

THE BETRAYAL

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of A Maker of History, A Prince of Sinners, The Master Mummer, Anna the Adventurer, Mysterious Mr. Cain, The Yellow Dragon, The Traitor, The Man and His Kingdom, A Millionaire of Yesterday, etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Link in the Chain.

Practically for three days and three nights the Council sat continually. There was no pretence now at recreation, no other guests. We worked, sat up, from the Duke downwards, unflaggingly, and with very little respite. When at last the end came, my padlocked notebook, with its hundreds of pages of hieroglyphics, held the principal material for three schemes of coast defence, each one considered separately and supported by a mass of detail as to transport, commissariat, and many minor points.

The principal members of the Council departed by special train early on Monday morning. I myself, a little dizzy and hot-headed, walked across the park an hour after dawn, and flung myself upon my bed with a deep sigh of relief. Before I had closed my eyes, however, Grooton appeared with apologies for his disability.

"I have been up to the house twice, sir," he said, "but they would not let me see you or even send in a message.



She was sitting with her hands clasped together, looking into the fire.

I thought it only right to let you know at once, sir, that the papers have been here rummaging about. They had what they called a search warrant, I believe. I came up to the house immediately, but I could not induce any of the servants to bring word in to you. Mr. Jesson, the Duke's own man, told me that it was as much as his place was worth to allow any one to enter the library."

"All right, Grooton," I muttered. "Hang the police!" I believe he said something else, but I never heard it. I was already fast asleep.

About mid-day I was awakened by the dazzling sunshine which seemed to fill the room. I called for a bath, dressed, and made an excellent breakfast. Then I brought out my notebook and prepared for work. I had scarcely dipped my pen in the ink, however, when a shadow darkened the window. I looked up quickly. It was Ray.

"Entered without knocking, and I saw at once that he was in a strange condition. He scarcely greeted me, but sank into my easy chair, and drawing out his pipe began to fill it. Then I saw, too, what I had never seen before. His fingers were shaking.

"Ray," he said, "have you any wine?" "The Duke sent me some claret," I answered. "Will that do?" "Ay!" I summoned Grooton and ordered the wine and some biscuits. Ray was a man who ate and drank sparingly. Yet he filled a tumbler and drank it straight off.

"You and I," he remarked, "are the only two who sat the whole show out. It was a grand, wasn't it?" "It was," I answered, "but I have slept, and I feel none the worse for it. Lord Chelsford carried on splendidly. There is solid work here," I said, "something worth the planning."

I touched my notebook almost affectionately, for the work was fascinating now that it had attained coherent form. After a few minutes I looked up at my guest. He had smoked on and said nothing for several minutes. Then he looked up at me. "Have you a spare bedroom, Ducaime?" "One or two," I answered. "They are not all furnished, but one at any rate is decent."

"Will you put me up for a day—perhaps two?" "Of course," I answered, but— "He answered my unspoken question. "The Duke has turned me out," he said grimly. "Who would have suspected the old man of such folly? He believes in Bienvion. I told him the plain truth, and he told me that I was a liar."

would come. I was still wondering when I heard her footsteps. She came in unaccompanied to me. She wore a grey dress of some soft material, and a large black hat with feathers. Her skirts were gathered up in her hand, and I heard the jingling of harness at the corner of the avenue where her carriage was waiting. I opened the door, and she entered with a soft swish of silk and a gentle rustling. The room seemed instantly full of perfume of Neapolitan violets, a great bulk of which were in her bosom.

"She looked swiftly around, and I fancied that it was a relief to her to find me alone. "Is Colonel Ray here?" she asked. "He is waiting for you," I answered. "on the sands," I promised to call him directly you came."

I moved toward the door, but she checked me with an imperative gesture. "Wait," she said. I came slowly back and stood by my table. She was sitting with her hands clasped together, looking into the fire. She looked very girlish and frail.

"I want to think for a moment," she said. "Everything seems confusion. My father has commanded me to break my engagement with Colonel Ray."

"I remained silent. What was there, indeed, for me to say? "In my heart," she went on slowly, "I know that my father is wrong and that Colonel Ray is right. He has simply done his duty. Bienvion was being sorely tempted. He is better away—out of the country. Oh, I am sure of that."

"Colonel Ray has done what he believed to be his duty," I said slowly. "It is hard that he should suffer for that."

"Often," she murmured, "one has to suffer for doing the right thing. My father has made himself a poor man because of his sense of what was right. I do not know what to do."

"I must do one of two things," she murmured. "I must break my faith with my father—or with him."

