

guard to its owner. Mr. Lewis, who, I beg, will forget them;" and he turned with a sickly smile, but with hidden eyes to the sullen figure at his side.

Lewis flushed hotly, and turned to leave the room.

"I'll forget your words if you like, Arthur Thussington," he said, with a threatening curl of the lips, "but I'll remember the blow."

Sir Robert looked distressed and startled—it was more like a school-boy's quarrel than a man's—least of all a gentleman's.

"You had better get to your room at once," he said. "I will send Mrs. Hartup, the housekeeper to you."

Then turning to Lennox, who was lying on the sofa, smoking his cigarette as tranquilly as if nothing had happened, he said—

"Why did not some of you interfere?—you, Lennox?"

The exquisite raised his head, and shook it gently.

"No, Sir Robert; I have no objection to parting dog and man, but I draw the line at dog and dog, or man and man."

And he dropped back again into his comfortable attitude with the same countenance, serene in its grand contempt for both of the disputants.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ORDERED TO HEAD QUARTERS.

"Can I forget? yes, that can I,  
And that can all men; so will you,  
Afore, or later, when you die.  
Ah! but the love you plead was true,  
Was mine not too?"—*FELICE.*

The morning following the fracas in the billiard-room, Bertie found amongst his letters a business looking document, which dated from the War Office, and commanded him to return to head quarters at once, so, throwing it across to Derry, who in exchange threw him a similar document, which he had received on his own account, said—

"Country in danger, War Office demands my presence. I fly to succour the nation," and two hours afterwards was scudding up to town and the detestable head quarters in the up express, with Derry by his side, and a cigar of the thickness of a schoolmaster's ferule in his mouth.

"Well, I'm not sorry, after all, to get a change. The Vale is a delightful place, but even heaven would get monotonous," said Derry, placing his huge legs on the opposite seat, and lighting up in self defence.

"Just so," said Bertie, with a yawn. "I was very comfortable, and should not have retreated for a day or two, though. I wonder what on earth they want us for. I expect it will turn out a mare's nest, and we shall be asked some absurd questions as to the number of men and their average height and fighting liquor, and then told that we may take ourselves off again, or else private Brown has been going it too strong in the barrack casks, and we are wanted to see him and him and try and induce him to take the pledge."

Derry laughed.  
"I say, Bertie, there are some

strange characters at the Vale. What do you think of the row in the billiard-room last night? Did you see Thussington's face?"

"I did, and I never felt more inclined to strike a man across the mouth in my life."

"It was perfectly demoniacal, wasn't it, do you know I don't feel altogether prepossessed by that gentleman, soft spoken, quiet-looking individual as he is; 'pon my soul, I'm half inclined to believe he's up to some infernal game down there!"

"There I differ with you," said Bertie, languidly. "I'm not half inclined to think, but I'm wholly sure that Mr. Arthur Thussington has some little scheme in hand that he's carrying through."

"What can it be, I wonder?" said Derry. "Is it the daughter, Ida Valor; a beautiful girl eh, Bert?—or is it some plot against Rod—poo dear old Rod! He's next in succession, you, know, and 'pon my soul, Bert, somebody ought to be on the watch."

"I agree with you my dear impetuous Derry, that somebody ought to play checkmate to ingenious Arthur, but you haven't proved that somebody is either you or me, consequently I am unmoved."

Derry was silent for a moment, then he said—

"I tell you what it is, Bert: it's an infernal shame that Rod Edgecombe should be shipped off to the end of the earth in this way, and that fellow left here to throw sheep's eyes at the poor fellow's love, and bite his nails at his inheritance. By jove, I'll go and talk to old Edgecombe like a father. I know old Rod, and it's my duty—I'll—"

"All right," said Bertie, "go and do it. But if it will save you any trouble I may as well tell you that you had better leave this particular duty alone—as you have left a good many others. My good impetuous, virtuously indignant friend—it is no use."

"What? have you tried it?" said Derry, looking round with surprise.

"I have," said Bertie, quietly.

"And didn't move the old curmudgeon?"

"Not an inch. You could as soon put this train in your pocket and walk down Picadilly without spoiling the set of your coat, as make any impression on Sir Harry Edgecombe. I think that exhausts the subject, Derry. Having an easy conscience, I can sleep."

And he closed his eyes.

