet tone, although his eyes still blazed like coals, "you would drive Job out of patience with your suspicions. Can't you see plainly that I can't get along without the information I may yet need in this matter? It's not my policy to harm you."

Picking up his glass and filling it to the brim, he continued:

"Since you will not drink your own, drink mine," and apparently exchanged glasses, but kept his own nevertheless.

Almost any third-rate juggler--any amateur with pretensions to sleight-of-hand--can perform the trick, but the old man knew nothing of juggling. He did know he was in dangerous company, and to please Hall he took the glass and drained it.

"Ugh! Lord, how bitter! Oh! oh! You devil, you're----"

"No more--no more, old man. Your time is up, although the trick came near failing."

The poor old wretch fell from the chair to the floor, striking his head against the table as he fell.

For a few moments the murderer was unnerved by his work. He sat pale and trembling in his chair, with his eyes averted from the heap on the floor, but the old man's glassy stare seemed fixed on him. He seemed to feel it. His outstretched arms seemed grasping for him.

In a little while he recovered himself, and grasping the bottle emptied it at one draught. Then he proceeded to remove all traces of his presence. The glass he had used himself he put back in the closet, and the packet from which he had taken the pinch of powder he placed in the old man's pocket.

He now stooped over the body and took from an inside pocket a package of papers. A glance satisfied him that they were what he wanted.

He next removed a money-belt which the old man wore, and after feeling of it smiled sardonically. "I knew the old thief was lying," he muttered. Something had fallen from his person while removing the money-belt, but he was still too excited to notice it.

Stepping quietly to the door, he opened it and listened. All was quiet in the house, and nothing could be heard but the falling rain outside. Shutting the door softly behind him, Hall stole down-stairs and out into the night--possessed of certain very valuable papers, a money-belt which he felt certain contained diamonds worth £20,000, and the brand of Cain upon his brow; and forever after, notwithstanding his great nerve and coolness, to be hunted either actually or in his imagination, and to be

startled at every careless joke, and to run from shadows.

## CHAPTER VI.

It was nearly noon on the second day following his visit to London, when Hall arrived home. He looked worn and haggard, and Mr. Stafford, who happened to meet him, made some remark about his looking badly.

Yes, Mr. Hall supposed he did look pretty bad; he had been bothered most infernally with business affairs for the past two days, and now, to make matters worse, he was compelled to go to Dublin to close another important transaction. Mr. Stafford would oblige him by kindly explaining this to the ladies, as he had not a moment to spare, and must pack up and leave within an hour.

An hour later Hall was at the railway station, looking considerably improved by a shave and change of clothing.

On arriving at Liverpool he bought a ticket for Antwerp instead of Dublin, and seemed chagrined to find there was no steamer until next day. So much vent did he give to his annoyance that the attention of the booking-clerk was specially attracted to him.

When Hall left the booking-office a quiet looking little man with remarkably bright eyes entered and inquired Hall's name and destination. It was given as Samuel Andrews, for Antwerp! The quiet little man, whom the usually very independent clerks treated with great respect, thanked them with a sweet smile, and then went to the nearest police station and consulted with the inspector, after which he sent several telegrams to London.

The steamer sailed at noon next day, and from early morning the little man, who was by name Harry Blount, and by profession a detective, sauntered up and down the pier. As the time for sailing drew nearer he looked more anxious and doubtful, but no Hall appeared. Mr. Blount rubbed his nose reflectively as he watched the vessel steaming away, murmured something not very angelic regarding Mr. Hall, asseverated that he believed himself closely related to several distinct kinds of idiots, and then went back to consult once more with his friend the inspector.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kate Stafford was in the garden the evening after Hall's departure, book in hand, but not reading. She was thinking of the man who had saved her life--a dangerous occupation for a young lady engaged to marry another man. If she did give a thought to Hall it was of fear and dislike, for in a vague, unreasoning way, she regarded him as the cause of her father's, and in consequence, her own trouble.

Hearing the gate shut she looked up, and the blood rushed to her face as she saw the man of whom she had been thinking coming toward her. Martin was accompanied by the quiet little man with the sharp eyes, whom he introduced as a gentleman desirous of seeing her father, and the three entered the house, where Mr. Blount was introduced to Mr. Stafford.

Kate left them to change her dress, and it was curious to see what care she took in selecting the prettiest.

While she was absent Martin informed Mr. Stafford that Blount was a detective.

"He is anxious to meet Mr. Hall, and would like to know whatever you can tell him about that gentleman's whereabouts. You will oblige me very much by giving him whatever information you can."

Mrs. Stafford entered just at that moment, and was surprised and delighted to meet Martin. Not wishing her to be annoyed in the matter, Martin suggested that they had better leave Mr. Stafford and his friend to talk business, and they accordingly adjourned to the drawing-room where Kate soon joined them.

Mr. Stafford was, of course, surprised to learn that his visitor was a detective, and more so that he should be looking for Hall. However, on being informed that Mr. Blount was desirous of finding Mr. Hall for the purpose of transacting an important piece of business, and that that gentleman had disappeared from his London address, he gave the desired information.

"Oh yes!" said Mr. Stafford, much relieved, "Mr. Hall left very hurriedly yesterday on important business, to be transacted in Dublin."

"So--Mr. Hall has gone to Dublin, eh!" remarked Mr. Blount reflectively. "Hum--well, I'm obliged to you for your kindness. You see, the people who engaged me are very anxious to meet Mr. Hall again, and his disappearance from town worried them. Allow me to thank you again, and please say good-bye for me to Mr. Martin, as I must return at once."

He had his hand on the door-knob, when turning as though a new idea had occurred to him, he continued:

"Would there be any objection to my looking about Mr. Hall's room? It is possible I might find some cl--something which would enable me to put my people in communication with him."

"No, I don't know that there is any objection," replied Mr. Stafford, slowly, and led the way to Hall's rooms. In one corner of the dressing-room stood a handsome desk, and after looking carelessly about the rooms Mr. Blount examined this carefully.

Mr. Stafford stood looking on, hardly knowing whether or not to stop the searcher. To his relief, however, Mr. Blount stopped after pulling out one or two drawers--behind one of which he found a couple of empty envelopes addressed to "Mr. Henry Hall, No. -- Harley St., London." These had evidently been pushed out by other papers.

After glancing at the address and making a mental memorandum of it, Blount said he would look no further.

"We shall have to wait until Mr. Hall comes back or writes," he said, and took his departure.

Going out he met Martin and the two ladies about taking a walk.

"Well, what luck," asked Martin, who excused himself to the ladies and hastened to meet him.

"I've found his address in the city and it is there we must try for him."



"Then you don't believe in the trip to Dublin?"

"Not a bit. While so far there's not a morsel of evidence against him, I'm morally certain he was on his way to Antwerp and thence to Amsterdam with those diamonds, and when he found he was followed doubled back. Come up to-morrow and meet me at Bow Street at noon. Good-bye."

Martin spent a very pleasant evening with the Staffords. Their nephew, Fred Carden, furnished the topic of conversation for the evening, and it naturally brought Martin himself somewhat into the conversation--and never had a narrator a more attentive and enthusiastic audience.

Knowing nothing about the engagement between Kate and Hall, Martin, who from the day he had carried her home had found himself thinking more and more about her, now noted with pleasure her interest in everything he said concerning himself. It was not so much lack of interest concerning her cousin, as increased interest when he spoke of himself.

#### CHAPTER VII.

"Now for Harley Street," muttered Blount, as he alighted from the train in London, and though it was 9 o'clock, he did not despair of finding either his man or something about him.

The motherly old lady who answered his summons at the door, was very much like the house--old-fashioned, but eminently respectable.

In the most innocent manner in the world she invited Blount into the sitting-room, but he did not accept the invitation until he had asked if Mr. Hall was at home, and she had answered that Mr. Hall had left town for a few days.

This was a disappointment, but at any rate he would find out what she knew about his movements, and sitting just a little in the shade with the old lady just a little in the light, Blount fired question after question, until even unsuspecting she began to wonder what it all meant. Quick to note this Blount stopped, and thanking her left No. -- Harley Street--very much puzzled and disappointed. All his theories were knocked to the winds by that half-hour's conversation.

According to the old lady, Hall had come home about 7 o'clock on the night in question, and had not gone out again. That she was positive of for he would have had to pass the open parlor where she together with some friends had remained until after 12 o'clock, and after that she and "the girl" had spent another hour putting things to rights. There had been a small party in honor of her little grandson's birthday.

\* \* \* \* \*

The finding of the body was reported to the police by one of the inmates of the house--a woman, at 1 A. M. She had come in late, as was customary with her, and had knocked at his door to ask for a match. Receiving no reply she turned the knob and entered. The light was still burning, and seeing at once he was dead she called some of the other tenants who notified the police. The body was not yet cold when they arrived, so that death must have occurred just prior to its discovery. The three

other inmates of the house accounted satisfactorily for their movements that night, and the verdict of the coroner's jury, next day, was "suicide."

Blount, who had been detailed to look into the case, was, of course, present at the inquest. So, also, was our friend Martin, and, as he stood out in bold relief among the inmates of the alley, he at once came under the observation of the detective, who approached him and opened a conversation in his quiet, unassuming way.

"Rather odd case, sir!" he said. "If he had only waited a little while he would have gone naturally."

"Yes--it would appear so," replied Martin, looking at him curiously.

"Not interested I suppose--just dropped in through curiosity? Oh! I beg pardon! I thought I had seen you before--you are the gentleman who called at the office several times about some missing documents, supposed to have been stolen by an old thief named Golden. Hope you're not offended, sir! It's our business, you know, to know everybody at an affair like this."

"Not at all!" replied Martin, recognizing in Blount a man who had been very attentive to him when making the inquiries referred to.

"Heard anything yet, sir?"

"Not exactly--but I've found my man."

"Found him!" exclaimed Blount, surprised out of his invariably soft, quiet tones.

"Yes,--there he lies."

Blount's business had accustomed him to surprises, but he could hardly realize that before him lay a man for whom Martin had offered a thousand pounds.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Positive. Nothing was found upon him or in the room, I presume."

"No, sir--that is, nothing of any account."

"I thought not," commented Martin.

Something in the tone had struck Blount, but before he could speak the inquest had begun. They had moved outside during the conversation, but now entered the room where the inquest was being held. It was all over in a few minutes, and a verdict of "suicide" rendered.

When the verdict was announced Blount, whose eyes had been roving over the crowd in a professional way, caught sight of a face which he recognized instantly, and he noticed with considerable surprise the look of contempt with which the owner of the face received the verdict.

"Well, well, Mr. Jaggars! And what do we know about this?" and thus communing with himself, Blount slipped out before the crowd and waited at the entrance. To Martin, who followed him, he said:

"Wait a minute and keep an eye on me please for----"

The elite of Burn's Alley began coming out just then and almost the first was Blount's man. He was allowed to go as far as the corner of the street. Blount then tapped him on the shoulder and asked what he knew about the "suicide."

"Nothin'," replied the man, sullenly.

"Come now, Jagers, if you will tell me all you know about the case, I'll see no harm comes to you. I mean about that last trick of yours. You know you're wanted now, and badly too, at that!"

"Well, now, I'll tell ye wot I'll do. You come to 'Blind Jim's' to-morrow--no, night arter, 'bout 'leven or twelve, an' I'll tell ye wot little I knows an' a 'ole lot I thinks."

"But you must tell me something now. Something to work on for the next two days."

Jagers considered for a minute and then continued:

"Look ahere, Mr. Blount! It's not safe for me t' stand gabbin' in this 'ere way, but I'll tell ye wot you'll do. Just find a chap called Hall. Tall, good lookin' cove, 'n well dressed. Lives sommers about the West End. If ye don't get 'im there, try down 'bout Manchester, an' keep yer eye on th' docks."

With the last words Jagers started off suddenly, muttering something about the "Inspector" and Blount turning leisurely, looked up the alley and saw the cause of Jagers' sudden move. Inspector Prime and the coroner were coming down the alley. He at the same time saw Martin standing on the opposite corner. Joining him he said:

"Mr. Martin, I asked you to wait because you made a curious remark up-stairs. You said you expected there would be nothing found on the body."

"Perfectly correct, Mr. Blount. Find the papers I am looking for, and you've got the murderer of old Golden!"

"Phew," whistled Blount. "So you don't believe in the suicide theory?"

"Do you?" Martin stopped and faced him.

"Can't say as I do. I did but--you saw my gentleman friend? From what he told me and what you tell me, I don't."

"Well, the same amount stands for the papers as before. But what did you learn from your friend?"

Blount informed him. The name and description fitted Hall so well that both started for Hanley Hall--with what result we know.

On the way Blount showed Martin a small locket which he had found between the dead man's shirt and vest. There was nothing peculiar about it--nothing to distinguish it from hundreds of others of a similar pattern, except that it contained the picture of a pretty young woman.

Martin's connection with Blount being explained, let us return to that gentleman.

His theories, as he put it himself, were "all gone to pot"--no hope now but Jaggars, and he accordingly proceeded to "Blind Jim's."

"Blind Jim's" was a resort of thieves, male and female, of the worst character, and when Blount entered everything came to a standstill. The singing and loud talking ceased almost instantaneously. The whisper went around "Blount is here," and each wondered "does he want me?"

The proprietor bowed obsequiously, and inquired after Mr. Blount's health, and would "he have something?" Before Blount could reply Jaggars relieved the suspense by coming from the back room and joining him at the bar.

"Have you a room where we can have a quiet drink?" asked Blount, of the one-eyed proprietor.

"Yes, sir! Cert'nly, sir! Here Mike!" (to one of the waiters), "show the gentleman to the parlor! What shall I send ye, Mr. Blount?"

"Nothing," replied Blount, shortly, "and see that you keep this den a little more quiet hereafter or you'll rue it!"

"Yes, sir! I will----" and as he passed out of hearing--"D---- you! I'd like to wring yer neck!"

Up-stairs Blount ordered a pot of ale for Jaggars and "a little gin" for himself and then settling back in his chair invited his companion to "fire away," which he did to the following effect.

The old man, who was known to him as Gorman, had for several years been his best friend, and had often, after they had become intimate, hinted at the possession of a secret which would one day make him rich. Finally one day, about six months previous to the murder, he told Jaggars that he had found a man through whom he could convert his secret into cash. Later, and only shortly before the murder, he told Jaggars that he was beginning to be afraid of his man, "and so," said Jaggars in conclusion, "he told me he had valuable papers which a chap named Hall wanted so he could marry the girl an' get the tin. He didn't know where she lived, but this 'ere Hall did, an' it wos Manchester he got a ticket for every time."

This was Jaggars' story and confirming his theory in every respect--yet how could he connect him with the crime? The locket was the only thing he had, and that seemed worthless. Hall appeared to have had no intimate friends who would be likely to recognize it, or rather the photograph in it. Again, Hall, guilty or not, had slipped through his fingers like quicksilver.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

It was with great reluctance Martin left Hanley Hall on the morning after his visit with Blount, and equally reluctant were the Staffords to part with him.

On arriving in London he found Blount awaiting him at the station.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Nothing. Everything's down, including your friend Carden, who is lying sick at the Bridge Hotel. He arrived last night. Better go to him."

"Carden here! By George! I must be off!" and hailing a cab Martin hurried away and was soon at his destination.

He found his friend in an easy chair near the window, looking pale and weak.

"Fred, old man! How are you? What's the matter?" exclaimed Martin, shaking both his hands warmly.

"Fred" was a dark handsome fellow of about five and twenty, whose face beamed with pleasure on beholding Martin.

"Oh, Dick! I'm so glad you came! How did you find me? I want to get home as quick as possible, and you must come down with me."

He had begun speaking in such a strange tone and closed so weak and wearily that Martin became alarmed.

"All right, Fred," he said. "Shall we start now? There's a fast train in twenty minutes."

"Yes, let us go at once--my luggage can wait."

It was just 3 o'clock when they arrived at Hanley Hall, and twenty minutes later Martin was on his way back--glad to get away.

There was great rejoicing over Carden's return, and much pity for his illness. That was perfectly natural and proper, but it made Martin sick at heart as he watched Kate hovering about his friend, anticipating his every wish and showing in every act the greatest affection for him. A woman looking on would not have been at all alarmed at this exhibition of affection--but then, Martin was only a man, and he went back to London with a heavy heart. He was mistaken, so he told himself as he went back in the train, it was only gratitude she felt for him.

At Bow Street he found a note saying Blount wished to see him, and he left one in return asking Blount to call at his hotel. He had hardly reached his rooms when Blount's card was presented to him and that gentleman ushered in.

Martin was in a bad, and for him, unusual mood, and Blount noticed it immediately.

"Have you any special engagement to-night?" asked Martin.

"No. I'm free except for that fellow, Hall."

"Hang Hall!" growled Martin, as he rang for an attendant.

"With all my heart!" rejoined Blount.

"I'm morally certain he deserves it, but hang me if it will be easy to prove it!"

"A bottle of brandy and a half dozen soda," said Martin, to the attendant who came in answer to his call.

"Now tell me what you've done, Blount! Here, have a cigar before you begin."

Blount looked at him curiously, took the cigar, and quietly detailed all that he had learned in the last two days.

Martin listened attentively, or appeared to, and when his visitor finished, pushed over the bottle of brandy.

"Help yourself, Blount," he said, and then filled his own glass, but made no remark regarding the story he had just heard. As a matter of fact his thoughts were away off in Hanley Hall. The detective, however, knew nothing about that, and somewhat piqued by his indifference, asked:

"Have you given up the matter, Mr. Martin?"

Martin looked at him inquiringly.

"I mean the recovery of your papers."

Martin apparently tried to pull himself together.

"Look here, Blount," he said, "I'm not right! You've been telling me something and I've been thinking of something else. Give me that brandy and tell me it all over again."

Blount passed over the bottle and Martin took a large tumbler full neat. It seemed to pull him together, and Blount, quick to appreciate the situation, repeated his story. When he had finished, Martin had apparently gathered his wits together. He pondered for a few minutes, and when he spoke Blount saw he was all business again.