"Then she lifted her eyes to mine. "Tell me what you think, Mr. Ducaime," she asked.

"I opened my lips to speak, but I could not. Was it fair that she should ask me? My little room was peopled with dreams of her, with delightful but impossible visions. My very nerves were full of the joy of her presence. It was madness to ask for my judgment, which the very poetry of my life was an unremitting and hopeless love for her."

"I cannot," I muttered. "You must not ask me."

"She seemed surprised. After all, I had guarded my secret well. "I will not refuse to help me," she pleaded.

"I set my teeth hard. I longed for Ray, but there were no signs of him at all. "Your father has ordered you to break your engagement with Colonel Ray," I said, "but he has done so under a misapprehension of the facts. You owe obedience to your father, but you owe more—to the man whose wife you have promised to be. I do not think you should give him up."

"She listened eagerly. Was it my fancy, or was she indeed a little paler? Her eyes seemed to glaze with a strange softness in the twilight. Her head drooped a little as she resumed her former thoughtful attitude.

"Thank you," she said, simply. "I believe that you are right."

"The Duke examined the ring long and searchingly. Then he looked from it into my eyes, and said: "You mean to say that you cannot take that off?"

"A locksmith might, sir. I certainly could not."

"The Duke shrugged his shoulders. "Chelsford's methods seem to me to savour a little of opera bouffe," he remarked dryly. "For my own part I believe that these marvelous documents would be perfectly safe in the unlocked drawer of my desk. I do not believe any of these stories which come from Paris about copies of our work being in existence. I do not wish you to be careless, of course, but the previous evening I saw a copy of your work in existence."

"I do not wish you to be careless, of course, but the previous evening I saw a copy of your work in existence. "I am glad to hear that," I answered. "There is nothing else you wish to say to me?"

"There is something else," the Duke answered coldly. "I understand that the police were granted a search warrant to examine your premises for stolen property. What the devil is the meaning of this?"

"I think, sir," I answered, "that the stolen property was a pretext. It seems that during the last few days the body I found on the sands was not washed in from the sea, but was a stranger, who had arrived in Braster over the night."

"I do not choose to believe it, Ducaime," the Duke said irritably. "Kindly remember that."

"I am glad to hear that," I answered. "There is nothing else you wish to say to me?"

"I have no definite information, your Grace," I answered.

"The Duke did not look at me for several moments. "I am afraid," he said, "that you may be able to furnish some information from this most ill-advised attempt of yours to suppress evidence which should most certainly have been given to the authorities. I have no doubt that your story is true. I have some inquiries now to make from the police station."

"I must go for you. Good evening, Ducaime."

"Good evening, sir," I answered. "It is much obliged to you."

"I obeyed him at once. "Listen well," he said, "for I am going to speak to you of the secret places of my life."

"I had down the pen which I had been using to write my fingers, and turned my chair. I judged that it was not necessary for me to speak, nor apparently did he think so."

"I have been soldiering all my days," he said, "since I was a child almost. It is a glorious life. God knows I have never given to a single month of it. But never again comes back once more to dwell among civilians one realizes that life is another side to life. It is so with practically a great under your foot to being advised from any man. But the time has come when I have the one and need of the other."

"I have loved two women in my life, Guy," he went on slowly. "The first was your mother. I started a little, but I still held my peace. He looked back into the ashes of the fire, and continued. "She told me to try my best," he said, "to be a friend to her after her marriage, and I hope, I think, that I succeeded. I even did my best to fight that woman's influence with your father at Gibraltar. There I failed. I was foredoomed to failure. She had the trick of playing what tune she cared to on a man's heartstrings. After it was all over, and your father and she had left the place, I spent years trying to persuade my mother to get a woman's man that I suppose the girl whom I thought of at all became like an angel, a creature altogether apart from that sex of whom I know so little. However that may be, she was the second woman to hold any place in my heart—as I would have said, she was the second woman to hold any place in my heart—and I returned with a great reputation, than I deserved. The very night of my

return I asked Lady Angela to marry me, and she consented. "I did not know you were so ignorant of the fact that it was out. His face was set in its grimest lines. He looked steadily at a certain spot in the fire, and went on. "There are things," he said, "which troubled me little at the time, but which just lately have been on my mind. The first is that I am nearly fifty, and Lady Angela is twenty-one. The second is that I came home with all the tinsel and glamour of a popular hero. Heaven knows I loathed it, but the fact remains. The King's reception, the V.C., and all that sort of thing, I suppose, accounted for it. She accepted my offer, and she has been very loyal. Until tonight no word of disagreement has passed between us. But there have been times lately when I have fancied that I have noticed a change. A time has come now when I could give her freedom without reproach on either side. I want to know whether it is my duty to give it her back."

