

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT SURPRISE.

A little while after that fruitless search, a young man with well-cut features and steel-grey eyes was walking rapidly along the principal street of the old town. His face was so stern, and his mouth was set in such a resolute curve, that he looked as if he had trampled every human feeling under his feet. Out of the High Street, he turned into another street where shops were few, and then paused for a moment before an old-fashioned bow-window filled with quaint silver and gold; valuable ornaments of a bygone day; necklaces, corals, bonbonnières, and chatelaines, not one of them of modern make. While he hesitated for a second or two on the doorstep, a young woman on the other side of the street was watching him unseen. She wore a smart brown coat, and coils of fair hair were twisted up under her straw hat. When he opened the door, she glided away, carrying a roll of music in her hand.

As he entered the old shop, a grey-haired man came out of an inner room, and bade him good-morning. Edmund Warrenne had come on an unpleasant errand; he colored up to his forehead as he produced the queen's bracelet.

"Yes, it is a genuine thing," said Mr. Myle, the old jeweller, examining it attentively. "Ah, yes, yes; we all know what necessity is. I'll make you as good an offer as I can, Mr. Warrenne, but there isn't much business done at present. Some of my best customers have died out."

Edmund left the shop with a heavy heart, carrying a smaller sum than he had expected to receive. Then he took his way to the outskirts of the town, walking as rapidly as he could, until he came to a row of small cottages, each divided from the road by its bit of front garden. Entering one of them, he opened the door without knocking, and a quavering voice from the front room called him by name.

"Come in, Mr. Edmund, I've been just longing for a glimpse of you," cried Nurse Grantley eagerly. "You've brought good news, I hope? No, I can read your face. Sit down, my dear boy."

She was a sweet old woman, with a face which had been pretty once, but was now like a wrinkled apple. Her white hair was arranged neatly under the cap; her work-basket was close to her side; everything in her poor little room betokened cleanliness and refinement.

"I'm an unlucky man," said Edmund wearily. "But it does me good to see you, nurse. You remind me of the bright old times, you know."

"Mr. Edmund"—the quavering voice grew firm—"the bright times will come again for us both. To you they will come in this life; for me they will begin again in the unseen world. I am getting very near that world, and I think I know what is to be. But what's amiss, dear? You always open your heart to me."

"It's a common trouble, nurse. I can't hear of a berth, and there isn't a gleam of light. You mustn't worry about me; something will turn up, I hope—and here's your money, dear old woman."

He laid the coins on the table by his side, and met the sorrowful gaze of her gentle blue eyes.

"My boy, you've had to part with something! You can never deceive me! You've given up a thing that you prized. What was it?"

"You have an uncanny power, nurse," he answered with a dreary smile. "Well, if you must know, it's only a bracelet—the bracelet which a queen gave to the promised bride of a De Warrenne long ago. My uncle Luke gave it