"Blount, I am convinced that you are correct in regard to this man. I am myself anxious you should find him, for I believe when you fasten the murder of Golden on him I will obtain the papers I am looking for. I have not only not given up the case, but I will double what I offered at first for their recovery!"

Blount's sharp eyes grew brighter, but before he could speak Martin continued:

"This man has got about two days' start of you. It is for you now to close every port against him. I mean see that he cannot enter any city, either by rail or river, without your knowledge and his movements reported to you. Spare no expense! And now let us quit the subject for an hour or two. I am out of sorts. I can't talk any more about this thing!"

"All right," assented his companion, cheerily. "Let's hear something about life in Australia, or shall I spin you a yarn of police life?"

They sat and talked until late in the night, and when Blount left he carried a check for £100, "to cover immediate expenses."

When he called next morning Blount found Martin had entirely recovered from his nervousness, as he called it.

"I have covered every point, I think," said Blount, "and now all we can do, at least for the present, is to hunt for the original of the face in the locket."

Day after day passed without word from the foreign police or the discovery of a face resembling that in the locket. At Martin's request, Blount had been relieved from all other duty, and they now traveled about together.

On the morning of the tenth day after the disappearance of Hall, Martin was standing on the steps of the hotel, waiting for Blount, when he suddenly caught sight of Mr. Stafford picking his way between the throng of wagons and cabs toward him.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the old gentleman, "it's as much as one's life is worth to cross here!"

"It is a dangerous spot," responded Martin, warmly returning the cordial greeting of Mr. Stafford. "How is Fred getting along?"

"He is improving. We have the right tonic for him I believe, but he is anxious to see you, and as I had to come to town, I was charged to bring you back with me. Ah! Here comes our friend. Good-morning, Mr. Blount."

Blount looked somewhat excited. In his hand he carried a telegraph envelope which he handed to Martin.

"By the way, Mr. Blount, I have just heard from Mr. Hall. He is at the Royal Hotel, in Dublin. If not too late you can communicate with him there. And now, Mr. Martin, I must be off, but I shall expect you to be ready to go with me at one o'clock. Good-morning, gentlemen!"

While Mr. Stafford had been talking, Martin was reading the following from a Dublin detective:

"Your party is at Royal Hotel. Is about buying property in Kildare."

He had caught what Mr. Stafford had said and looked at Blount in amazement. The latter looked staggered.

"Well, this beats all!" he exclaimed. "Here we've been looking all over the civilized world and just as we find him, the fellow sends us word himself! Either we are all wrong about him, or he's the cheekiest case I've yet met."

"Why, Blount, where are your wits? Don't you see, he has managed to dispose of the diamonds somehow, and has gone to Ireland to carry out his story. You must get after him at once and trace him back."

"Right you are! I must be growing stupid--but I'll be off at once!"

"Wait a moment! You can't get away until to-night. Better send your man a telegram to watch him closely. Then come back to my rooms--it may be a long hunt, and money does as much as brains sometimes."

"I have sent the telegram," said Blount. "He is at this moment under the best pair of eyes in Europe."

Two hours later Blount started on his long chase, and when Mr. Stafford called he found Martin all prepared to accompany him.

CHAPTER IX.

While riding back to Hanley Hall, Mr. Stafford imparted to Martin some information which changed the aspect of the trip for the latter, from dismal recklessness to hopeful anxiety--his anxiety being to get to Hanley Hall as soon as possible.

They had the compartment to themselves, and Mr. Stafford remarked the dismal, down-hearted expression of Martin's countenance.

"I'm afraid, my boy," he said, quizzically, "you need some of the same tonic as is helping Fred."

"What is that?"

"A good, jolly, pretty girl!"

Martin's gloom became intensified, and more to keep the conversation going than anything else, his companion continued:

"I don't suppose you are aware Fred has become engaged to be married since his return. Lucky dog! He's got one of the best, jolliest and sweetest girls in Lancashire! It was all Kate's work though, for we knew nothing about it until she arrived." (Here Martin became deeply interested, and beamed on the speaker something after the manner of the sun bursting from behind a cloud.) "It seems they were a good deal to each other for some time before he went to Australia, but they quarrelled and that sent him off. She was inclined to flirt a bit, and he was inclined to be jealous. But you should see them now! I'll be hanged if it don't make me feel young again just to see it! Of course, I don't pretend to see anything, and you must not pretend to know anything until you are told."

Martin readily agreed to the restriction placed upon him, and for the balance of their journey Mr. Stafford had no reason to complain of his companionship. Indeed, the old gentleman could not understand the sudden transformation which had taken place, and on their arrival at Hanley Hall both were in high spirits.

They found Carden in the drawing-room, surrounded by a half dozen ladies, to whom he had evidently been narrating some deeply interesting tale, for their entrance was not noticed until they had almost reached the group sitting in a half circle about his chair. He, sitting facing the door, had of course seen them, but went on for a minute or two. Stopping suddenly he said, pointing at Martin:

"And there, ladies, stands the hero of the occasion!"

There was a general turning of heads instantly. Mr. Stafford roared with laughter, while Martin actually blushed--which caused the old gentleman renewed merriment as he exclaimed:

"Come, come, Fred! This is really too bad! Spare the hero's blushes!"

Everybody joined in the laugh this time--even Martin himself--which put all on a more friendly footing than an hours ordinary conversation would have done.

Among the ladies to whom Martin was introduced was a Miss Fleming--the "tonic." Where he had seen her before he could not recall, but that he



had seen her Martin felt positive. At length his curiosity got the better of him and as he was seated beside her at the table that evening he asked,

"Miss Fleming, I have been puzzling myself all the afternoon about you. I seem to recall your face, but cannot recall where I last saw it. Do you remember ever meeting me?"

Miss Fleming, looked at him in surprise, looked at him reflectively, tried to look wise, and finally shook her pretty head negatively. No, she had not seen him before--that is, she could not remember it if she had--"But then, one meets so many during season, you know, Mr. Martin."

Mr. Martin did not know anything much about "the season," but he did know Miss Fleming's face was in some way familiar.

On her part, Miss Fleming was delighted to have "the hero of the occasion" for a neighbor, and plied him with questions--"just to draw him out," as she explained confidentially to the other ladies in the drawing-room while awaiting the gentlemen. Her questions were put with such a pretty show of shrewdness that Martin could not refrain from smiling, and catching him once she said, poutingly:

"Now, if you aren't mean! Here Fred's been saying all sorts of nice things about you, and I have been thinking--never mind what, and you have been laughing at me all the time!"

This rebuke was audible only to the person addressed, but the whole table--heard her next remark.

"Why, Mr. Martin! You've got Kate's ring!" Then glancing at Kate's hand--she sat just opposite; "Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Martin! But it's like it, anyhow!"

There was a general smile at her confusion, and to cover it Martin said there was quite a history attached to the ring. He had not seen Kate's ring, and when Miss Fleming mentioned it Kate's hand was beneath the level of the table.

"History!" echoed the vivacious little sprite. "Then I'll forgive you for laughing at me, if you will promise to tell me all about it."

Martin laughingly promised, and forgot all about it until the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room. Once there, however, he found that not only Miss Fleming, but all the rest of the ladies were waiting for the story, and surrounded him immediately on his entering the room. The other gentlemen laughed at his predicament and Carden advised him to begin at once.

"You might as well go ahead, Dick," he said "if Jennie--Miss Fleming wants a thing, she always wants it bad, and generally gets it, too."

"Very well--I suppose I might as well surrender. Now pay strict attention, Miss Fleming.

"Well, some twenty years ago there died a New York merchant--a man of great wealth. His wife had died a year previous and to his son, a child of three or four, he left his entire property. At the time of his death, Mr. Hall was living in the country. He had retired from business a few years before and the people in the vicinity knew very little about him or his affairs. Therefore, when his brother-in-law, who was appointed

executor under the will, disposed of the property and carried off the boy Richard, no one was enough interested to inquire what became of him.

"The brother-in-law, whose name was Hardy, had a son of about the same age as the boy Richard Hall, and from the day he left his country home young Hall was taught to call himself Hardy, while young Hardy, then an innocent party to the scheme, was taught to call himself Hall.

"In the envelope containing the will was a letter from Mr. Hall to his son which was not to be opened until he had attained the age of eighteen. This, of course, the unscrupulous executor opened, and found it to be a request from the father that the son on attaining his majority should fulfill a compact made with his former partner, who had removed to England relating to the marriage of----"

As may be readily imagined, Mr. Stafford was growing somewhat interested by this time. At this point he could restrain himself no longer.

"Mr. Martin!" he exclaimed. "Are you--but hang it! You can't be inventing! Where the deuce did you learn all this?"

Martin and Carden and the friends of the Stafford's stared at him in surprise. Martin, however, quickly noted that neither Mrs. Stafford nor Kate did, although both looked a little excited.

"The story is a short one, Mr. Stafford, and if you wait a minute or two longer you will know it all."

"Oh, yes! Please, Mr. Stafford! Don't spoil it! Go on, Mr. Martin!"

Notwithstanding his excitement, Mr. Stafford could not help laughing at Jennie's appeal, and nodded to Martin to go on.

"I was saying this letter related to the marriage of the boy Richard Hall and the daughter of his father's former partner. Well, the boy did not seem to take kindly to his new name, and Hardy finally shipped him to his brother in the West, where he was so ill-used that at the age of fifteen he ran away and grew to manhood among cowboys and miners. He had a good memory, and retained a lively recollection of his uncle's endeavors to change his identity, and at the age of twenty-one returned to New York. Here chance favored him for in some way--how I cannot tell--he came across his uncle, now an old man in abject poverty. His son, of whose whereabouts he knew nothing, had squandered every dollar of the large estate left by Mr. Hall. He gave young Hall all he had remaining, and that was the letter relating to the marriage compact. Leaving New York, Hall went to California, where I met him and from whence we traveled to Australia, where we met George Carden, Fred's uncle, who took a great fancy to Hall. In return Hall confided to Mr. Carden his history and also his papers. Mr. Carden was unknown to me at that time, and as I was doing well on my claim I did not join them when they moved further up the river. Here Hall met his death at the hands of a ruffian who preyed on the miners. The trouble occurred one Sunday, and I happened to come along just then, being on my way to visit my two friends, and I thus came to hear Hall's story, Mr. Stafford, for he lived for some time after he was shot."

"But the man who shot him died immediately after the shooting--didn't he, Dick?"

It was Carden who spoke, and even the women could understand his words as they saw the grim smile and the cruel expression of Martin's usually

calm countenance as he replied:

"Yes, I believe he died just one minute after."

The ladies shuddered and moved closer together.

"After Hall's death," continued Martin, "Old Carden, as he was called, lived alone and away from the other miners. It was current report in the camp that the 'old man' was rich. It was known that he owned valuable property in and about Melbourne and Sydney and Hall when dying told me to warn him that it was known that he carried £20,000 worth of diamonds in a belt about his waist. I did so, but without saving him. He was found dead shortly after, and the belt and everything else, except a few small bags of dust, was gone."

Martin stopped as though through with his story, but Miss Fleming recalled him with:

"But you haven't said a word about the ring, Mr. Martin!"

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten! Hall gave me the ring and requested me to find the lady with its mate and inform her family of the circumstances of his death. He left her what little he had made--a matter of two or three thousand pounds, which I am still waiting to give her, but as her name and all other information regarding her was contained in the letter stolen with Carden's papers, I am still looking for her."

#### CHAPTER X.

To say Mr. Stafford was surprised by Martin's story would scarcely be doing justice to his feelings. At first he felt inclined to tell Martin the balance of the story of the betrothal, but hesitated on Kate's account--supposing, of course, that Hall was a person of more than ordinary interest in her eyes. The supposition was a natural one in view of the relations existing between Kate and Hall, as we must still call him, and he was therefore surprised to hear her join heartily in the general commendation of Martin's tale.

"I am glad the story pleased you, but really it is the facts themselves and not my awkward stringing of them together to which the praise should be accorded."

Martin said this in reply to a remark of Miss Fleming--that he was "a splendid story-teller."

"Well, the facts are certainly interesting," said Kate, very quietly. "Especially so to me, but it was your narrative of them which will now relieve you from all further anxiety regarding that legacy."

Martin looked at her inquiringly.

"Yes," she continued, with a smile and holding out the hand on which she wore the ring. "Yes, you need look no further, Mr. Martin. The ring and the woman are before you."

There was, of course, general surprise on hearing this, but Mr. Stafford quickly confirmed Kate's assertion by relating the story of his

partnership and the betrothal of the children. He, however, refrained from mentioning anything in relation to the subsequent arrival of the stranger claiming to be the son of his former partner.

"And so the poor boy died in Australia! Too bad! Too bad! But you have certainly been a faithful executor of the trust he placed in you, Mr. Martin. It seems like fate. You form Kate's acquaintance by saving her life; you then discover to her that she is an heiress and--bless me! there's no telling where you'll stop."

The old gentleman stopped, with a look at Kate which caused her to blush a little, even while joining in the laughter caused by his words.

"Before attempting anything further," replied Martin, "I must, having found the legatee, deliver up the legacy. It's a matter of two or three thousand pounds, as I said before, and we can settle it up any time to-morrow that is convenient. When that is disposed of, however, it may be that we shall find Miss Stafford interested in another and much larger matter."

"I knew it! I knew it!" exclaimed Mr. Stafford, slapping his knee vigorously. "Kate, you can prepare--say to-morrow night, to hear some blood-curdling tale; and at the end of it this magician will suddenly discover that the King of the Cannibal Islands or the Emperor of Nowhere has died and left you a kingdom."

Amidst the general amusement caused by this outburst Martin and Carden alone retained grave countenances. After the fun had subsided a little the latter said, very gravely:

"Indeed, Uncle, more wonderful things than those may happen. I am somewhat acquainted with this gentleman's capabilities, and know that his powers 'have not yet been fully extended.'"

The serious way in which this was said excited considerable curiosity, but nothing further could be learned from the young men, and after arranging for the trip to London next day the ladies retired. Mr. Stafford followed shortly afterwards, but the young men remained in conversation until a late hour--the name Hall being frequently mentioned.

Next day, Mr. Stafford accompanied by Kate and Martin, proceeded to London to transact the business necessary to the payment of the legacy to Kate. This was soon accomplished, and it being still early in the day, Martin suggested that they should have luncheon at Greenwich.

Here, while strolling about after a delightful meal, of which the famous whitebait formed the principal part, the party ran across a photographer--one of the class that carry about shop and residence wherever they go. A solicitation for their trade brought first an order and later a not particularly bad photograph of the three in a group.

This incident, unworthy of record in itself, led to others of consequence--terrible consequence to one character in our story.

On their return to Hanley Hall it was overlooked in the excitement caused by the departure of Miss Fleming, whose mother had suddenly been taken ill, and Martin's receipt of a long telegram from Blount, the contents of which interested both Carden and himself.

"He has been to Antwerp. I am going there," was the last and most

interesting line of the telegram.

## CHAPTER XI.

Among the letters received at Hanley Hall the morning after Martin's receipt of Blount's telegram, were two from Mr. Hall--one for Mr. Stafford and the other for Kate. As he tossed the letter to her Mr. Stafford remarked: "From our friend Hall!"

After glancing over his letter he continued:

"He seems to be buying considerable stock in Kildare."

Martin and Carden exchanged glances. It seemed odd that each time Martin received news of Hall so also did Mr. Stafford.

Kate's letter caused her to change countenance, and in response to an inquiring look from her mother she passed over the letter. It had the same effect on the mother as the daughter--a look of anxiety came to her face.

"What's the trouble?" asked Mr. Stafford, who had been watching them curiously.

Kate became embarrassed and blushed, but did not reply. Mrs. Stafford hesitated, and finally said it was nothing particular and concerned only herself and Kate. Neither Martin nor Carden knew anything of Kate's engagement, and Mrs. Stafford did not feel inclined to discuss it just then--although now firmly convinced there was something wrong about Hall. The letter she held in her hand urged immediate preparation for Kate's marriage, and informed her that he would return, expecting to find Kate ready, at the end of three weeks.

After breakfast Mrs. Stafford informed her husband of the contents of the letter, and he in turn took Carden into his confidence regarding the engagement and the letter.

Carden was surprised, and suggested consulting Martin without giving any reason or necessity for doing so; but Mr. Stafford offered no objection, and Martin being found in the library, he was soon in possession of all the facts regarding Hall's arrival in England and subsequent engagement to Kate--even to the mortgage or mortgages he held on the Stafford property.

Martin did not appear particularly surprised or put out at anything he heard until the engagement was mentioned. On hearing of this he said quietly, but with bitter regret expressed in the tone:

"I wish I had been told this before."

After a minute's thought he continued:

"If I may advise in this matter, Mr. Stafford, I would say let everything go on as it is, and allow this fellow to believe everything is proceeding smoothly. Of course, you are now aware he is an impostor, but there is more in this than you think, Mr. Stafford, although, at present you must be content with what I've said."

Mr. Stafford looked mystified, but a look from Carden caused him to assent readily to Martin's proposition, and volunteered the remark that he would have his "women folks" do the same.

Martin himself, however, did more that morning to put the "women folks" at ease than Mr. Stafford did, for meeting Kate shortly after the interview in the library, he begged a few minutes' quiet conversation.

"Let's take a stroll," he said; "it will be the easiest and surest way to avoid interruption."

Later in the day Mrs. Stafford was taken into the secret, as was also Miss Fleming, who returned a week later.

"Auntie is so nervous," explained Miss Fleming, "that when mamma has a headache she summons every doctor and every relative she can reach. Mamma never knew I was coming home until I arrived! And she just packed me back here, I really believe, to teach Auntie a lesson! And now tell about your trip to London."

They were all seated in the drawing-room. Martin had just returned from London, whither he had gone to learn if anything had been heard from Blount. He had heard nothing from that gentleman, and he was growing anxious over the continued silence. It would also appear that he was mistaken regarding Hall's movements, for a letter received that day announced his expectation of returning within a week. He felt decidedly blue and was not inclined to talk. Kate, therefore, told of the trip to London--an event of no little moment to her--where they had gone afterwards, and finally of their being photographed.