"Then Ray looked straight into my face, and the color flamed there, for I saw now how he had made his constant. "What do you think, Guy? You are only a boy, but you are of her age, and you have seen a little of her lately. You are a boy, but then only boys and novelists understand women. Speak up and tell me what is in your mind."

"I will tell you this," I answered hotly. "If I were your father, I would not sit and hatch schemes about marrying her. I would marry her first, and make her happy afterwards, and as for the rest of the questions which you have asked me, and yet not put into words—I have never heard or seen in Lady Angela the slightest sign that you were not her lover as well as the man whom she was engaged to marry. As for your own folly, since you seem to have noticed it, no one knows better than I that it is the rankest, most absurd presumption. But with me it begins and ends. That is a most absolute fact."

"Ray rapped his pipe upon the table. "Listen," he said. "I found you named practically her name. Yet you have powerful relatives, and your family is equal to the Duke's. There may be money to some day. Bear these things in mind. Can you repeat what you have said?"

"It was a wild dream—a wonderful one. But, before me I saw the stern white face of the man, eager for his share of happiness after all these magnificent years of dauntless service. I forgot my own distrust of him, his coldness, his brutality, remembered only those other and greater things."

"Even were I in such a position," I said, "I would not marry her. Yet you have an idea—and it is not worth while that she should have."

"That," I answered, "lies between you and your conscience."

"He rose to his feet. "I will show you my justification."

"I heard Ray's heavy footsteps ascending the stairs to his room. In a few moments he returned, bearing in his hand a letter. "Guy," he said thoughtfully, "I am a man who does not place trust in any one. For that reason, and perhaps because ignorance was better for you, I have told you little of the events of that night. Now my first opinion of you has undergone some modifications. You are stronger than I thought, you have shown faith in me, or I should not be here. Listen! The man whom you found dead in the marshes was not your father!"

"I was not surprised. Always I had doubted it."

"Who was he then?" I asked calmly. "When your father went mad at Gibraltar," Ray said, "he needed help. This man, Cery by name, supplied it. When I knew them both he was your father's valet. Since then he has been his confederate in many schemes. Your penants are a sense of honour. This creature set himself deliberately and successfully to corrupt it. He was a parasite, a nervous, bloodless thing without a single human attribute. He and that woman were alike responsible for your father's ruined life."

"Once before," Ray continued, after a moment's pause, "I had told him that if ever we should meet where his life would cost me nothing, I would kill him as I would a dog. He smiled as though I had said some delicate compliment. And that night, Guy, a hundred yards from your

cottage, he sidled up to me in that lonely road, and bade me direct him to the abode of Mr. Guy Ducaime. A moment after he recognized me."

"I drew it from the envelope. It was dated from the Savoy Hotel. "My Dear Son,—I do not deserve that you should read beyond these three words. I have a little right to call you my son as you have desire to claim me for your father. I am here, however, purely on an errand of justice. I have learned that you have been robbed of the sum set aside to give you a start in life. I am here to endeavor to replace it, for which purpose I desire that you will grant me a business interview within the next few days. I beg your reply by Cery, my faithful companion and servant. I am known here as "RICHARD DREW FOSTER."

"I laid the letter down without remark. Ray had filled his pipe whilst I had been reading, and was sitting now on the arm of his easy chair, facing me. "I understood the letter and its meaning," he continued. "I knew that the whole neighborhood was under the observation of the French Secret Service, and the man who signed himself Richard Drew Foster was in your excellent tool ready to his hand. It is very certain also that the matter would probably have presented itself to you in a wholly different light. Accordingly, I placed the letter in my own pocket, and I released my hold of Cery."

"You can go back to your master," I said, "and tell him that you have seen me, and that I have his letter. It will be sufficient. And you can tell him that I shall be in London tomorrow night, and if any such person as Mr. Drew Foster is staying at the Savoy Hotel, he will know the inside of a military prison before midnight."

"The man slunk away. I suppose he realized that with me in the way their game was up. But afterwards he must have hesitated, and then made up his mind to attempt what was probably the bravest action of his life. He followed me, stole up softly behind, and with an old trick which they teach them on the other side of the Seine, he as nearly as possible throttled me. However, I held my fingers inside the slipstap, and I held my fingers in the throat. When I could breathe, I lifted him up and threw him into the marshes. There I left him. It seems the fall killed him. That is the whole story. It was absolutely Guy's justice; but I am quite aware that the laws of the country do not exactly favor such summary treatment. Accordingly I held my peace. I am sorry for it now."