Bertie himself was glad to get back to town for a time, for where the treasure is, there the heart is also, and Bertie Lennox's pale-faced treasure was running through the gaieties of town, it will be remembered. So he leant back and wondered whether he should meet her by chance in drawing-room or concert-hall, the tre or ball-room; and wondered furthermore whether she would receive him with the same kind indifferent smile, or overlook him altogether; he wondered, in fact, he wondered at all men, with a

disease do wonder, and wondered all the way up to town; and when he found himself seated in his favorite corner at his favorite club, he still discovered that the pale face with the large, thoughtful eyes that it lit up and melted, glistened and smiled, as the soul that shone through them was moved by pity and sorrow, or mirth and joy, was haunting him still, and tried in vain to smother it, blind it, horrify it out of his mind's eye, by surrounding himself with a cloud of fragrant tobacco-smoke, and reading the full particulars of the last murder in that day's *Times*.

And at that moment the pale face and pensive eyes were attracting admiring attention at Lady Mary Wethers' great "hop," and Grace Wilson was thinking sadly, and against her will, of the golden-headed exquisite who had saved her from a broken heart, and kept from her side, because he thought the sight of his face was painful to her.

And as she leant upon the arm of a tiny shallow-brained gentleman, who whirled round with her in anything but maddening waltz, she felt within her heart that she would give a kingdom, had she so troublesome a possession, for a sight of the calm, indolent face, and soft, careless-looking eyes.

"The Irish beauty is rather *triste* to-night," drawled some one as they passed her; and hearing it accidentally, the "beauty," having, alas! no tobacco or absorbing newspaper, took to dancing perforce, and had to waltz, quadrille, and redowa the handsome golden-crowned face from her thoughts.

There are a great many games of chance which the sons of men play at, but there is none so disastrous and so unprofitable as the game of cross purposes.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A FLIGHT IN THE NIGHT.

"If you loved me ever so little,  
I could bear the bonds that gall,  
I could dream the bonds were brittle,  
You do not love me at all."  
"My heart swims blind in a sea,  
That stuns me; swims to and fro  
And gathers to windward and lea,  
Lamentation, and mourning, and woe."

The glare from the camp-fire of dried wood and leaves fell flickeringly upon the three men as they sat, lay, and lounged around it.

High above their heads the stars twinkled down upon them as if the long distance made their eyes blink, and all round above them, breaking the solemn silence, came the shriek of the night-bird and the whiz of some huge bat, attracted, puzzled, and frightened by the gleam of the blazing fire.

Roderick was lying full length upon the rug beside the blaze, with his eyes fixed upon the pale, curious face of the stranger, who sat opposite him, one hand thrust in his coat, the other raking the embers together with his long knife.

Nat was leaning against a tree, being a piece of wood into pegs his snares.

"You ask me whence I came—of my life," said the man, fixing his eyes for the

instant from his monotonous occupation to fix them on the dark, handsome face of his questioner, and speaking in deep, full, grave tones. "I come from England. My name is Guy—simply Guy. I have no other—I need none other. If you ask me why I left England, I tell you that I was compelled to leave it. Yes, I see by your faces that, like every one else, you have decided that I am guilty of every possible crime. You are wrong. If I committed crime, it was for once only, and then to—get—bread. Enough! This scarcely can interest you. I left England and came to Melbourne."

"You," glancing up suddenly at Nat, and dropping his head to resume his raking the next moment, "you know what that means. I starved for three weeks, was driven from pillar to post like a hound, flung oaths, too, when I was dying for bread, and at last managed to beg money to join a gang bound for the diggings."

"We started at daybreak, making for some district west of this. We found gold after a few weeks' journey: found it in such quantities that before the month had closed we men—some of whom had been starving at the commencement—were nabobs."

"Waiting until we had exhausted the run, we determined to start for the return, to spend the gold for which we had so hardly toiled."

"The night we packed up our traps a band of bushrangers gold thieves, or whatever else you like to call them, came upon us like phantoms."

"We fought in the dark as devils would fight in wrath—look here."

And rising to his feet he slipped his rough shirt off his shoulders, and displayed in the flickering glare a breast scored and cut like the bark of an old oak, with innumerable wounds, then dropped down again noiselessly, and resumed his raking as before.

"There were four to one; we reduced it to two to one, and all excepting myself were shot down and hacked to pieces in the reduction."

"I crawled away bleeding and stupid, with only my saturated shirt, leather trousers, and old revolver remaining of the thousands I held but a short half-hour before."

"Do you want a history of the sufferings, privations, pains, and narrow escapes I endured from that cursed night to this? No. It would weary you and rile me. I am here—and if you will give me the chance, I'll keep the word I pledged you this morning. If not—"

And here he rose, and dropping the raking-stick, shook himself together with the air of a huge mastiff.

"And if not, say so at once, and I'll go. A man feels more stiff and ready after a good meal, and I'm not the man to take a half-welcome or show my shadow where it isn't wanted."

There was a moment's silence after the almost defiant speech, and the firelight, as it flickered upon