"Oh! Gracious! Let me see it, Kate! It must be one of those horrid tin things!" and after a glance at it Miss Fleming continued: "I declare, Kate! For your own sake, you really ought to burn it! It's almost as bad as the one I had taken three years ago--only mine is smaller!"

Martin became interested at this point, and now asked Miss Fleming if she had preserved any of the photographs. He had been gazing at her idly while she was speaking, still trying to remember where he had seen her before, and when she spoke of the photographs a sudden light burst upon him. Hers was the original of the face in the locket!

Martin asked the question so eagerly that he attracted the attention of the others.

"I don't know but I should have, for we had enough taken to exchange all around, and I managed to beg most of mine back. There was a whole crowd of us out sailing, and gentlemen were at a premium; but as I was only a little thing then, they didn't mind humoring me."

"Of course not," rejoined Martin, with a smile at the lady now nineteen years of age and four feet ten inches in height. "Of course not, but can you let me see one of those horrible photographs? I am really anxious to see one."

"Well, if I have got any of them they are at home; so, of course, I can't show them to you now."

"Could you not write for one?" persisted Martin. "It is not mere curiosity, Miss Fleming, but on the contrary, of the greatest importance that I should see one of the photographs you mention. They were of the

size put in a locket, were they not?"

"Yes," replied Miss Fleming, looking at him in surprise, "but how----"

"Never mind how I know, for the present, but if you will get me one of those photographs as soon as possible, you will furnish an important link in an interesting story."

Martin spoke very earnestly, impressing even Miss Fleming, and when he added:

"So important do I regard this, Miss Fleming, that I am compelled to ask you to return home at once--to-night."

Miss Fleming promptly expressed her willingness to do so, and started with Martin within an hour.

The drive of ten miles was accomplished quickly, and the search commenced immediately on their arrival at the Fleming residence. The picture was easily found, and Martin then questioned Miss Fleming as to her knowledge of the members of the party--especially Hall--but she knew no one of that name, and had not photographs of all present on that day. Neither had she ever seen the gentleman engaged to Kate.

Martin took possession of the photograph, and then proceeded to London.

## CHAPTER XII.

Martin was a little disappointed regarding the value of his discovery. He had expected to learn from Miss Fleming something about Hall. Still, he had found an important link in the chain, and on his arrival in London sought the inspector from whom he had secured Blount's services.

It was late at night--or rather early morning--and everything being quiet, Inspector Prime was rather glad than otherwise to see Martin. The latter related the finding of the locket, and the subsequent finding of the original of the photograph in it.

The inspector listened attentively. He considered it an important piece of evidence and said as much, but counselled waiting for news from Blount. Hall was under surveillance, and there was no danger of his slipping through their fingers again. Meantime he would put a "good woman" into Hall's late residence in Harley Street--as chambermaid. Through her everything there belonging to Hall could be examined without exciting suspicion.

Martin did not reach his hotel until daylight, and did not arise until late in the day. On descending to the office he was agreeably surprised to find a letter from Blount. The contents, however, were not encouraging. Blount was unable to find any trace of Hall, as yet, but did not despair of doing so.

Martin immediately communicated with Blount by telegraph, telling him he had discovered the original of the locket picture.

This being done Martin had apparently reached the end of his tether. What to do with himself he did not know, but he would not go back to

Hanley Hall, for feeling reasonably certain of finally proving his case against Hall, and being determined to follow it up, he did not care to meet Kate. That she must have some regard for Hall seemed only natural--otherwise why the engagement.

For want of something else to do, Martin sought Inspector Prime and learned that he, too, had heard from Blount.

"I can't stand this infernal idleness," said Martin during the conversation. "If I felt certain of catching Blount at Antwerp I would----"

"Why not take a trip to Dublin?" interrupted the inspector. "You will have to act carefully, however, and do just as O'Brien, the detective there, bids you. Does this Hall know you?"

"I think not. He met me once at Hanley Hall, but under circumstances which would probably leave no impression of my appearance on his mind."

"Well, you might go there to relieve the monotony of waiting--but be careful!"

Within a few hours Martin was crossing the Channel, and on arriving in Dublin found, on presenting a letter from Inspector Prime, that Hall, and his shadow, O'Brien, were at Naas, in Kildare, where it was understood the former was about buying considerable property, and after spending the day in Dublin, Martin proceeded to Naas.

At the "Blessert Arms," the best of the two inns in Naas, Martin found O'Brien, to whom he had a letter from Dublin.

There was nothing to report, O'Brien told him, except that Hall was well supplied with money, which he spent freely; that he had made many good friends, and was negotiating for the purchase of an estate in the vicinity.

"Does he live here?" asked Martin.

"Yes--whenever he can get away from his friends. To-day, and for the past two days, he's been off thirty mile from here shooting."

"But how the deuce can you keep track of him there?" exclaimed Martin, in angry surprise. "I understood he was never out of your sight or reach!"

"Be easy now, Mr. Martin. He's not out of either my sight or reach, for on my recommendation he engaged my partner, Jim Farrel, as his valet. Jim wired me just a hour ago that they will be back to-night."

O'Brien smiled just a little triumphantly as he finished, and then pretending not to notice Martin's confusion, continued:

"You see, Mr. Martin, I formed the acquaintance of our friend almost as soon as he arrived in Dublin, and I've cultivated that acquaintance with great success ever since. I am here by his invitation, but my pride--I am a gentleman in somewhat reduced circumstances, d'ye mind--my pride will not permit of my mingling very much in the sport which he is now enjoying, and in which he at first insisted I should join him."

The two gazed for a moment at each other as the detective finished. Then Martin extended his hand:



"I don't suppose there's any use of saying anything," he said, smiling ruefully at his own discomfiture.

"No more than there is necessity," responded O'Brien, heartily. "Come! Let's take a drop of something!" and after giving the order continued: "That reminds me of something--our friend, I am happy to say, is beginning to drink heavily."

Martin looked inquiringly, and O'Brien exclaimed:

"It shows he's growing either careless or desperate, for he drank nothing in Dublin, and something's bound to come of it."

Hall, together with several friends, arrived that evening. All were in high spirits, because, perhaps, as O'Brien explained to Martin, "they had a fair quantity inside of them."

The party proceeded at once to Hall's rooms, where wine and whiskey were ordered freely until late in the night, when they adjourned to the bar. Martin was standing with one elbow resting on the bar, his hand under his chin and his feet crossed, when they entered. Hall, who was quite drunk, either accidentally or in bravado knocked up against him and almost threw him off his feet. Martin was not in a happy mood, and angrily demanded what he meant; but even as he spoke, seeing Hall's condition, turned away.

The latter was not too drunk to catch the contempt expressed by the look and the action, and angrily insisted that Martin should listen to him, but instead Martin walked slowly away as if about to leave the room. He had not gone five paces before Hall was after him and struck him with his walking-stick. The blow, if it could be called a blow, for Hall was barely able to lift the stick, was the last straw--Martin's patience was exhausted. Turning on Hall like an enraged lion, he lifted him bodily and threw him half the length of the room--the flying body coming down with a crash amidst the chairs and tables along the wall.

Hall did not move, and as his friends picked him up someone said he was dead, and suggested detaining Martin, who, after lighting a cigar, walked out and off through the country for five miles. When he returned he had walked off his excitement, and enjoyed a good night's rest.

Martin paid no further attention to the matter, and laughed at O'Brien when the latter next day spoke of further trouble; but that evening a gentleman called upon him with a message from Mr. Hall demanding an apology, as public as the injury, or a duel!

At first Martin laughed at the idea, but his caller was an Irishman, very gentlemanly, very pleasant, but also very determined that his friend should have either one or the other, with the preference largely in favor of the duel. Mr. Martin must recognize the fact that he (Martin) was a big, powerful fellow, while his friend was comparatively a small man; and while it was true there had been a little trouble, the punishment was very largely in excess of the provocation. Moreover, the affair having been so public, he could hardly see how Mr. Hall should be satisfied with an apology--but, then, that was not his affair.

The upshot of the conversation was that Martin allowed himself to be badgered into saying he had a friend in the inn to whom he would refer the matter, and Captain Carroll having accomplished his object, departed with a satisfied smile and a pleasant "good-evening."

"I ought to have pitched the fellow out of the window! But I'll be hanged if you could be angry with him, you would think it was a marriage instead of a possible funeral he was arranging," said Martin, as he explained the affair shortly after to O'Brien, adding: "Is it possible this thing cannot be ignored? It seems ridiculous!"

"Yes, you might take the next train for Dublin," replied O'Brien, quietly, "otherwise you may as well make up your mind to fight, for Carroll will leave no loophole open for an amicable settlement. He delights in fighting himself, and would die of mortification if any affair he was engaged in should be settled without going out."

Martin swore he would not run, neither would he fight, but the man who interfered with him would remember and regret it, if he lived long enough; but in the end submitted to "the custom of the country," and O'Brien called on Captain Carroll that very evening.

#### CHAPTER XIII.

The arrangements for the duel progressed rapidly. Once it was understood that there should be a meeting, no more accommodating gentleman than Captain Carroll could be wished. He left everything to O'Brien, the weapons, the ground, the time. He would leave the choice of all these to the other side, dealing as knew he was with such an honorable gentlemen; but notwithstanding this, managed to have the arrangement of everything, even to the position of the men on the field, as he won the toss for the choice.

The night before the duel Martin wrote several letters to Carden, Mr. Stafford and Blount, and two to relatives in America. These he entrusted to O'Brien, to be forwarded in case he was killed. He was not at all alarmed about himself, just a bit nervous about the other fellow.

"It's a cold-blooded piece of business," he said, in talking with O'Brien. "Suppose I should kill him?"

"The anxiety is generally the other way," replied O'Brien, with a laugh. "Still, as you suggest, it's serious business and I wish it was over."

"It's lucky I'm a pretty good shot," mused Martin, "otherwise I might accidentally kill him." And looking up suddenly at O'Brien, added: "Of course it would never do to kill him. That job must be left for another time and another manner!"

The morning set for the duel dawned fair and bright, and with the first streaks of red across the sky a jaunting car and a closed carriage arrived at a quiet spot not a mile from the Blessert Arms. In the jaunting car came Martin and O'Brien, while the carriage contained Hall, Captain Carroll and a surgeon.

The parties had separated the night before and taken up quarters at different inns to avoid suspicion.

Captain Carroll having won the toss for position, placed his man with his back to the sun.

As Martin took his place he handed a letter to O'Brien. "Only in case of death," he said. It was addressed to Kate Stafford.

Whether one was too quick or the other too slow no one could say, but it was quite certain that Martin's pistol was not discharged until he fell with a bullet in his side.

Hall remained in his position until Carroll heard the surgeon's report.

"He's dangerously hurt and you had better get away to Dublin for awhile," said Carroll, hurrying back, "I've arranged with O'Brien to keep you informed of his condition. Can I do anything else?"

"Yes, send down that man of mine with all my luggage as soon as possible!"

"All right! But I don't think it's as bad as that--but be off! You take the car, he must have the carriage."

When O'Brien saw Hall about to drive away he hesitated for a moment, and was about to make some excuse to get away and follow him, when Carroll joined them, saying he too must leave, as he had promised Hall to send his man after him at once. This decided O'Brien, and he remained and assisted in conveying Martin to the Blessert Arms.

After seeing Martin placed in bed, O'Brien immediately mailed the letters he had received the previous night, and then sent a long letter to Inspector Prime of London and a telegram to Farrell, his partner, at the hotel where Hall had stopped on coming to Dublin. He also sent another to the Dublin police to look after Hall's movements, and having thus closed all avenues of escape, returned to the inn.

The surgeon had just finished a careful examination of Martin's wound, and said bluntly that he considered it dangerous, but could not speak with certainty for a day or two.

O'Brien was a good detective, but felt dismayed at the idea of having to play nurse. He appealed to Mrs. Moran, the good-natured proprietress of the Blessert Arms, for assistance before letting the surgeon leave.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Do you take us for heathens? Why, I'm only waiting for the doctor to leave to go and see what's to be done!"

"But I want somebody to look after him all the time, Mrs. Moran. I will be around myself, of course, but I'm no use as nurse and I will pay well for some one who is."

"Well, pay or no pay, you don't suppose we'd leave one sick man to take care of another? But if Julia wants to make a little extra I'll give her the chance. She's a good girl--the best I've ever had!--Julia!"

"Julia," a pretty black-eyed girl with rosy cheeks and a Juno form, came in answer to the call.

"Julia," said Mrs. Moran, "Mr. Martin in No. 6 has been hurt this morning, and Mr. O'Brien, here, wants somebody to take care of him, and he wants to pay something for it, too. It's a chance to make a few shillings, if you want to take it."

Julia wanted to take it immediately, and was duly installed as a nurse.

Toward evening fever set in and Martin became delirious. The surgeon was called in at once. It was bad, very bad, he said, and he remained an hour or more with his patient.

Just after the surgeon left Captain Carroll called. O'Brien, who did not want to scare Hall out of Ireland just yet, met him down-stairs, and said the surgeon had declared the wound to be a dangerous one. That of course Hall already knew, and it would serve to keep him worried. Nothing more definite would be known for a day or two.

During the afternoon of the second day, when Captain Carroll called again, he met the surgeon, who told him the case was a decidedly ugly one, and that if inflammation set in, as he feared it would, there was little hope of saving Martin's life.

Carroll immediately telegraphed Hall: "Better leave. It looks very bad," and Hall having an hour to spare, caught the steamer for Liverpool. He had found his valet, Farrell, quite competent and useful, and brought him along.

Meanwhile the letters mailed by O'Brien had reached their destination--those reaching Hanley Hall causing no little commotion. Martin had closed both letters by saying: "This will be mailed only in case of my death or serious injury." And O'Brien, it should have been mentioned, had written Carden that the cause was serious injury.

Mr. Stafford and Carden immediately decided to start for Naas. The letters were received at breakfast, and during the meal the men discussed the trip and the probable condition of Martin. Mrs. Stafford and Miss Fleming expressed the greatest sympathy for Martin, but Kate remained silent. As they arose from the table, however, she said:

"Papa! Do you think--do you think we--that is, I could be of any service? It must be awful to be a stranger in one of those places--and be--be so ill!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Stafford, looking at her in surprise.  
"I--I----"

Before he could go any further there was an approving chorus:

\_Carden.\_ By Jove! The very thing! Kate, you're a brick!

\_Mrs. Stafford.\_ Kate is right, George! We owe Mr. Martin many obligations!

\_Miss Fleming.\_ How nice of you, Kate! I should just love to go!

Mr. Stafford looked dismayed, and said very meekly that he had made no objection to Kate's accompanying them, nor had he any to make, and as it took women folks all day to get ready, she had better begin at once.

Preparations for the trip were begun immediately, but just at noon as they were about ready there came a telegram from Inspector Prime asking Carden to come immediately to London.

This was a set-back, but Carden decided matters. He would go at once to London, while they should start later for Liverpool. After seeing the inspector he would follow on to Liverpool and catch them at the boat.

Carden accordingly started at once, and as arranged caught them at Liverpool. He looked somewhat excited, but said nothing, except that the inspector had news of interest to Martin.

Thus it happened that Hall sailing from Ireland passed his betrothed sailing to Ireland.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

When Hall arrived in Liverpool he proceeded at once to London. His valet was careful to see that he did not come unannounced--at least in Bow Street--and from thence the information reached the new servant in Harley Street.

Hall, however, remained only a day in London. After spending one night in Harley Street, he informed his landlady he was going away again for a day or two and that he expected some letters. Any arriving the day of his departure were to be forwarded to Hanley Hall. Those arriving after that were to be held.

Farrel was then ordered to "pack up a few things," and at noon they started for Hanley Hall. On arriving, Hall was annoyed to find Mr. Stafford and Kate absent. They had gone, so he was informed, to what might be the death-bed of a very dear friend of the family,--"which is only the truth, you know," said Miss Fleming, as she concluded telling Mrs. Stafford just what must be said to Hall.

Although much annoyed, Hall preserved a calm exterior, and asked where they had gone.

"To Staffordshire," Miss Fleming replied, very promptly, not giving Mrs. Stafford a chance to commit herself.

Hall looked at her sharply. Her face seemed to trouble him, as it had Martin.

"When do you expect Mr. Stafford to return?" Hall addressed Mrs. Stafford, but again Miss Fleming interposed.

"Of course that must depend on the recovery or death of their friend," she said, with a mischievous smile.

Hall would have much preferred questioning Mrs. Stafford and receiving his answers from her, and suspecting, this Mrs. Stafford said she must leave them for a little while. Miss Fleming would entertain him.

Miss Fleming rattled off a lot of small talk, to which Hall barely paid attention. At length a break occurred in the conversation, and he said:

"Do you know, Miss Fleming, I seem to know your face--yet I can't remember where."

"It must have been my photograph," she replied, with an innocent smile.

"Precisely! I found a locket a couple years ago with your photograph in it--I knew I had seen your face somewhere!"

"Could you let me see it, Mr. Hall?" with the same innocent smile.

"No, I regret to say I cannot; although what has become of it I do not know. But I beg you will tell Mrs. Stafford I had to go, as I wish to catch the train back and I have barely time to do so," and having driven a very large nail in his own coffin, Hall left immediately, while Miss Fleming at once wrote Carden an account of her conversation with him regarding the locket.

When Hall alighted from the train in London, he ran plump into a gentleman of rather disreputable appearance, who cordially "blawsted" Mr. Hall's "heyes" and consigned his soul to everlasting perdition.

Hall did not recognize the burly individual and paid no attention to him, but the other appeared to recognize him and heard him give the order to drive to No. -- Harley Street.

"So yer back are ye!" he muttered. "Mebbe I'll give ye a call afore ye know it!"

It was our old friend Jiggers, and after Hall was driven away he stood for some time in deep thought. After a while he moved off in a hesitating way. Then apparently coming to a sudden resolution, he muttered a horrible oath, saying--"I'll do it!" and walked quickly in the direction of the den known as "Blind Jim's," where Blount had met him regarding the murder.