"Had left the Savoy Hotel when I reached there," Ray said, "and had omitted to leave an address. He would have been glad if I could spare her a few moments in the drawing-room as soon as possible."

"Lady Angela was standing upon the hearth. I stepped a little way across the threshold and stopped short. She held out her hand to me with a quick laugh. "Have you forgotten me?" she asked, "or am I so alarming?"

"I set my teeth and moved toward her. "You took my breath away," I said, "with an ease which I was very far from feeling. Remember that I have come from Braster."

"I do not know what she wore. Her gown seemed to me to be of some soft crepe or silk, and the color of it was a smoky misty blue. There were pearls around her neck, and her hair, arranged with exquisite simplicity, seemed to be drawn back from her face and arranged low down on the back of her neck. She had still the fresh delightful color which had been in her cheeks when she left Braster, and the smile with which she welcomed me was as delightful as ever. "This is a charming arrangement," she

declared. "You know that you are such an important person, and have to be watched so closely, that you are to stay here. I expect my muscles with the house-keeper to see to your rooms. I do hope that you will be comfortable."

"Comfortable is not the word," I answered. "I have never been used to such luxury."

"She laughed. "To be continued."

My own unattractive liquor was on the table by the side of my empty coffee cup. I made her drink it, and her teeth ceased to chatter. She was rather a pathetic object. One of her little black satin slippers was cut to shreds, and the other was clogged with wet sand. The floor of Ray's room was in her white face. She caught hold of my hand impulsively. "The man," she murmured, "whom you found—what was he like?"

"He was a small dark man."

"She laughed hysterically. "He," she exclaimed, "was over six feet, and broad! It was not he. It may have been some one whom he sent, but it was not he. Guy, have you heard from him? Do you know where he is?"

"I shook my head. Ray interposed. "I think," he said roughly, "that you'll find him at home when you get there, madam, wherever that may be. If he were in this country it would be within the four walls of a prison."

"She looked across at him. "You have set them on the police—then?" she said. "You would hunt him down still? After all these years?"

"Ay," he answered. "Tell me where he is hiding in this country, and I will promise you that his days of freedom are over."

"She pointed to me. "His father was his father a hundred times over."

"She turned to me as though in protest, but I was not to be deterred. She rose wearily to her feet. "I will go," she muttered. "Guy," she added, turning to me, "you are honest. You will always be honest. You have nothing to fear, so you do not hesitate to speak if necessary to those whom nevertheless you do not trust. But there are other things in the world to fear besides dishonesty. There is animal brutality, coarse indifference to pain in others. There is the triumph of the beast over the man. There he sits, he who can teach you these things," she added, pointing to Ray. "Do not choose him for your friend, Guy. You will grow to see life, to judge others, through his eyes—and then God help you."

Ray laughed, and again to me there seemed to be a note of coarseness in his strident and uncontrolled contempt of the world. She took no notice of him whatsoever. She opened the door and passed out so quickly that though I tried to intercept her, and called out after her, I was powerless to prevent her going. She had fitted away into the shadows. I could not even hear her retreating footsteps.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Painful Encounter.

More work. A week of it, ceaseless and unrelenting. The police seemed to have abandoned their watch over my cottage, and I heard a whisper that a statement by the Duke had at any rate partially cleared me from suspicion. Ray had decided to leave England. I knew quite well that it was on my account. He, with the others, was now in London. Then came my own summons thither. I was told to report myself immediately on arrival at Rowchester House, and to my surprise was informed by the servant who answered my inquiries that a room was reserved for me there. I had no sooner reached it than Lady Angela's own maid arrived with a message. Her ladyship would be glad if I could spare her a few moments in the drawing-room as soon as possible."

"Lady Angela was standing upon the hearth. I stepped a little way across the threshold and stopped short. She held out her hand to me with a quick laugh. "Have you forgotten me?" she asked, "or am I so alarming?"

"I set my teeth and moved toward her. "You took my breath away," I said, "with an ease which I was very far from feeling. Remember that I have come from Braster."

"I do not know what she wore. Her gown seemed to me to be of some soft crepe or silk, and the color of it was a smoky misty blue. There were pearls around her neck, and her hair, arranged with exquisite simplicity, seemed to be drawn back from her face and arranged low down on the back of her neck. She had still the fresh delightful color which had been in her cheeks when she left Braster, and the smile with which she welcomed me was as delightful as ever. "This is a charming arrangement," she

declared. "You know that you are such an important person, and have to be watched so closely, that you are to stay here. I expect my muscles with the house-keeper to see to your rooms. I do hope that you will be comfortable."

"Comfortable is not the word," I answered. "I have never been used to such luxury."

"She laughed. "To be continued."

my own unattractive liquor was on the table by the side of my empty coffee cup. I made her drink it, and her teeth ceased to chatter. She was rather a pathetic object. One of her little black satin slippers was cut to shreds, and the other was clogged with wet sand. The floor of Ray's room was in her white face. She caught hold of my hand impulsively. "The man," she murmured, "whom you found—what was he like?"

"He was a small dark man."

"She laughed hysterically. "He," she exclaimed, "was over six feet, and broad! It was not he. It may have been some one whom he sent, but it was not he. Guy, have you heard from him? Do you know where he is?"

"I shook my head. Ray interposed. "I think," he said roughly, "that you'll find him at home when you get there, madam, wherever that may be. If he were in this country it would be within the four walls of a prison."

"She looked across at him. "You have set them on the police—then?" she said. "You would hunt him down still? After all these years?"

"Ay," he answered. "Tell me where he is hiding in this country, and I will promise you that his days of freedom are over."

"She pointed to me. "His father was his father a hundred times over."

"She turned to me as though in protest, but I was not to be deterred. She rose wearily to her feet. "I will go," she muttered. "Guy," she added, turning to me, "you are honest. You will always be honest. You have nothing to fear, so you do not hesitate to speak if necessary to those whom nevertheless you do not trust. But there are other things in the world to fear besides dishonesty. There is animal brutality, coarse indifference to pain in others. There is the triumph of the beast over the man. There he sits, he who can teach you these things," she added, pointing to Ray. "Do not choose him for your friend, Guy. You will grow to see life, to judge others, through his eyes—and then God help you."

Ray laughed, and again to me there seemed to be a note of coarseness in his strident and uncontrolled contempt of the world. She took no notice of him whatsoever. She opened the door and passed out so quickly that though I tried to intercept her, and called out after her, I was powerless to prevent her going. She had fitted away into the shadows. I could not even hear her retreating footsteps.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A Painful Encounter.

More work. A week of it, ceaseless and unrelenting. The police seemed to have abandoned their watch over my cottage, and I heard a whisper that a statement by the Duke had at any rate partially cleared me from suspicion. Ray had decided to leave England. I knew quite well that it was on my account. He, with the others, was now in London. Then came my own summons thither. I was told to report myself immediately on arrival at Rowchester House, and to my surprise was informed by the servant who answered my inquiries that a room was reserved for me there. I had no sooner reached it than Lady Angela's own maid arrived with a message. Her ladyship would be glad if I could spare her a few moments in the drawing-room as soon as possible."

"Lady Angela was standing upon the hearth. I stepped a little way across the threshold and stopped short. She held out her hand to me with a quick laugh. "Have you forgotten me?" she asked, "or am I so alarming?"

"I set my teeth and moved toward her. "You took my breath away," I said, "with an ease which I was very far from feeling. Remember that I have come from Braster."

"I do not know what she wore. Her gown seemed to me to be of some soft crepe or silk, and the color of it was a smoky misty blue. There were pearls around her neck, and her hair, arranged with exquisite simplicity, seemed to be drawn back from her face and arranged low down on the back of her neck. She had still the fresh delightful color which had been in her cheeks when she left Braster, and the smile with which she welcomed me was as delightful as ever. "This is a charming arrangement," she

declared. "You know that you are such an important person, and have to be watched so closely, that you are to stay here. I expect my muscles with the house-keeper to see to your rooms. I do hope that you will be comfortable."

"Comfortable is not the word," I answered. "I have never been used to such luxury."

"She laughed. "To be continued."



She swooped round me and raised her veil.

her lips. She stood and shivered like a trapped bird. He removed his hand from her teeth. "Go on," he said mildly. "Don't mind me. Perhaps I can help Mr. Ducaime answer it."

"She sank into a chair. Her eyes seemed to implore me to protect her. I heard Ray's little snort of contempt; but I answered her kindly. I could not help it. "I am sorry that you came," I said, "but, of course, I will answer any question you want to ask me. Don't hurry! You are out of breath. Let me give

an etching of Charles IX. of France, dated 1563, made it a civil offence to offer a guest more than three courses at one meal.