On arriving at "Blind Jim's" he sought a desperate character known as "The Knifer," and both adjourned to a private room.

It was early in the evening, and though the two conversed very earnestly until after midnight, and "The Knifer" appeared to have money, they drank but little--which caused the proprietor of the den to remark that "the boys in number six must have a little business on hand."

He was not far out of the way, for about one o'clock the "boys" left the house and proceeded stealthily to No. -- Harley Street.

Farrel, the valet, had obtained leave of absence, and no one but Hall slept on the second floor that night. He had come back from Hanley Hall in an ugly temper, and had spent the evening drinking--in fact had gone to bed pretty drunk. And he had what is called the drunken man's luck, for had he gone to bed sober he would undoubtedly have been awakened when our friend Jiggers, in removing his watch from the dressing-case, knocked over a glass globe. Had he awakened "The Knifer," who was bending over him, would have plunged the knife which gained him the title into Hall's heart. However, being drunk, he slept on undisturbed by the noise and escaped bodily injury.

In the morning when he awakened, Hall looked for his watch to see the time, and not finding it looked for his vest, never doubting it was there, but the vest contained no watch. Instead of becoming angry Hall began to look troubled and searched among the garments he had removed the night before. Piece after piece was thrown hurriedly on the floor, but what he sought--and it could not have been his valuable watch which he risked handling so recklessly--was not there.

Sinking back on the bed he stared around the room. Suddenly his gaze fell upon the open rear window, and running to it he saw a ladder raised against the rear of the house. It was quite clear to him now--he had

been robbed while lying in a drunken stupor, and realizing this he cursed himself and his folly and his misfortune.

After a few minutes he closed the window, and going to a closet took out a bottle of brandy, which he had just managed to put away the night before. Bestowing another curse on this, he took a drink of it and sat down to think. Suddenly he brightened up, and seizing a pencil wrote the following advertisement:

"If the parties who took the watch No. 0072 and other jewelry, together with an undergarment from No. -- Harley Street, will return the same at once, they will receive the full value and not be prosecuted. All the articles must be returned to ensure the foregoing."

"There, that looks hopeful--that is, if the fools have not thrown it away!" exclaimed Hall, as he read over the advertisement.

He dressed rapidly and went out without saying a word about his loss, and before breakfasting left a copy of the advertisement at the office of every newspaper in London, with orders to insert it for a week.

"What precious lambs 'e must take us for!" exclaimed "The Knifer" as he read the advertisement in the paper next day.

"Werry!" rejoined Jagers. "I wonder wot 'e thinks ve took the bloody pad for? Hundergarment 'e calls it!"

When a week had passed without receiving any response to his advertisement Hall changed it to the following:

"£500 reward and no questions asked for the return of the watch and other jewelry etc., taken from the second floor of No. -- Harley Street on the 10th instant. Address, CONFIDENTIAL, care of this office."

This, too, came under the notice of Jagers and his friend. The latter glanced at the advertisement covetously and said:

"Hi wonder 'ow much 'igher 'ee'll go?"

"Don't you bother yer 'ead about that! 'E can't get 'em if 'e went as 'igh as the bloomin' moon!" retorted Jagers, savagely.

## CHAPTER XV.

The trip to Naas was made quickly and without any incident worthy of note, except that the rough passage across the channel caused Mr. Stafford to become sea-sick as they neared Dublin, and having escaped it up to that time and become boastful of it, he now blamed his sickness on the Irish air which they must by this time be breathing--which air he declared never agreed with an Englishman's stomach.

Arriving at the Blessert Arms, Mr. Stafford inquired about Martin and was told he was still very ill.

"He's been out of his head entirely for the last few days," said Mrs.

Moran, "but the doctor says there is a chance for him yet. Would ye like to see him? The doctor says if we could only find out who it is he's talkin' about and askin' for all the time, it'd do him all the good in the world. But it's nothin' but Kate, Kate, all the time, an' sure there's thousands of Kates!"

Without waiting to see the effect of her speech Mrs. Moran led the way to Martin's room, and knocked softly on the door. Getting no response she knocked a little louder, and then opened the door.

"Look!" she said. "Poor Julia's asleep. She has not laid down once since he was brought in."

Julia was sitting near Martin's bed, with her head resting on her hand, sound asleep.

"Poor girl! It's time she had some rest," said Kate, and quietly stepping across the room awakened her, but Julia would not leave the room until Mrs. Moran beckoned to her to do so.

Kate quietly took her place. Carden gave her an approving nod, and turning to Mr. Stafford, said:

"There is no use in our going in now. Better come down and wait for the doctor. Meantime we can get something up to Kate."

"Faith, that's sensible, anyhow!" commented Mrs. Moran. "Come down to the dining-room an' I'll give ye the best in the house."

After the others had gone Kate arose and closed the door. As she returned she heard Martin murmur her name, at the same time stretching forth his hand as though seeking her. On the impulse of the moment she placed her hand in his and this seemed to satisfy him. In a few minutes he sank into a peaceful slumber and his grasp relaxed. Gently placing his hand under the cover Kate picked up a book which Julia had evidently been reading when she fell asleep. As she picked up the book she noticed a letter lying on the table. Truly feminine, she looked to see the address and found it to be for herself.

It was the letter Martin had given O'Brien on the morning of the duel, and he had laid it there to await developments.

Naturally supposing it was about to be mailed to her, Kate was going to open it, when hearing a knock at the door she slipped it into her pocket and went to answer the knock.

It was Mrs. Moran with a tray containing some of the various edibles embraced in "the best in the house," and some excellent tea, for which latter Kate felt truly thankful.

Mrs. Moran had brought up the tray herself for two reasons. First, because Kate had won her heart by her sympathy for the tired-out Julia, and secondly, because she had heard Carden speak of her as Kate, and she wanted to have a chat with her.

Setting down the tray on the little table, she said in a whisper:

"Doctor Fox was right I see. 'Twas Kate he wanted, an' now that ye've come there's no fear but he'll get well!"

Kate smiled a little and blushed a little.



"Why do you think I'm the Kate that is wanted? As you say yourself, there are thousands of the name."

"True for ye! But did any one ever see him restin' like that before, quiet and peaceful as a child?" and Mrs. Moran pointed triumphantly at Martin.

Having delivered this unanswerable argument, Mrs. Moran shook her head knowingly and stole out of the room as softly as though she weighed 120 pounds instead of "14 stone"--as she put it herself.

Down-stairs she confidently informed Mr. Stafford and Carden that now that Kate had arrived, there was no need of worrying, as Martin would certainly be all right again in a few days.

Even Carden, anxious as he was regarding Martin, to whom he owed both his life and fortune, could not avoid smiling at the simple yet sublime confidence with which Mrs. Moran made this assertion. Yet when Dr. Fox come down from the sick chamber he bore her out to a great extent. While up-stairs he had heard Martin call Kate, had seen her take his outstretched hand and then drop into an easy sleep. So that when questioned he replied that he had no doubt now of Martin's recovery--"provided the lady up-stairs could stand the strain of nursing him," and the doctor left them.

Mrs. Moran, who neither could nor would be shut out from hearing the doctor's report, looked somewhat triumphantly at her two guests, who in turn looked rather dumbfounded at this unexpected confirmation of her opinion.

Neither Mr. Stafford nor his nephew spoke for a few minutes. Neither deemed it wise to mention the thoughts which had actually occurred to both on hearing the doctor's opinion.

At length Carden suggested a game of billiards, and they adjourned to the table which made the "Blessert Arms" the preëminent of the two inns in Naas.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Doctor Fox called to see his patient early next morning, so early that he met Mr. Stafford and Carden coming down to breakfast.

"Well, how is the patient this morning?" he asked.

"I'm afraid you will have to go up-stairs to ascertain that," replied Mr. Stafford. "Oh yes! We inquired--" he added, noticing the curious glance of the physician. "We inquired just now, but were told you were coming early, and we could learn his condition from you."

"Sensible girl," said the doctor. "I will not keep you waiting long, I imagine."

In two or three minutes the doctor reappeared and motioned them to come up. At the door he cautioned them not to excite his patient adding--"He is now fully conscious!"

This was pleasing news, even coupled with the doctor's proviso that there must be only a word.

Martin was awake and expecting them, and returned the warm clasp of his friends' hands. Kate sat somewhat in the background, smiling and looking happy notwithstanding her all-night vigil in the sick room. When the doctor departed she was to exchange with her predecessor, Julia, for a few hours, by order of the doctor.

When the gentlemen descended to the bar and informed Mrs. Moran of this, she at once notified Julia, who proceeded to Martin's room only to return again in a few minutes.

The young lady was reading to Mr. Martin, she said, and would not want her for half an hour.

"That's good!" commented Mrs. Moran, to whom the information was conveyed. "She'll have him asleep by that time and you'll have nothing to do for awhile, so if you have any sewing or knitting ye better take it with ye."

When Julia returned at the expiration of the half hour she found Mrs. Moran's prediction correct. Martin was asleep and Kate awaiting her.

As the doctor was about leaving he again warned Carden and Mr. Stafford against exciting Martin.

"Your friend," he said, "has some weighty matter on his mind. What it is I, of course, do not know. Possibly you may. But whatever it is, all reference to it must be avoided."

In view of this positive prohibition Carden remained silent regarding the letter he received next day from Miss Fleming in relation to the locket picture. He would have liked to have consulted Martin, but this being impossible at present he decided to return at once to London, and felt relieved to learn when about starting that his friend was asleep. Kate could explain or avoid explaining his absence better than he could himself.

At the Bow Street station Carden met Inspector Prime, and read to him that part of Miss Fleming's letter relating to the locket.

After making careful note of this the inspector informed Carden that Blount had returned and was working on an advertisement which had appeared lately in the various London and Liverpool newspapers. He would have Blount call at Carden's hotel that evening, as there might be some questions to ask which did not occur to him (the inspector) at that time.

As appointed, Blount called at the Bridge Hotel that evening. He had only seen Carden once and barely knew him, but knowing the friendship existing between Martin and Carden, had no reluctance about giving the latter a detailed account of his work since leaving London for Dublin and Antwerp.

On reaching Dublin he found without the slightest trouble that Mr. Hall had just returned from Antwerp, but the most thorough search in Amsterdam--that city of diamond dealers and cutters--whence he had gone from Antwerp, failed to show that Hall had had dealings with any of them. He did find that a man answering Hall's description had been

there--but that was all.

Blount then showed Carden the two advertisements, at the same time informing him that he knew them to be Hall's.

"You see--he's getting anxious!" said Blount. "In the second he names a specific sum--and quite a large one too. Then again, he omits reference to that mysterious undergarment. I expect to receive full information regarding the missing property to-night. The chambermaid and his valet whom he engaged in Dublin, both belong to us. Yes," he continued, noting Carden's surprise, "yes, they both belong to us, and yet I don't believe we could stop him if he wished to leave the country to-morrow."

"Then you don't regard this locket affair as of much importance?" asked Carden, very much disappointed.

"Not alone. You see, Mr. Carden, he frankly acknowledges that he found it and lately lost it. It may have been stolen or lost from the chain. Still taken in connection with other points, it may prove of the greatest importance."

Shortly after Blount left to meet Hall's valet, and Carden made a flying visit to Hanley Hall. They arranged to meet the following day, for the purpose of informing Carden, up to the last moment before he returned to Ireland, of what had occurred.

Carden arrived late and was surprised to find that neither Mrs. Stafford nor Miss Fleming had retired. The former look troubled and the latter had evidently been trying to console her.

Carden soon learned the cause of the trouble. A letter from Hall to Mrs. Stafford had been received that evening. It enclosed another to Mr. Stafford, which she was requested to forward to him. The letter to Mr. Stafford was unsealed--probably left so purposely--and Mrs. Stafford, unfortunately for her peace of mind, read it.

The letter set forth in plain terms that the writer had returned from Ireland for the purpose of marrying Kate Stafford, and with the expectation of finding everything ready for the marriage; whereas, on his arrival, he not only found no preparations being made, but father and daughter were gone on an indefinite visit.

Mr. Stafford could take his choice of seeing the engagement fulfilled at once, or of having the overdue mortgages held by Hall foreclosed and Hanley Hall in the possession of a stranger.

Mrs. Stafford was in great distress. It was the first intimation she had received of her husband's financial troubles, and a woman almost invariably loses her head in anything of that kind.

Carden's arrival was most fortunate. Finding his aunt knew nothing of the matter, he told her he would take charge of the letter, as he was returning to Ireland next day, and assured her there was no occasion to worry. Finding it impossible to convince her in regard to this, he finally revealed what he had intended to keep secret until after his marriage to Miss Fleming; namely, that since meeting Martin he had become very wealthy.

"And Aunt," he continued, "Dick--I mean Mr. Martin, could buy the place twice over, so don't worry! He has risked his life for mine, and if my money is not sufficient I know his is at my command. As for this fellow,

I shall write to him for you that as the time for the marriage has not arrived he need not complain. When the time comes he will find everything prepared!"

Carden's words did much to reassure Mrs. Stafford, and she retired in a fairly good frame of mind. Miss Fleming accompanied her, pausing at the door to shake her finger threateningly at her disconsolate lover.

Next morning, immediately after breakfast, and after a short but not all stormy interview with Miss Fleming, Carden left for London.

At Bow Street he found that nothing had been heard from Blount since the previous day. Being anxious to get back to Naas, Carden left a note for Blount and started at once for Liverpool.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The main cause of the letter received by Mrs. Stafford was a scheming little attorney named Jacobs, who just managed to keep within the pale of the law, and over whom Hall held powerful influence. At the end of the second week's advertising Hall consulted Jacobs pretty freely in regard to his affairs, telling him that important papers, including a will bequeathing considerable property to the lady to whom he was engaged to be married, had been stolen from him; that he had offered every inducement for the return of the stolen property without avail, and did not expect that they would ever come to light; that as a matter of fact the receptacle in which the papers were concealed would not be apt to reveal their presence, and the thief or thieves had probably thrown it away as worthless.

Mr. Jacobs inquired how his client had arrived at this conclusion, and was informed that five times the value of the articles taken had been offered for their return.

Mr. Hall did not, of course, tell Jacobs all he knew. They would have been on equal footing had he done so, and could hang each other; but when he had finished as much as he cared to tell, Mr. Jacobs assured him that the loss of the papers, under the circumstances, would make no great difference. It would cause more trouble and expense--not a great deal--but as Hall knew almost the exact wording of it (the will) and as one of the witnesses, a man who made his mark instead of writing his name, was still alive there would be no trouble in proving a similar will which he (Jacobs) could get up--of course for a moderate consideration.

Jacobs talked plausibly--in fact almost the exact truth, and finally Hall wrote the letter mentioned in the last chapter.

Immediately on receipt of Mrs. Stafford's answer, written by Carden as though at her dictation, Hall proceeded to prepare for his wedding--his first act by way of preparation being to direct Jacobs to go ahead and prepare the will, giving him a pencil draft, with names and places blank.

The time fixed for the wedding was but ten days off, and Hall's second act of preparation was in the way of retrenchment. He discharged his valet--who immediately reported the fact to Blount--and then instructed

Messrs. Jones & Jones to close out his interest in the Hanley Hall mortgages for whatever they would bring, deducting six months' interest. He held just two, amounting together to £5,000, and the Messrs. Jones found a purchaser in short order at two-thirds of the face value--themselves.

He was now in possession of considerable ready money, the prospect ahead looked bright, and it only required fairly good luck for a few days and he would be sharer in, if not sole possessor of, immense wealth. The plain blunt letter from Carden reassured him as to the intentions of the Staffords, and he became once more the calm, elegant gentleman that he was at the time of his first appearance at Hanley Hall.

He was beginning to believe that the stolen papers would not come to light again, as he had told Jacobs, and there was nothing to bother him but the loss of his money--for it may as well be stated that Hall had lost a very large sum in notes, together with a large draft, on the night of the robbery. The draft was now overdue and Hall had managed to find out that it had not been presented for payment. For obvious reasons he had not attempted to stop payment, but the fact that it had not been presented did much to strengthen his belief that the draft, together with the papers with which it was hidden, were lost or destroyed.

True, he had ugly thoughts and ugly dreams at times, and had at all times a vague idea of being dogged; but now the excitement of the big game he was playing kept his thoughts pretty well engaged during the day, and whiskey ensured relief from them at night. The strain was a heavy one, however, and his nerves were by no means as steady as when he was introduced to the reader. Neither whiskey nor crimes make good nerve food.

Three days before that set for the wedding Hall's shattered nerves received a severe shock. He was in a restaurant which he frequented evenings, and overheard the following conversation:--

"I say, George! Did you hear about that thing at Baring's to-day?"

"Can't say! What was it?"

"A fellow who was afterwards recognized as a notorious thief presented a draft for some large amount--I've forgotten what it was--but at all events the cashier had been expecting it for over a week and the delay in presenting it kept the thing fresh in his mind--worried him, you know. Well, to cut it short, he asked some question or other and the answer made him rather suspicious. So instead of paying the draft he signalled one of their detectives; who immediately recognized the fellow and took him in custody. They're trying now to find the owner of the draft."

The conversation ended here, the two young men, bank clerks evidently, having finished eating.

Hall sat for a short time debating what he should do, and decided that for a short time he had better quit the country. He did not care to become prominent in the public view just at present. If things went right he could afford to lose the money--and right or wrong, it was not safe to claim it. Indeed, if the matter was followed further than the bankers who sold the draft, it was pretty certain to be found that it was the proceeds of the sale of diamonds.

Again, if the thief confessed where and how he had obtained the draft,

he (Hall) was bound to come prominently into view. So, on the whole, Hall thought it best to quit the country for a while.

His nervousness on reaching Harley Street was so marked that the chamber-maid paid particular attention while he informed his landlady that he must leave town that night. Business of great importance demanded his presence on the Continent--and before Hall had finished packing-up Mr. Blount was waiting for him across the street.

Hall wrote a couple letters before starting, one being to Mrs. Stafford requesting that she should notify her husband and Kate that owing to business of the utmost importance and urgency the wedding must be postponed. As soon as he reached his destination he would be in position to say when he would be able to return.

Hall mailed the letters in the first box he came across, hailed a cab, and was driven rapidly to the Euston Square station. Blount was not prepared for this move, but caught the order "Euston Square," and catching the first hansom that came along followed as fast as possible.

At Euston Square sharp inquiry elicited the fact pretty surely that Hall had bought a ticket for Dover, and Blount caught the next train arriving three hours later--for the same place.

Blount was not particularly worried about missing Hall, feeling sure his man had gone to Dover, and knowing what the latter had probably forgotten--that there was no boat until late next day.

At the first hotel in Dover he found Hall registered, and after making sure he had really retired, sat up with the clerk all night--there would be no such slip this time as was made at Liverpool.

It was quite late when Hall made his appearance next morning, but Blount never stirred until he saw him enter the dining-room. Then he, too, entered and made a meal, timed to finish exactly with Hall's.

Hall went to his room and did not leave it until late in the afternoon. He then proceeded to the dock, bought a ticket for Calais, and was about to board the steamer when Blount tapped him on the shoulder:

"You can't leave, Mr. Hall!" he said.

Hall turned quickly and asked "Why not?"

"Because I have a warrant for your arrest."

"For what?" demanded Hall, turning color.

"Duelling! Your opponent is badly hurt and you must come back to London. If you wish to see the warrant here you can do so, but it will be better to come back to the hotel. I can show it there to yourself--here it would create excitement."

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

A brilliant idea had occurred to Blount as he was on his way to Dover. He had really nothing, as he had told Carden, in the matter he was

prosecuting, on which to prevent Hall from leaving England, and on the way down he worried considerably as to how he could keep his man from getting on foreign soil. Suddenly the duel flashed across his brain, and before Hall arose in the morning he had by means of messengers obtained a warrant from a Dover magistrate. He waited, however, until Hall was about to board the boat, before using it, to make sure that that gentleman actually intended to quit the country.

As may be imagined Hall was startled on being informed that he was under arrest, and relieved on learning the cause. Even if his opponent should die it would not be as bad as what he had at first expected, and he accompanied Blount back to the hotel in a frame of mind rather cheerful than otherwise.

At the hotel Blount took Hall to a room and showed him the warrant. It was all in proper order, as far as Hall could tell, and he could make no objection to being placed in Dover jail. He would have an examination next morning, Blount assured him, after he had been locked up, meantime could he do anything for him. He, of course, had no feeling in the matter, except perhaps sympathy--for after all it was not really classed as a crime by society--or if a crime it was certainly that of many a noble gentleman for ages past.

The tone was as sympathetic as the words were frank, for Blount could talk when occasion warranted; but if he expected to gain Mr. Hall's confidence through his little speech, he must have felt sorely disappointed.

Mr. Hall wanted nothing except liberty, and that Blount could not give him. However, Mr. Blount would oblige him by sending for his attorney, Mr. Isaac Jacobs, No. 4 Fleet Street, London, for he (Hall) could really not afford to waste time in Dover.

If Blount was disappointed in his effort to gain Hall's confidence, he found a crumb of comfort in knowing he was connected with Mr. Jacobs; for Blount knew the attorney and his record quite well, nearly as well as Hall himself.

The telegram was sent without delay, and Jacobs came at once, arriving at Dover late the same night. Blount met him accidentally at the entrance to his hotel, the nearest to the station.

"Ah! Good evening Mr. Jacobs! Down to see our friend, I suppose?"

Jacobs was almost as startled as his client had been on meeting Blount, but having nothing particular to fear at the moment, like his client, quickly recovered himself.

"Yes, Mr. Blount," he replied. "Are you the party in charge?"

"Well, I suppose it might be put that way. But really I'm not much interested or posted as far as the case goes. A message came across from Dublin yesterday that there had been a duel fought somewhere over in that land of fun and fighting, and one of the principals badly hurt.

"The party wanted was our friend Hall, and I was sent after him and got him here just as he was about starting. I suppose he will be held until we can get further particulars from the other side, and then we will send him back."

Mr. Blount, as may have been remarked, could talk a long time and say a

whole lot without telling anything to his auditor.

Mr. Jacobs, however, knew Mr. Blount, and while the latter had not actually wasted his breath, he did not learn much from the attorney.

"Of course, as I was sent for I came at once," said Jacobs, "but I cannot see that any thing can be done here if the trouble occurred in Ireland. As for holding him for further information, I don't know that you can do that either. However, I can say nothing until I have seen my client."

As a matter of fact Blount had no legal evidence of the duel. He had, of course, heard of it, and from more than one source, but no official information had reached London or any other police office. Blount knew, therefore, that Hall would be instantly discharged as soon as the examination was held, which if Mr. Jacobs had his way, as he was pretty certain to, would be next morning. How to prevent the hearing puzzled him, and he sat for several hours endeavoring to find a way out of the difficulty. At length a desperate expedient occurred to him. The magistrate who had issued the warrant was neither particularly bright nor learned in the law, but he was most decidedly obstinate, and held Scotland Yard men in great esteem, not to say reverence. It had suddenly occurred to Blount to take this worthy gentleman into his confidence, and although it was past midnight, he acted on the idea at once.

Justice Holland was considerably surprised and at first annoyed at being disturbed at this late hour, but Blount assured him that nothing except the importance of his business would excuse his call, and forthwith unfolded a tale that made the magistrate forget his annoyance, and he readily agreed to be unable to see the law as Mr. Jacobs did next day--if it became necessary to listen to that gentleman.

Feeling sure of Hall for at least another day, Blount now set the telegraph wire at work and commenced sending telegrams in every direction--London, Dublin, Naas and Hanley Hall--with strict injunctions to the operator to see that he was not kept waiting for answers should any arrive by telegraph.

There was only the ordinary number of cases to be tried by Justice Holland the next day, but the Court officers and regular visitors were fairly astonished at the care and time he spent over even a plain, ordinary drunk. He inquired into every thing concerning the present case and all previous ones, if any.

It was long past the usual hour for adjourning Court, and seeing that more than half the calendar still remained untried Jacobs began to grow uneasy. He cursed the "stupidity" of the justice, who was spending more time on the simplest case that came before him than a London magistrate would occupy in disposing of the entire calendar, and strangely enough, Hall's case was the last on the list.

At length he grew so impatient that he addressed the Court and asked if his case could not be taken up at once. It was an important one, he said, and involved the liberty of a reputable and responsible gentleman whose important business was suffering through his absence, and he must demand an immediate hearing. The Court listened calmly, then informed Mr. Jacobs that his case would be taken up in the regular order, and that his client would certainly have a fair and speedy hearing. After which the Court proceeded with the trial of more cases. At length, however, the Court could stand it no longer. The announcement was made that no more cases would be tried that day, that witnesses should be on



hand at the regular hour next morning, and notwithstanding the vigorous protests of Mr. Jacobs the Court adjourned.

Mr. Jacobs vowed he would compel a speedy hearing. He would get out a writ of habeas-corpus, and did, too, but Blount had gained his point and Hall was kept in custody another day.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

When Carden returned to Ireland he found Martin, although still very weak, progressing rapidly. As predicted by Mrs. Moran, he had improved steadily since his nurses were changed--not that Julia was not a kind and attentive one, but then, she was not Kate to Martin. He was now able to sit up and no particular restraint was placed on his talking provided the subject was not too exciting.

Immediately on his arrival Carden communicated to his uncle the contents of the letters received by Mrs. Stafford from Hall, and inquired whether Mr. Stafford knew what mortgages Hall actually held--at the same time assuring him that in his opinion there was no reason to worry. Mr. Stafford knew nothing, except that he had always paid his interest to Messrs. Jones & Jones and that they had been very lenient up to the last application he had made for time. He related what Hall had told him about the way he came to be the possessor of the mortgages, and that was all he knew. Carden then proposed consulting Martin, but Mr. Stafford objected. He did not care to have a stranger--and after all Martin was only a stranger--so intimate with his affairs.

Although Mr. Stafford would not consent to consulting Martin in regard to the mortgages until it became absolutely necessary, Carden in relating what had occurred during his illness, could not avoid some mention of them.

Martin, however, made no comment regarding the mortgages. He did not speak for a few minutes, but when he did he startled Carden.

"Fred," he said, in his quiet determined way, "I must get back to London at once. There is a great deal to be done before the time for this marriage arrives, and nothing can be accomplished by sitting here waiting, like Micawber, for something to turn up. If anything does turn up it will not be to our advantage, and I shall be better doing something than idling here. So I'm off by to-night's boat."

Carden looked aghast on hearing this, but knowing the utter uselessness of objection, simply said:

"Very well, Dick. But don't you think it would be wise to hear what the doctor has to say about it?"

After looking at his watch, Martin replied:

"Well, as I can't get away until evening I see no objection to that; but, Fred, you know it will not make a particle of difference."

Fred knew this perfectly well, so making an excuse to get out, he set about trying to learn in advance what the doctor would say, and if possible, prevent his, (Martin's) departure.

He called on Doctor Fox, and when he had told his story the physician simply laughed at the idea of Martin attempting to get off that evening. "Why, he must be out of his head again!" he exclaimed. "The man is as weak as a child, and would die from sheer exhaustion before he reached Dublin."

"But he will go nevertheless unless we can devise some means of preventing him. You don't quite know your patient, Doctor. I do, and I'm very sorry I did not consult you before telling him certain things which I should have known would have resulted in this determination of his to go to London."

"Oh! And so, in spite of my warning, you have been talking business to him--eh? Well, sir, allow me to tell you that if your friend starts to-day or to-night, or any other time for several days, he will be on his last journey as sure as fate! While outwardly a cool, calm fellow, he is of a highly nervous temperament, and were it not for that he would go to sleep this afternoon and not awake until after the train had gone. That would be my course with an ordinary obstreperous patient, but with your friend it would be equally as bad as allowing him to go."

"But what are we to do?" asked Carden helplessly.

"I don't know exactly what to say," replied the doctor, slowly. "By the way! What relations, may I ask, exist between your cousin and your friend? Are they engaged?"

Carden seemed struck by the suggestion contained in the doctor's question.

"No--I wish they were! My cousin, I may tell you in confidence, Doctor, is engaged to the man with whom Dick fought, but it was not on her account, fortunately."

"Phew!" whistled the doctor. "Then, my friend, for some reason, you may depend upon it, she's engaged to the wrong man! There's more in this than appears on the surface. Your cousin is a very deep girl and not easily seen through, but engaged or not, your only hope of stopping your friend is through her. Consult her if you have an opportunity--I can do nothing but warn him, and that you tell me will be waste of breath. Still, it's my duty to do it, and I shall take care that it's done in her presence. It's now about time for my call. You go ahead and see that she is there when I arrive."

Carden departed at once, and on returning to the inn found Kate reading to Martin, who was lying back in his chair before the open window, with half closed eyes, drinking in the balmy air and the musical tones of the reader at the same time--the last man in the world one would suspect of contemplating a sudden, and, to an invalid, long and rough journey.

On Carden's entrance the reading ceased, Martin came back to earth, and the three entered into conversation, which continued until the doctor's arrival.

Doctor Fox made a more careful examination of Martin than usual and announced the result.

"You are doing very well, and will be all right again in a few days, provided you keep very quiet and do not attempt too much. Over exertion just now would ruin everything and throw you right back to the starting

point--perhaps kill you."

"Yes," assented Martin, "I am feeling the result of your skill and the care of my watchful nurse, who will scarcely allow me to breathe, except in accordance with your orders."

Carden and Kate smiled, as did the speaker himself, but the doctor preserved his gravity. The turn of the conversation did not suit him, and he saw plainly Martin intended to avoid the subject of the trip to London.

"Do not underestimate the care of your watchful nurse, Mr. Martin," he said, very gravely. "But for that care I do not know that I could do much for you. And be careful that you do not overestimate the improvement that has taken place."

"So Fred's been telling you about it!" commenced Martin, looking significantly toward Kate.

Ignoring the look and speaking to his patient but at the nurse, the doctor replied:

"If by 'it' you mean your mad idea of making a trip to London in your present helpless condition, he has, and it is my duty to warn you that such a trip would result in your death--even before reaching your destination."

Martin was annoyed, and looked it. He had not intended that Kate should know anything up to the last moment of his intended trip, and to quell the conversation regarding it simply bowed in acknowledgment of the doctor's warning.

Kate, it should have been mentioned, had only the previous night found Martin's letter in her pocket and read it. She now knew his secret--and her own too--but as she reached the end of the letter she saw that it was intended to have been sent her only in the event of the writer's death, and now understood why it had been left on the table where she found it. Except that it had made her a little more careful, and, if possible, a little more tender, Kate showed no sign of what had been revealed by the letter.

Doctor Fox was watching her while telling Martin that at present a trip to London meant death, and as he expected, she grew pale and looked troubled, but, contrary to his expectations, did not speak. He did not know what she had learned during the night. Had it been yesterday she would have joined forces with him and entered a vigorous protest--but it was to-day now.

Carden knew it was useless to speak and he, too, remained silent; and driven to his last resource, the doctor appealed directly to Kate.

"Miss Stafford, do not you, to whom our friend is so deeply indebted, think it very rash, not to say ungrateful, to throw away the result of our labors by imperilling his life, as he will in taking this mad trip to London?"

Kate raised her eyes to find Martin gazing intently at her. It was an unexpected encounter on both sides, and caused a slight blush to mantle Kate's cheeks, for she felt that if her glance expressed as much as his, Martin had learned a great deal.

With eyes cast down she replied rather confusedly that she hoped Mr. Martin would not think of going--but, of course, he knew best what to do.

The doctor had really taken a great liking to all of the party, especially Martin and Kate, and this reply, so unlike what he had expected, drove him out of temper.

"And you pretend to be his friends, and yet will allow him without protest to make this insane trip, knowing it will probably be his last! I'll be hanged if I can understand it! I had certainly hoped for your support, Miss Stafford, but it seems you are like the rest, and I must wash my hands of the whole affair."

The doctor had just eased his mind when he suddenly detected something coming and quickly added:

"Mr. Carden, I must see you down-stairs for a moment," and without waiting for a reply hurried Carden out.

"Mr. Carden," said the doctor, somewhat excitedly, as he hurried that astonished gentleman along, "let's go right down to the bar and take something to drink! You may not have been aware of it, but I've taken a great fancy to our friend and your cousin! I have, by George! And we must take a drink on it!"

"But what the deuce has that got to do with it?" asked Carden, beginning to think the doctor had already had too much.

"Everything, my boy, everything! Our friend has by this time very sensibly decided not to go to London at present!--Two more, please." This last to the barmaid.

"Yes," he continued, answering Carden's glance, "yes, my dear boy, it is all settled by this time! I told you she was engaged to the wrong man, and I was right--but that's all over now!"

Carden looked a trifle mystified at first, but as the doctor proceeded a light began to dawn upon him. It was not very clear, however.

"What do you mean, Doctor? Surely you think that since you dragged me down here----"

"Just what I do mean!" interrupted the doctor. "How blind you fathers and mothers, cousins and brothers are! Why, if I had not dragged you down here, as you put it, the explosion would have taken place while we were there, but our presence would have made it premature; and like most premature explosions, would have resulted only in hurting all present--more especially the two up-stairs."

At this moment a messenger entered with two telegrams--one for Carden, the other for Martin.

Carden's telegram read:

"Have Hall here under arrest for duelling. Get me official information of fight--see O'Brien.

"BLOUNT."

With the telegram as an excuse Carden was about to return to Martin's

rooms, when the doctor stopped him, saying very earnestly:

"Hold on, Mr. Carden! You appeared anxious only a short time ago to stop Martin from leaving here. He has now, I firmly believe, abandoned that idea. Do you want to start him again with that?" indicating the telegram. As Carden stopped hesitatingly he continued with a humorous look: "And, besides, you should have some regard for their feelings. Just put yourself in his or her place and imagine anyone intruding so quickly!"

"Bosh!" was the irritable response of Carden, but he sat down with the doctor and joined that gentleman in disposing of some bitter beer--"just to pass away the time."

This is what happened up-stairs.

Doctor Fox had scarcely dragged Carden out of the room before Kate burst into tears. Martin was startled by this sudden outburst of emotion and was very much troubled. It was no slight cause that forced such an exhibition of emotion from so reserved and proud a girl as Kate. As the crying increased Martin became more troubled, and after a momentary struggle surrendered.

Walking over to her with more strength and firmness than he had shown since being wounded, Martin raised her up, and taking her in his arms kissed her. She seemed to know what was coming, for from behind her handkerchief came a tear-stained face wearing an hysterical smile to receive his salute.

"You will not go away," she said, not inquiringly.

"No--of course not, since it troubles you."

That was all. There was no giving or asking. No questioning the right of one or the submission of the other. It was all decided from the moment Martin had arisen from his chair--although he knew nothing about the letter.

After a half hour Doctor Fox yielded to Carden and knocked at Martin's door. On entering both saw at once that something unusual had happened. Kate had removed all traces of her recent emotion and looked exceedingly bright and happy. Martin looked very complacent, his face wore a happy smile, and the mingled air of pride and ownership with which he now and then looked at Kate tickled the doctor immensely.

"I have to crave your pardon for our hurrying away," said the doctor, immediately on entering, "but I really had something of importance to say to Mr. Carden."

"All right, Doctor!" replied Martin, and as he tore open the telegram exclaimed: "By Jupiter! What does this mean?"

"Well, what is to be done?" asked Carden. "You are the only person in the place capable of giving the authorities the necessary information. O'Brien is away in some horrible place with a worse name; the surgeon skipped off as soon as he thought you were going to die, and Carroll is off in Scotland shooting. You are the only one left to give the information."

"And from me it will never be obtained! I was a fool to go into the thing at all, but my being a fool is no reason that he should be

punished. It was perfectly fair and he took greater chances than I did--though he was not aware of it."

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor.

Kate smiled approval. Carden gave it up.

## CHAPTER XX.

When Mr. Jacobs threatened to obtain that all-powerful friend of the prisoner, a writ of habeas corpus, Detective Blount, although then without the evidence necessary to hold Hall for trial, did not feel very much concerned. He felt certain his telegrams would procure enough evidence to warrant the prisoner's commitment for trial, but he had a very close shave for it, and the immediate evidence came through an unexpected and almost unknown party--Miss Fleming.

His reply came from Dublin--nothing was known there and O'Brien had not reported for forty-eight hours. He was engaged in another matter.

Next came Carden's reply for both Martin and himself: "Martin too ill. Doctor forbids talking of the matter. O'Brien not here."

Blount looked angry and disappointed--and then came Miss Fleming, just fifteen minutes before he was to go to Court--and with her a big good-looking country squire, who was only too happy to escort her to Dover.

Miss Fleming immediately proceeded to business, and with a directness that excited Blount's admiration. After making sure he was the right party, she laid two letters before him.

"Those," she said, "contain the information, I think, that you asked for. They are from Mr. Martin, and say that he is about to fight with that horrid Hall. At the end of each is a short note from a Mr. O'Brien, saying Mr. Martin was seriously hurt. The letters were sent to Mr. Stafford and--Mr. Carden, and they are with Mr. Martin now."

After examining the letters Blount asked:

"Miss Fleming, would you object to being a witness against Hall, if it becomes necessary?"

She hesitated a little but finally said if it would help her friends in any way she "would try."

It was not necessary, however; for the prosecuting attorney, armed with the letters and telegrams and a witness ready to identify him, had no difficulty in having Hall committed for trial--without bail, owing to Carden's alarming telegram.

Having Hall, now, where he could lay his hand on him when required, Blount accompanied Miss Fleming and Mr. Gerard, her escort, as far as Manchester, and then hurried on to London. No matter how the trial for duelling turned out--and he shrewdly suspected Martin would refuse to appear in it--there was a great deal to be done before it came on.

The first news he received in London was regarding the stolen draft presented at Baring's. Being detailed specially for Martin's matter, this was given as news and not as bearing on his case, as was the additional fact that no trace could be found of the owner, who was now supposed to have been murdered.

Blount in a professional way asked who was the thief and the amount of the draft.

The reply rather startled him. The thief was well known to him as a friend of Jaggars, and the amount of the draft twelve thousand pounds. Then Blount did some very brilliant thinking, which resulted in his calling on the man who had presented the draft.

"Hello, Sanders! Got you again, have they! I say! What did Jaggars do with the rest of the stuff?" Mr. Blount asked, carelessly.

"How do I know? Blast----" Mr. Sanders stopped suddenly. He had steadily refused to talk so far, but his week's imprisonment had not improved an unusually bad temper, and it had got the better of him.

Mr. Blount could be a perfect Job's comforter when occasion required, as is proved by the following:

"Well--you've put your foot in it this time, I'm afraid. I've been away for a week or two--only got back to-day and heard of this. They have you straight enough on the draft, but that's nothing--only a few years. The other is 'life,' or worse.

"Why, don't you know they've got it down for murder now? Oh! you are in for it I'm afraid, as soon as Jaggars gives up. They haven't found the body yet, but, of course, that's pretty near certain to come to light. It's only a matter of time."

Sanders was no fool--at any rate not fool enough to engage in any affair involving murder, and in spite of himself became interested.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded.

"About the finding of the body of the man you took the draft from. The draft itself, of course, amounts to only a few years, but the other---Here! I've got to see a friend of mine almost as bad off as yourself. Take this paper--it will tell you as much as I can!" and Mr. Blount hurried away to the end of the corridor, and then sat down and talked to the turnkey for half an hour.

Sanders was an educated man and came of good family. Drink had been the primary cause of this and his previous troubles, but he had never been involved in anything even approaching murder, and when Blount had gone he seized the paper and read a long story of the crime supposed to be connected with his possession of the draft. News had not been too plentiful, and the editor had given full scope to the reporter's imagination. The police were close on the heels of the missing murderer, so the paper asserted, and he or the one in custody, it was expected, would divulge the story of the crime.

Sanders read the story eagerly and looked considerably worried by it, Blount's little story fitted in so nicely.

Suddenly Blount appeared at the door of the cell.

"Well, through with the paper, Sanders?" he asked, and as it was handed back: "You were a most infernal fool to put your hand into anything with blood in it. Such fellows as Jagggers and 'The Knifer' (Sanders started) take chances of that kind right along, and are bound to come to the rope in the end--but they are little better than brutes, while you are a man of education. But I must be off! May see you again in a day or two--Good-bye."

And having left Sanders with plenty of food for reflection, Blount left the prison in high glee.

"I'll get that thousand pounds yet," he muttered as he passed out, "and by the merest fluke, too. And 'The Knifer' is in it, eh! Well, well! To think of playing it on an intelligent chap like Sanders--but they are all fools, every one of them."

Thus communing with himself, Blount walked rapidly in the direction of "Blind Jim's;" but once in the neighborhood, proceeded at a leisurely gait to that den. As those who frequented the place were all night owls of the worst type, there were but few present when Blount entered, and Jagggers was not among them.

The last time Blount visited Jagggers, the latter became a person of importance because of his intimacy with him, and it occurred to Blount that he could perhaps get something out of "Blind Jim" on the strength of this apparent intimacy.

There were no love lost between the proprietor and the police--especially that portion of it represented in the person of Blount--but he bowed obsequiously as the latter approached.

"I want to meet Jagggers again--where is he?" said Blount, after declining an offer of "something," and ignoring an inquiry as to his health.

As may be supposed "Blind Jim" knew of Jagggers' last bit of business, and hesitated a moment before answering that he did not know.

Jagggers had become very drunk after Blount had gone away the last time the latter called, and had told the proprietor of the den that he had put Blount up to a big thing. Remembrance of this made Jim add that Jagggers had been there the previous night for the first time in a couple of weeks, and was very drunk when he left.

"When you see him again, say I want to see him about that matter. He will know what I mean--I think I will take some beer."

This chimed in exactly with Jagggers' story, and induced "Jim" to say:

"Suppose I make it a quart o' bitter, Mr. Blount, an take it over to 'Nell'--you know her? She 'n Jagggers went out together last night."

Blount assented to the proposition, but a ten minutes conversation with 'Nell' proved conclusively that she knew nothing about Jagggers, except that he appeared to have plenty of money, and was living with "The Knifer," "down Blackwall way."

This was something, however, and Blount left "Blind Jim's" fairly well satisfied. He had not expected to find Jagggers there, and was rather gratified that he had not. It proved that Jagggers was in hiding--otherwise why abandon his old haunts?



That night every officer in London and the outlying districts had an accurate description of Jiggers and "The Knifer," with orders to arrest them.

#### CHAPTER XXI.

Chance favored Blount again next day. He was walking along toward Newgate, undecided whether to call on Sanders or try "down Blackwall way," when he met a brother detective. "Hello Morgan!" he said, "through with your job already?"

"Yes--and so is everyone else on that job for the present," replied Morgan, ruefully.

"Why--what's the trouble?" asked Blount, sympathetically.

"Let's go somewhere and I'll tell you all about it."

They adjourned to a nearby public-house and Morgan related his trouble.

He had been detailed to a large stationer's to find out who was committing a series of petty thefts, and was employed as a salesman, in order to familiarize him with the place and the people. He had already gained some information, and would probably have accomplished his work, but for an accident. That morning he had detected a young lad pocketing a fancy glass paper-weight, and was about to stop and take it from him quietly, but before he could even leave his place behind the counter the proprietor, who had also observed the theft, rushed forward and collared the boy.

"And what do you suppose the chuckle-headed idiot did then? Called out, 'Morgan! Morgan! Why don't you arrest this young thief? What are you here for?' The blasted fool! Of course that settled it for me--but I couldn't have any better luck!"

"How's that?"

"Oh! I don't know! I'm a bit superstitious about some people, and this lad belonged to that little Jew attorney, Jacobs, and you remember when I arrested him two years ago I broke my leg next day jumping off the train at Charing Cross. Now his imp of a boy comes along and helps to spoil a good job!"

Blount sympathized, as in duty bound, and ordered another pot of beer. Morgan was a really bright fellow, much younger than Blount, and a protégé of the latter.

Although now interested on his own account in everything concerning Mr. Jacobs, it was more from habit than anything else Blount inquired what the boy wanted so far away from his employer's office.

"Some peculiar kind of paper--a kind that's shipped a great deal to Australia and other colonies, I believe--and come to think of it, the youngster had several packages of chemicals in his pocket when arrested. Shouldn't wonder if that fellow Jacobs was up to some knavery again."

Blount was all interest in a moment, and said:

"Morgan, I'm on a big thing and I think I'll ask for your assistance. I don't know whether I can get it or not, but I'll risk telling you to go back and see this youngster before reporting at the office. I will go there and attend to that and meet you there when you get back. Get everything you possibly can out of the boy, and if necessary promise him liberty. This may be an important discovery."

They parted, and Blount on reaching the "office" gave a short account of what Morgan had told him, and then asked for the latter's assistance in "the Martin matter," as it was now known in police circles.

The inspector was an old friend of Blount's, and although he pretended to be tired of it, was himself interested in the Martin matter.

"Yes, you can have him, I suppose, but that Martin matter will be the death of me, I'm afraid." And having fired this shot the inspector left "for a few minutes," but when Morgan entered at the end of a half hour he had not returned. Blount accordingly informed him that he had obtained the necessary permission.

"And I'll take it on myself to say you need not wait to report now. Come along! We can talk as we walk. We must get down to Blackwall."

Once on the street, however, Morgan stopped him and hurriedly related his interview with the boy.

"By George! Morgan, this is connected with the Martin matter, I'll bet a shilling!"

"What is all this gambling about? The Martin matter?" asked the inspector, who had come behind them unobserved.

"You've just hit it," returned Blount, on seeing who had addressed them. "And you must help me a good deal this time. Come inside."

The three entered, and after a hard fought battle Blount came out triumphant, and hurried Morgan away with this parting injunction:

"Do anything--plead, steal, lie, anything--but get the boy out before they notice his absence. When you are through meet me at Horn's at Blackwall. Now jump!"

Having delivered this not altogether pious exhortation, Blount walked leisurely in the direction of Blackwall, while his partner hurried off in the opposite direction.

"I'll get him! I'll get him yet--and soon, too!" ruminated Mr. Blount, and he smiled with the satisfaction peculiar to the man who is reaching the point where he proves his theory to be the correct one.

Reaching Blackwall, he sauntered about, stopping occasionally when he ran across a high flavored public-house, asking a question here and there, and finally dropped in to see the inspector of the Blackwall district.

This gentleman, with whom he was very well acquainted, had not as yet run across either of the men; but, of course, this was only the first day that he knew they were wanted. Still, they must be keeping pretty quiet--if they were in his district--or he would have known something

about them.

It was now about time for Morgan to arrive, and bidding the inspector "good-bye" Blount strolled along to "Horn's,"--the most respectable public-house in the district--and found his comrade awaiting him.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

"It's all right! The boy's back at work and will be at my house to-morrow night, when it is expected Jacobs will be back. I was afraid to say to-night, not knowing what was on here."

"Good!" commented Blount.

"And let me know what I am doing--I can work to better advantage."

"Correct. You shall hear it all before dark, and we can do nothing more until then."

Blount related in detail the full history of the Martin matter as far as he knew, and it was dark when he concluded his story.

"And now you must stay right here all the time until you find Jagers. I'm satisfied the girl told me the truth to-day, and that he told her the truth while drunk last night. He don't know you, so you can go about as you are; but I shall have to make a little change, so that he may not be alarmed if he catches sight of me first."

After a hearty meal Morgan engaged a room at Horn's and thither they proceeded. Here Blount made his "little change," which, however, would enable him to pass his closest friend without fear of recognition. Being satisfied of this, he together with Morgan made a tour of the public-houses of high and low degree embraced in the Blackwall district, but without success.

"Never mind," he said, on returning to Horn's, "I'm satisfied he's here, and we'll get him before the week's out if we look sharp. I'll see you when you get back to-morrow night. Good-night."

## CHAPTER XXII.

Things having begun to progress favorably over in England we will take a trip across the Channel.

Martin was recovering rapidly, to the great satisfaction of Dr. Fox, and the doctor was not alone in declaring that to the nurse, or nursing, or both, belonged the credit of the cure. And many were the sly remarks and glances bestowed on the patient and nurse when they indulged in the now daily stroll, always accompanied by Carden, or the doctor, or Mr. Stafford--sometimes all three.

News spreads rapidly in a small place. Each one's affairs is the concern of all the rest, and from sly looks and remarks it began to be rumored that Miss Stafford and Martin were to be married as soon as the latter was fully recovered. A little later the day was fixed, and finally, a week after the engagement had been officially announced, (by the gossips), Mr. Stafford was almost paralyzed by being asked for an

invitation to his daughter's marriage.

The request was made jestingly, and came from a wealthy gentleman whose acquaintance he had formed since arriving in Ireland.

Notwithstanding the jesting tone, the explanation which followed awakened Mr. Stafford to the fact that there was considerable talk going on concerning his daughter and Martin. Had this gossip been confined to the poorer classes, he would have paid no attention; but the fact of this friend speaking of it--even in jest--proved that it was not, and he became rather alarmed. Mr. Stafford had the greatest regard for Martin, and liked him well enough to make that detestable trip to Ireland; but Kate was already engaged to one man, and certainly must have cared something for him when she consented to the engagement, and neither Martin nor Kate must cause any more such talk.

Meeting Carden shortly after, he asked bluntly whether he knew anything, and related what he had heard, but Carden knew nothing.

Carden did suspect a great deal, but he did not care to express his views on the subject, and remained quiet.

Mr. Stafford was dissatisfied, and, being aroused now, he determined to get at the bottom of the matter. There being but two people left, and they the principals, he chose Kate as the easiest to approach on the subject. Here again he was disappointed; for on telling what he had heard, she simply smiled.

"Why, papa!" she said, "how ridiculous to pay attention to such idle talk! If Mr. Martin should hear of this he would not allow us to remain an hour. And you know we are considerably indebted to him."

There was no blushing or confusion--no awkward attempt at explanation--and Mr. Stafford was completely crushed. Had he seen Carden, just a few minutes previous, telling Kate that her father would probably call on her shortly regarding certain queer stories regarding herself and Martin, and then leave at once without waiting to see the effect of his words, he would not perhaps have been crushed so completely. She did blush then--very furiously, too.

However, Mr. Stafford was soon relieved of "the infernal Irish and their confounded stories," for in the course of a few days Martin, who was again becoming uneasy and anxious to get back to London, obtained Dr. Fox's consent to make the trip; and in recognition of his kindness, as he considered it, Martin insisted that the doctor should accompany them.

"I'll make it good, Doctor," he said. "You can put some other poor chap in your place, and give him a chance to make something."

And so it was arranged, with the addition of Julia Farrell, Martin's first nurse. Just how to recompense her at present for her goodness to him he did not know. In the future he had something laid out for her, but did not care to spoil it by being premature; and accordingly, to keep her in the way of doing better and of being in a better position than she could possibly reach in the "Blessert Arms," Martin requested her to accompany them to England, and with Mrs. Moran's assistance persuaded her to do so. To Mrs. Moran he confided his intentions regarding Julia, and to help in carrying them out, left a message for O'Brien.

The decision to start was arrived at on Thursday, and the time of

departure fixed for Saturday morning, to catch the night boat from Dublin and still leave time for a little rest before crossing the Channel. This was strictly in accordance with Dr. Fox's schedule, and they spent an hour or two during the afternoon looking around Dublin.

On returning to the hotel, they were considerably surprised to find O'Brien awaiting them; even Martin, who had left the message for him, was a little surprised. For reasons of his own, Martin was pleased to have him with them, and the party started in very good spirits for England.

The voyage was quick, and easy and uneventful, and immediately on arrival, and not in accordance with Dr. Fox's schedule, they proceeded to Hanley Hall, where they received a warm welcome from everybody--but especially so at the Hall itself, where Mrs. Stafford, Miss Fleming and her late escort to Dover, Squire Gerard, were awaiting them.

The three strangers, Julia, the doctor and O'Brien, were made especially welcome, when it was known the various parts they had played in connection with Martin's trouble.

Next morning a message was received from Blount. Their arrival had not escaped him--at least Martin's had not, for the message was directed to him.

The letter announced that Blount had managed to have Hall committed for trial; that the trial would come on shortly, and desired to know whether Martin would be able to go to Dover to attend the trial, or if it would be necessary to take his testimony in writing. Incidentally he mentioned O'Brien's name.

Immediately on receipt of this letter Martin did two things, of one of which Blount became aware very quickly, and which caused him considerable irritation. The other, had he known of it, would have made him exceedingly angry.

First Martin wrote a letter to Mr. Blount, informing him in the most distinct and emphatic style that he would not appear against Hall regarding the duel in any manner.

Next he sent for O'Brien, who had obtained an extended leave of absence before starting from Dublin, and showed him Blount's letter and his reply.

"Now, O'Brien," he said, "I know it is asking a great deal just at present, but I want you to go right to Dover and thence to Calais, where you must stay until this trial is over. I will let you know the very moment you can come back, and (with a quizzical smile) I know you will not delay. Will you go? You understand why I ask you to do this."

O'Brien cheerfully volunteered to put himself out of Blount's reach, and started that afternoon for Dover.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

Morgan's efforts to find Jagers were untiring and equally unavailing, and at the end of the first week he was certain Jagers was not to be

found in Blackwall, so certain that he ventured to express this belief to Blount. The latter, however, was equally certain Jagers was in Blackwall. "Keep at it," he said; "you'll run across his trail yet, although I was a little ahead when I said a week," and Morgan accordingly continued the hunt.

Blount was now in a particularly hopeful mood, and felt confident Morgan would unearth Jagers; and he had obtained some interesting information concerning Jacobs, the attorney, through the office-boy, whose release he had obtained for the purpose of using him against his employer.

When the boy called at Morgan's house, according to his promise, and Blount instead of Morgan met him, it required some persuasion to make him talk; but he was eager enough to do so when Blount modestly admitted that it was to him he owed his liberty, and on him depended his enjoyment of it in the future.

Blount then learned that the paper and chemicals which had been found upon the boy, were intended for a clerk recently employed by Mr. Jacobs, for what purpose the boy did not know, except that they were to be used in copying some papers. Did he know the contents of the papers or their character? No, nothing, except that Mr. Hall had left them with Mr. Jacobs.

That was all Blount could get out of the boy at the first meeting.

"Now, Henry," he said, when the boy had finished, "this stealing business of yours is only postponed, but if you do as I bid you, it will never come up again. If you don't you will certainly go to jail, and in short order."

Henry was only too eager to promise to do anything to prevent his re-arrest, and Blount continued:

"Very well, Henry, we'll see how you get on. Now then! You get to the office first in the morning--don't you? Yes--well, to-morrow morning be there particularly early and make a rough copy of the papers this new clerk is working on. If you can't copy all, read the rest carefully so that you can tell me what it is about, and copy the balance next morning. Then you must get me a sheet of the paper and a few drops of the ink. If you do all this correctly it will be a good deal in your favor, and may obtain your absolute release from this foolish trouble you are in. You must also pay close attention to what passes between Mr. Jacobs and the new clerk and try to remember it. By the way! What is the new clerk's name?"

"Quirk, sir, and I heard Mr. Jacobs tell him when he came first, that if he didn't keep sober it would be worse for him."

"Oh! ho! Got a grip on him--eh? Well, that's all for to-night, Henry. Be sharp now, and get here as early to-morrow night as you can."

Shortly after the boy had gone, and while Blount was musing over his story regarding the queer documents, the preparation of which required such special paper and peculiar ink--for he shrewdly suspected the chemicals were to be used in making the latter--Morgan entered looking a trifle exultant.

"I have located him at last!" he said.

"Of course; he will be safe until you get back? You know I don't want to

lose sight of him now under any circumstances."

"Yes--he's safe enough. He's blind drunk at the 'North Star.' He has a room there, and has been out of the house but once since hiring it. 'The Knifer' must be somewhere else, for from the description he is the friend and only caller who comes occasionally to see Jagggers."

Blount was not of the "I told you so" breed, but came near looking it as he said:

"Very good, Morgan! Very good! Now get back as quick as you can and don't leave him again until I come. I think between this boy and Sanders and what we can make Jagggers say, we are getting near the end of the Martin matter. Sanders looks tired out already, and if I can only keep up the strain he's under he will give up everything in a day or two. Meantime you look out for Jagggers, and I'll see about these queer papers. I'm beginning to think they will form an important link in the chain which we will soon finish forging."

Morgan started back at once, pleased with Blount's commendation and confidence in him; but found on his arrival at the "North Star,"--which was a house of fair character and had for that reason escaped close attention--that there had been a row during his absence, and that Jagggers had been stabbed by a drunken sailor. The injured man was being carried up-stairs when he arrived, and on his heels came the doctor.

Morgan, who had been informed that the wound was a bad one, now justified Blount's high opinion of him by making a bold stroke. Calling the doctor aside, he informed him who he was and that Jagggers was a criminal.

"You can, if necessary, but it probably will not be, introduce me as your assistant; and then, whether the wound is really dangerous or not, he must be made to believe it is--make him believe he is dying!"

The doctor hesitated and looked doubtful, but when Morgan said it was "worth five pounds," all hesitation and doubt vanished--of course, Mr. Morgan was a representative of the law, and he must do as he required.

Jagggers was really seriously hurt, and fully appreciated that fact. He greeted the doctor with a curse for delaying so long, and then asked what chances he had of recovery.

"Don't be afraid of tellin' me!" he exclaimed, as the doctor, after carefully sewing the wound, stood looking gravely and thoughtfully at his patient--as per instructions.

Morgan, standing to one side and out of Jagggers' view, acknowledged to himself that the doctor had fairly earned the money, as he saw the more than professional gravity deepen into positive gloom before the reply came:

"You are in a decidedly dangerous condition. Wounded as you are in the groin, I cannot undertake to say you will live two hours!"

Jagggers was not wounded in the groin, but of course did not know it, and looked terror-stricken on hearing the verdict he had so freely invited. His terror was increased by the doctor's suggestion that a clergyman was next in order.

"No, no! I want none of the d----d canting parsons!" he cried; and then,

catching sight of Morgan, who had purposely come within range of his sight, exclaimed: "Who is that? What does he want?"

Before the doctor could reply, Morgan stepped forward and answered for himself. Jagggers was now in the desired condition to continue the bold game he was playing.

"I am a detective, Jagggers, and I came here for you; but as death claims you first, I suppose I can only wait for the end."

Jagggers was very weak from loss of blood, owing to the delay in sending for a physician, and the subsequent delay of that gentleman after his arrival at the "North Star" in consulting with Morgan, and this weakness increased the terrors of his imagination.

"Wot fur?" he asked.

"Murder of Golden in Burns Alley," was the sententious reply.

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" screamed Jagggers, starting up with sudden energy. "It's a lie! He was my friend!"

"Well, well! Never mind. It don't matter now, of course, but if you did not murder him, how did you get possession of that draft and the other papers? Sanders says he got the draft through you."

The doctor was standing in front of Jagggers, and Morgan motioned him to take down what was said.

Wearied, confused, and believing himself dying, Jagggers replied:

"I did give Sanders a draft, but the old man never had no draft! That devil, Hall, had that, but me and 'The Knifer' got the best of him. We got into his room one night and got his papers. They was sewed up in a chest-protecter an' I kep' them just for spite! They was no good to me--only the draft! And that's gone too! Poor Sanders! He's in for that!"

"Doctor!" called Morgan, sharply, but with a significant look. "Give this man something to brace him up! I must get this thing in writing!"

The doctor hastily prepared something for Jagggers, which was scarcely in his stomach before Morgan asked:

"What you say may possibly save Sanders' neck from the rope and put it around Hall's, but you must sign a statement of it!"

Morgan had touched the right key, and knew it when he saw the glitter of the dying (?) man's eyes on mentioning Hall.

"Now then, Jagggers! If you want to put the rope on the right man you must tell me where the papers are. Where are they now? You've got 'em, I suppose?"

"No--Jack (The Knifer) played me a mean trick. He's got all the papers an' wouldn't give 'em to me. He was 'ere yesterd'y an' I don't just know where he's gone--but 'e's got 'em."

The doctor finished writing almost as soon as Jagggers stopped speaking, and after making his mark to it the latter dropped back on the pillow.



"Dead!" exclaimed Morgan.

"Oh, no! Just asleep!" said the doctor.

Reassured on this point, Morgan despatched a message to Blount and then proceeded to make himself comfortable for the night.

Next morning at six o'clock Blount appeared, and simultaneously Jagers awoke.

A long conversation ensued--Blount holding Jagers's statement of the night before in his hand.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

On the morning of the trial for duelling Hall entered the court room, looking defiantly at Blount, and took his place full of apparent confidence--and with reason. Jacobs had learned of Martin's return to England, and had also managed to learn two other facts of importance to his client: first, that Martin was now in fairly good health; and second, that he would not appear at the trial.

When the case was called Jacobs answered "ready" with great promptness and the trial commenced. The prosecution had nothing but the same letters produced on the commitment, although it had promised to have ample evidence at the trial, and Mr. Jacobs immediately moved for the discharge of his client. It would be ridiculous, had it not been so outrageous, he said, to proceed any further. The very man whom it was asserted by the prosecution on the commitment was at the point of death at the hands of his client, was actually in England and out riding and shooting daily. Why did not the prosecution produce this man or some witness of the alleged duel?

The prosecuting officer looked rather blankly at Blount, the latter looked wickedly at the prisoner and his counsel; but looks break no bones, and Mr. Jacobs's motion to discharge Hall was duly granted. In the court room with Blount was Morgan, and as Hall walked out, once more a free man, he had a new shadow.

"Don't let him out of your sight," warned Blount "or he'll fool you as he once did me. We are getting pretty close to him now--very close. Jagers and Sanders we have pretty safe on the burglary, but it will never do to alarm him until everything is ready. I will get to London and see what can be done there."

Hall's first act after dining at his hotel with Jacobs, was to write Mr. Stafford, advising him that he would return to Hanley Hall within a day or two, and hoped to find things in readiness for the marriage.

After this he had a consultation with Jacobs regarding the papers the latter was having prepared, and incidentally learned, to his immense relief, that the affair of the stolen draft appeared to have died out.

Hall's letter caused some trouble at Hanley Hall--one result of it being Martin's departure on the day after its receipt--leaving instructions for O'Brien (who had been notified that he could return) to keep out the way of Hall.

There was to all appearances nothing more than the usual regret at the departure of a friend exhibited by Kate when Martin announced his intention of removing his quarters to London, and Mr. Stafford felt correspondingly relieved, for he was still suspicious. However, something had actually come between Kate and Martin, and each acted in a very reserved manner toward the other. It had begun with Martin immediately on their arrival at Hanley Hall, and Kate, quick to notice the least change, and too proud to ask for a reason, responded in kind--with the result that there was now quite a breach existing between them. Martin had on his part become aware of the change in Kate's attitude toward him, and when he took her hand before starting for the station, he thought it odd that she should be the one to misunderstand him, but before either could speak Carden appeared to drive him and Dr. Fox to the station.

"I will be up after you just as soon as I have had a look at this fellow and hear what he has to say," said Carden, as they drove to the station. "I can then judge what is best to be done, and act as circumstances may require; otherwise I would of course be with you, but I guess the doctor can take care of you for a day or two."

"Oh, I will see that he doesn't run round too much," said the doctor, laughingly.

Martin and the doctor proceeded to London, and at the doctor's suggestion secured quarters in the suburbs, instead of at the London Bridge Hotel, where the former usually put up. Here Blount called, Martin having advised him of his residence at Croydon. He had not forgiven Martin for refusing assistance in the matter of the trial for duelling, and was rather reserved at first; but after detailing the various occurrences in which they were both interested, he succumbed to the admiration expressed by Martin and thawed out a little.

"And there is another thing I had almost forgotten," he continued. "This fellow Jacobs is without a doubt forging a will for Hall's use," and he then related the substance of the arrest of Jacobs' office boy, his subsequent relations with him and the use he had made of him. "I have a copy of the will as it is being prepared, although it is not satisfactory yet, according to what the boy tells me. Here it is. As you see names, places, and amounts are all blank--left to be filled in by Mr. Hall when the proper time arrives. This proves that he has not recovered the papers and that Jagers tells the truth about 'The Knifer' having them. When we secure him we then wind up Mr. Hall's affairs in short order. The locket, the robbery by Jagers, and the forgery of the will, will be enough to hang him higher than Haman.

"Morgan is now in Paris trying to find who bought the draft, and if as we suspect it is Hall, then it will not be a hard matter to find the diamond dealer from whom he obtained the cash. And now, Mr. Martin, how much time have we, before it will be absolutely necessary to close in on him?"

"I can't tell yet," returned Martin, "I must wait until Fred Carden either comes himself or reports."

He spoke wearily as though tired of the matter, and Blount ascribed it to his late illness. Doctor Fox, who had begun to notice the change in Martin since leaving Hanley Hall, and suspected the true cause, was now willing that his patient should become even excitedly interested in something--anything was better than this dull indifference--and he

sought to awaken Martin's interest in various ways, but without success.

The day following Blount's visit brought O'Brien with news that Hall had arrived, and following O'Brien came Carden.

Blount was off again after "The Knifer," and O'Brien and Doctor Fox were both out when Carden and Martin met.

"He is back again," said Carden, "and I'm satisfied Kate has no feeling but dislike for him. What ever induced her to consent to marry him I cannot imagine, and how to prevent it I can't see! And yet it's as plain as day that for some reason she's being sacrificed in the affair!"

Martin listened attentively to Carden, and when the latter began pacing the floor nervously, he said, slowly, and as though weighing his words:

"Fred, I have something of a confession to make regarding your cousin and myself."

Carden stopped short in the centre of the floor and looked at him.

"Yes, on the day I gave up the trip to London, your cousin, through my weakness, became aware that she was more to me than as the affianced of another she should be; but it has gone no further since we returned--although I am sure she does not care a pin for him, whatever she may for me. I agree with you that there is something mysterious about the affair; but do not talk any more about it now, I am somewhat bothered myself."

There was a weary sadness in his voice that touched Carden. He said nothing but wrung Martin's hand.

Doctor Fox and O'Brien returned at this juncture, to the relief of the two friends, and Carden informed them that Hall had insisted that the marriage should take place as soon as possible; and, assuming everything to be in readiness, had fixed a week from that day as the time for the ceremony. Hall had given as the reason of his haste that he expected to be compelled to transact a great deal of business while on the long wedding tour he purposed taking--business involving vast interests and demanding immediate attention.

## CHAPTER XXV.

Carden had barely finished his story regarding Hall when a telegram came for Blount. It was a duplicate of one which had been delivered at the police office in Bow Street, as the double address proved, and had been sent to both places to prevent any possible delay in reaching the person for whom it was intended.

This precaution to ensure promptness showed the importance of the contents, and Blount being engaged in the hunt for "The Knifer," whom he believed to be somewhere on the other side of the city, Martin did not hesitate about opening the telegram. It was from Morgan and Doctor Fox was more than satisfied with the interest exhibited by his patient.

"Draft was bought by the party and in the manner expected. Will be back with proof in a day or two."

Martin read the telegram aloud, and when he had finished they all understood the care and necessity for haste in its delivery. Hall must once more be placed under surveillance and Blount found without delay.

"O'Brien, you must get over to the Surrey side and find Blount! You, Fred, must go back to Hanley Hall and watch things there! I'm afraid the case will not prove as clear against our man as Morgan seems to think. He's too slippery to be trapped so easily!"

Richard was himself again, and the doctor marvelled at the sudden change in his patient.

O'Brien started off at once, Carden remained only a few minutes longer, and ten minutes after the receipt of the telegram Martin and the doctor were alone.

At the end of two hours O'Brien returned with Blount, who shared Martin's opinion as to the incompleteness of the case against Hall.

"However, Morgan is not given to discovering mare's nests and may have more than we imagine," said Blount. "And now I must leave you to keep track of Hall. I've just got through with Sanders. He admits getting the draft from Jaggars, and Jaggars has already admitted stealing it from Hall; so the thing is pretty clear, if Morgan has been as successful as that telegram would indicate. There's only the papers to recover, and Jaggars says his friend 'The Knifer' has them, and when Sanders broke down he let out that 'The Knifer' was probably living with a woman friend of both in Leith, so I'm off for there."

Even as he spoke Blount was starting away, but stopped to add:

"Don't you think it would be better if O'Brien were to stay here and you should go back to Hanley Hall? Mr. Hall has no reason to regard you other than as a friend after your action regarding the duel."

Martin did not like the idea, but consented to go back, not to Hanley Hall itself but to the village. So far as avoiding Hall was concerned this was useless, for when Carden called next morning Martin learned that Hall was also a guest at the inn.

"He was standing at his window as we came out," continued Carden as they strolled along. "Of course he must have recognized you, although he did not appear particularly interested. Hello! This is the very man coming after us on the horse. Going to call on Kate, I suppose."

Hall passed a minute later, with a friendly nod which might be intended for either or both. He was evidently not interested about Martin or his movements, and had more than enough to engage his thoughts elsewhere. In two days more he would be married and on the way to Australia and immense wealth.

Something of this kind occurred to the two pedestrians as they watched the rapidly disappearing equestrian.

"Looks pretty happy," remarked Carden.

"Yes, but he is not married yet," returned the other with a grim smile, "There's a great many things liable to happen during the next forty-eight hours."

A great many exciting things did occur in the last six hours of the ensuing forty-eight, beginning with the arrival of Blount the night before the day set for the wedding.

Martin, Carden and Doctor Fox were together when Blount entered.

"Well, the famous Martin matter is about closed and the Hall matter about to open up!" he exclaimed, in a loud tone. "Here are your papers, Mr. Martin."

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

The second floor of the inn where Martin and Hall lodged had once been used as a ball-room, but this either did not pay or suit the present proprietor who had partitioned it off into three good-sized rooms. One of these Martin occupied and Hall the others.

It was about nine o'clock when Blount entered Martin's room.

Sitting in front of the fire in the next apartment was Hall, musing over the past and planning for the future--a future that looked exceedingly bright and promising.

There was no light in the room, except from the open fire; the door was partly open. Suddenly he was aroused by Blount's entrance, and then his attention was especially attracted by hearing his name mentioned.

The inn-keeper had done his own joiner-work and the partitions were all but transparent, and Hall stepping softly to the partition, heard Blount very plainly continue:

"They are all there I think--just as Golden had them the night he was murdered by our cunning friend Hall."

The eavesdropper started back in alarm, but could not resist the temptation to listen to the story.

"I found 'The Knifer' easy enough in Leith, and got the papers on him," Blount was saying. "He admitted the robbery of the papers and draft in Harley Street, and Morgan got back to-night with the diamond broker who bought the diamonds. He had a tough job, but finally persuaded him to come, and he's down-stairs with Morgan now."

Again Hall started back in alarm. They were very close on him, and he paused irresolutely. The story coming through the partition was rapidly depriving him of his nerve, and happening to look through the window, he saw a man on the opposite side of the road looking up. He was being waited for; they did not know he was in. How long would they wait before coming to his room?

Back to the partition once more he crept, and listened to Blount's confirmation of this idea.

"We will wait for a little while before going to his room. They were not sure down-stairs whether he had returned, and I didn't want to alarm him until I had seen you. However, there's no chance for him to get away. Morgan's down-stairs, O'Brien is in front, and another man at the rear."

Hemmed in completely--every avenue closed. It was clear that the chain of evidence must be complete--they were so confident, too, of getting him.

He went to a cupboard, took out a bottle of brandy, and poured out a moderate drink. After drinking the liquor, Hall began to pace the floor, which, unlike the partitions, was solid, and his quick nervous step made no sound.

"Trapped! Cornered like a rat! Well, cornered rats are dangerous, gentlemen! Look out! you haven't killed it yet!"

Pausing, a little back from the window, he looked out and saw the man in the same position. Then he resumed his walk, more like a caged tiger than a human being.

"One down-stairs, one in front, one in the rear and this one up-stairs! Four man-hunters! Let me see!"

Stopping, he opened his trunk and took out a pair of pistols, which he laid on the table.

"Four! If it was in the open--But pshaw! What difference would one or two make! I'm trapped! The game is over and I've lost! Lost!" he repeated hoarsely. "Lost! Lost everything--a fortune, a good name and a beautiful wife! An hour ago it was castles! Now it's gibbets! Kate! Kate! But for her I would not mind it so much!"

His face changed for a moment and became softened, but quickly resumed its former demonical expression as he resumed his walk.

"You've trapped me--Yes! But the rope never was made to hang me! I'm prepared for that at any rate! Never! No trial! No rope! No morbid fool's curiosity!"

Stopping again, he poured out more liquor.

"The next one will be time enough," he murmured as he put it to his lips. Setting down the empty glass, he lighted his lamp, closed his door securely and then, after a short search, produced a small package of the same white powder which had ended the career of Golden. Placing a pinch of this in the glass Hall filled it to the top with liquor, placed his lamp near the window, lighted a cigar and sat down to wait for his visitors.

He had not long to wait--only ten minutes--but his thoughts must have covered a great deal before the expected knock came.

"Too late!" he said, with the glass to his lips. "You will have to break it in."

Then laying back in his chair he emptied the glass. He hardly moved, his head sank a little to one side, the glass fell from his hand, and so they found him.

Blount had suspected something was wrong on finding the door fastened, and did not waste a moment in breaking it down, but as the dead man had truly said--he was too late.

Doctor Fox was called, but said he could do nothing--the man was dead

from prussic acid.

Notwithstanding their knowledge of the man and his crimes, all were shocked at the sudden termination of their pursuit, and none thought of retiring. Although nearly eleven o'clock, Carden returned to Hanley Hall, Martin accompanying him.

Owing to the preparations for the marriage, hasty as they were, everything was astir at the Hall, and Carden gravely told the story of the suicide.

As may be imagined, the story created great surprise and horror, and of the entire party Kate was apparently the least moved. She sat very quiet, and said but little; never addressing Martin, who also remained very quiet, and was beginning to believe himself mistaken regarding Kate's feelings toward the dead man.

However, he had a duty still to perform, and when Carden had finished he took from his pocket the stolen papers, and addressed Kate:

"These, Miss Stafford," he said, "are your property and Fred's--yours more than his. They are your uncle's will, and the other papers I spoke of, representing property to the value of--well, certainly over one hundred thousand pounds, besides a draft of twelve thousand pounds which you can obtain within a few days. All this is divided between yourself and Fred, with something in your favor."

Surprise was again general, except on Kate's part, and more than one regarded her curiously.

"Why, Kate," exclaimed Miss Fleming, "you appear to have become accustomed to these Cræsus surprises!"

Mr. Stafford, agreeably astonished by this sudden access of wealth, also remarked that she took the matter very coolly; but Kate did not respond to either remark, except to say she was tired out and must leave them.

Martin, Carden and Mr. Stafford left early next morning to attend the inquest, which was quickly and quietly disposed of, and then returned to Hanley Hall in time for luncheon, where Miss Fleming and Mr. Stafford took the principal parts in carrying on the conversation.

Martin and Kate, seated side by side, exchanged but few words, and those of only the commonest civility and in a cold, repellant manner on the part of Kate.

That this had been noticed by more than one, was apparent when, after luncheon, Carden joined Martin in the library, and the latter said, with an almost plainly forced calmness:

"Fred, now that those papers have been recovered, I can't see that there's any use in my lingering here. You know all I've got, except a few hundred pounds in London, is either banked or invested in New York, and I've just read this article (extending the paper) which seems to indicate that something of a panic exists there now, with possibly worse to follow. So I'll take a run up to London, I think, and if this report is confirmed, go back to New York. I'll stop and let you know on my way to Liverpool if it's true."

Carden barely glanced at the article, and handed back the paper with a dismal smile.

"Yes," he said, "I understand. It's a good excuse, but I'm hanged if I can understand it! It's not like Kate--especially after what you've told me of the affair at Naas--and yet to-day she acted worse than a total stranger. Her mother, Jennie and myself noticed it."

"Never mind, Fred! I'm off now to London. You can account for my absence as best you can; but, at the risk of being set down for a boor, I will avoid another meeting until coming back on my way to Liverpool."

"Ah! You are going in any event!"

"Yes--it is better--much better, Fred!"

And so it was arranged. Martin was to leave at once, agreeing to return next day to Hanley Hall, whence Carden would accompany him to Liverpool.

Martin went to pack up some papers and a few articles of wearing apparel, while Carden went to inform the Staffords of Martin's intentions and the reason of his hasty departure. He found Miss Fleming alone in the drawing-room at the piano, and to her, in telling of Martin's intentions, said more than he would have to any of the family.

"Oh, yes!" she said. "It's quite plain--but don't you think, Fred, you ought to go with him to London? He might not come back at all, you know!"

"You are right, Jennie! I'll go with him." And when Martin came down a few minutes later, he found Carden prepared to accompany him and gladly acquiesced in the arrangement.

It was not until evening that Mr. and Mrs. Stafford learned of the departure of the young men, and the supposed cause, and they expressed great concern at the possibility of any misfortune happening to Martin; but to Kate it was then an old story, for Miss Fleming had been drumming it into her ears all the afternoon, never failing to broadly hint at what she unhesitatingly pronounced to be the real cause--"Kate's cruelty to Mr. Martin."

Kate endured it patiently and in silence--which caused Miss Fleming to say she was disgusted with such obstinacy, and then leave her in peace.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

When Martin and Carden reached the office of the London representatives of the New York house, in or by which the former's entire fortune was invested, they found quite a gathering about the doors, and inside an excited crowd of investors clamoring for information.

Martin was well known to the clerks as being heavily interested, and his coolness commanded sufficient admiration to procure him an interview with a member of the firm.

"Better go to the hotel and wait for me, Fred," he said, as he passed into the private office.

When he emerged at the end of ten or fifteen minutes, his unmoved



appearance, and the quiet smile with which he greeted the clerks with whom he was acquainted, did much to re-assure those who had watched his entrance. Carden, too, was deceived on meeting him.

"It's all right, I suppose?" he said.

"No, not exactly, but I suppose there will be enough recovered out of the wreck to pay my debts. You know I have been speculating a little on my own account, and I don't know how I stand."

Martin spoke slowly and thoughtfully, as though considering his position, and Carden looked at him in amazement so great, that before he could speak, Martin was continuing: "Of course, Fred, I shall have to leave at once, by the next steamer."

"Dick, it can't be possible that you have lost everything!" exclaimed Carden, excitedly.

"Looks like it. They tell me it's the worst smash in twenty years."

Carden looked disheartened, much more so than his friend, and asked when the next steamer sailed.

"The day after to-morrow, the next fast one, so we will have a day to ourselves before we part, Fred."

Martin spoke cheerily, which caused his friend to brighten a little and ask if it would not be well to start back at once to Hanley Hall.

"No, Fred, not to-night. Perhaps I may be able to get there to-morrow if I can arrange to leave then."

The two friends separated shortly afterwards--Carden returning to Hanley Hall, where his arrival, and subsequent narration of Martin's trouble caused great sympathy.

"Surprises are becoming the usual thing here. I wonder what will come next!"

Mr. Stafford said this during a break in the conversation, but an answer came sooner than he expected, and from an unexpected quarter.

"Papa, don't you think that, under the circumstances, Fred and I should do something to help Mr. Martin out of this trouble? He has spent large sums of money, I'm sure, in recovering those papers, and doubtless in other matters."

It was Kate who spoke, and all looked at her in surprise. Not a blushing, embarrassed girl, but a calm collected woman met their gaze.

"Of course, I know nothing about these matters," continued she, "but it would seem that an immediate advance of a large sum would be likely to be of assistance."

"I am afraid Dick would not care to accept assistance from friends," said Carden, slowly. "If he would, I should have proffered everything I possessed, while in London, but I know he would accept nothing--at least from me."

There was a marked emphasis in the last words, and significance in the look accompanying them, but the effect was not visible. Kate simply

bowed in acquiescence, and said it was a pity they could not find a way to aid him, and that ended the matter for the night--that is, in the drawing-room.

Later, up-stairs, Miss Fleming entered Kate's room on some pretext, and after a few minutes' conversation arose to leave, but before going relieved herself of the object of her visit as follows:

"Kate Stafford! If any one should have told me that you were the cold-blooded thing you are, I would have done something wicked to them!"

Miss Fleming was a brave little woman, but she was badly frightened, for a moment, after she had finished speaking.

Maids were plentiful enough at Hanley Hall, but the two girls usually dispensed with them when visiting each other.

Kate had just loosened her long black hair preparatory to brushing when her friend finished, and as she swung around from the glass it fell in masses about her. She looked like an angry Juno as she towered over little Miss Fleming.

"Jennie," she cried, fiercely, "don't you dare torture me about that man any more!"

Startled, frightened, Jennie cowered under the outburst, but the next instant was playing the comforter and telling Kate she "didn't mean a word of it!" for the latter suddenly sank into a chair, and began to cry and sob as though her heart would break.

And through all the tears and all the comforting Jennie only obtained a slight clue to the cause. It was when Kate said, with her head resting on the other's breast:

"Jennie! Jennie! I can't give him another chance to throw back my love, and I can't meet him kindly unless I do!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Next morning's mail brought a letter from Martin, written after Carden's departure, and addressed to the latter, and after perusing it himself he read it to the others after breakfast. It ran as follows:

"My dear Fred: I have changed my mind about going to New York and have cabled people there to see what can be got out of the wreck. I am a young man yet, Africa is looming up as a place to make something quickly, and there is a ship sailing for the Cape to-morrow night, or early next morning. I met the captain after you left, and have made arrangements for my passage. I will, of course, have to get a good many things, and this will take all the time I have to spare, so I cannot go to Hanley Hall as agreed. You must, therefore, say good-bye for me. It will, also, take nearly all I possess at present. I must, also, therefore, ask you to do something for me, and I believe you will get it back soon from the "wreck." Make Julia a wedding present of five hundred pounds for her goodness to me. I know you will do it gladly enough, and the bank people surely ought to pay £500 on £200,000."

Julia, who since her arrival at Hanley Hall, had been made one of the family, and was sitting facing the reader, here entered a vehement protest:

"No, no, Mr. Carden, never! To think of him, with all his trouble, thinking of me!

"That's worth five hundred more--just to hear it!" exclaimed Carden; "and now let me get on, for we have no time to spare."

"I am sorry, Fred, I cannot be at your wedding," he continued; "but you know, that even if circumstances permitted, it would not be pleasant for your cousin. I can't understand it--you know what I mean--but as it is with me now, it is fortunate it is so. Not that I would be afraid with her with me, but it is fortunate for her at any rate.

"You can read part of this, if you like,--just enough to account for my failure to appear, and come and see me before we get away.

"Say good-bye to every one for me, for I am neither good as a writer or talker, and I should not like either your aunt or uncle, Miss Fleming, Julia, or O'Brien, or the doctor too--or anyone else, to think I parted without regret at not seeing them--yet, Fred, I don't believe I could stand it if I did.

"It's a long letter, my boy, but it may be the last--it's certainly the longest I've ever written."

Carden folded up the letter and placed it in his pocket. His eyes were not exactly dry--nor were any others at the table--little Miss Fleming and Julia were actually sobbing; Mr. Stafford, Doctor Fox and O'Brien were vainly endeavoring to look through the open window; and Kate sat dry-eyed, aye, and dry-lipped too, gazing intently before her, and Carden became angry.

"I've violated Dick's confidence," he said, in hard tones and looking straight at his cousin,--"only to show you the kind of a man we are losing--for he's going to certain death, I firmly believe!"

Carden stopped and sprang up quickly, but not quick enough to prevent Kate from falling heavily to the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

All was bustle and confusion aboard The Albatross. It lacked only an hour of sailing-time, and still all the cargo was not aboard. The captain was swearing at the stevedores, and they in turn at the men, but it was all in vain, and the part of the cargo still to be stowed was so valuable that the captain hated to leave it.

Whilst the captain was hesitating, a hansom came tearing down to the pier.

Leaning over the taffrail of The Albatross was Martin, and, even before the cab door was thrown open, he murmured "Fred!"

"I was afraid something serious had happened, and you could not come!" he said, returning the warm grasp of his friend.

"Something serious has happened!" replied Carden, "and you must come back with me at once! It's just a matter of life or death with Kate, and Fox says it depends on you! Come Dick! Why, what's the matter with you? Come on! Hang the outfit! Let's get away!" and he dragged Martin ashore.

It was a week after the sailing date of The Albatross when Doctor Fox came into the dining-room just as dinner was being served, to say:

"Somebody might go up-stairs now and allow Julia to come down, for I shall need her again by-and-by," looking straight at Martin, who instantly arose and left the room.

It had been an anxious week at Hanley Hall, and at times Doctor Fox despaired of saving the life of the patient.

"She will get along all right now," continued the doctor after Martin left the room. "The fever has gone, and time and care will, I believe, do the rest."

There was general rejoicing over this glad intelligence, but the doctor forbade any undue excitement--"for a day or two."

Meantime Martin had reached Kate's room, and was admitted by Julia. Kate turned her head on hearing him enter, and smiled as he approached and took her hand.

"You came back on my account," she said.

"Yes," he answered, "but----"

"And you will not go away to that place?" she interrupted.

He wanted to tell her that he was now a poor man and could not afford to act as he wished, but he had been warned of the result of argument. She was very weak, and spoke scarcely above a whisper, but in her weakness lay her strength, and he hesitated and she understood him. Her hand still lay in his, and with a gentle pressure she drew him nearer to catch her whisper:

"We have enough for both. You must not go away! Will you?" and he meekly answered that he would not.

"Then you may kiss me," she whispered, and Julia came down-stairs looking so radiantly happy that all felt the necessity of asking her the reason.

\* \* \* \* \*

Martin's affairs were not in such bad condition as he had been led to believe, for when the day set for his wedding and that of Carden's and O'Brien's, arrived, he was again quite wealthy. His own private speculations had far surpassed his highest hopes, and aside from this the financial crash was not so great as at first reported.

Hanley Hall, with its seven miles of enclosing walls, is no longer the property of the Staffords, having passed into the hands of the British Government, and is now devoted to the amusement and instruction of the people; but the Martins, and the Cardens, and their descendants, are

still in the vicinity.

THE END.

\* \* \* \* \*

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\* \* \* \* \*

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\* \* \* \* \*

Transcriber's Note: The original copy of this text did not have a Table of Contents. A Table of Contents has been created for this electronic edition.

The following typographical errors present in the original text have been corrected.

In Chapter III, "Breakfast, over Mr. Stafford strolled out" was changed to "Breakfast over, Mr. Stafford strolled out", and a quotation mark was added after "she must do as she pleases."

In Chapter VI, "mumured something not very angelic" was changed to "mumured something not very angelic", "asserverated that he believed himself" was changed to "asseverated that he believed himself", "some cl-- something which would enable me" was changed to "some cl--something which would enable me", and a quotation mark was added after "Mr. Henry Hall, No. -- Harley St., London."

In Chapter VII, a missing quotation mark has been added after "he have something?", an exclamation mark following "Here Mike" has been moved from outside to inside a quotation mark, and a missing period was added after "slipped through his fingers like quicksilver".

In Chapter IX, "all sorts of nice things about, you" was changed to "all sorts of nice things about you", "You might as well go ahead Dick" was changed to "You might as well go ahead, Dick", and a missing period was added after "who took a great fancy to Hall".

In Chapter X, a missing quotation mark was added after "the Emperor of Nowhere has died and left you a kingdom".

In Chapter XI, "Kate became embarassed and blushed" was changed to "Kate became embarrassed and blushed", "aware he is an imposter" was changed to "aware he is an impostor", and "Her's was the original" was changed to "Hers was the original".

In Chapter XV, a missing period was added after "the two inns in Naas".

In Chapter XVI, "her all night vigil" was changed to "her all-night vigil", and "Mext morning, immediately after breakfast" was changed to "Next morning, immediately after breakfast".

In Chapter XVII, "if the matter was followed furthur" was changed to "if the matter was followed further".

In Chapter XVIII, a missing quotation mark was added before "The party wanted was our friend Hall", and "Mr. Jacobs, however, knew Mr. Blout" was changed to "Mr. Jacobs, however, knew Mr. Blount".

In Chapter XIX, a quotation mark was added before "How blind you fathers", and a quotation mark was deleted after "exclaimed the doctor".

In Chapter XX, a missing period was added after "laid two letters before him", a quotation mark was removed after "The other is 'life,' or worse.", "Such fellows as Jaggars and 'The Knifer'" was changed to "Such fellows as Jaggars and 'The Knifer'", and "Thus communing with himself Blount, walked rapidly" was changed to "Thus communing with himself, Blount walked rapidly".

In Chapter XXII, "put himself out Blount's reach" was changed to "put himself out of Blount's reach".

In Chapter XXIII, "Quirk, sir, And I heard" was changed to "Quirk, sir, and I heard", and "an' would'nt give 'em to me" was changed to "an' wouldn't give 'em to me".

In Chapter XXIV, quotation marks were added after "necessary to close in on him" and before "I can't tell yet", "this dull indifferance" was changed to "this dull indifference", and "she's being sacrificed in the affair" was changed to "she's being sacrificed in the affair".

In Chapter XXV, a quotation mark was added after "Here are your papers, Mr. Martin."

In Chapter XXVI, "I found 'The Knifer' easy enough in Lieth" was changed to "I found 'The Knifer' easy enough in Leith", and "at the risk of being set down for a boar" was changed to "at the risk of being set down for a boor".

In Chapter XXVII, a period was added after "£500 on £200,000".

In addition, the phrase "No.-- Harley St.", which appears frequently in the text, has been changed to "No. -- Harley St." throughout.

In the advertisements, a period was added after "Birthday and Wedding celebrations", and a comma was added after "dyspepsia".



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