

"Well, is there only one man in the world with a scarred face? And that's not the kind of thing that you described; any slight accident may have caused that." I don't think he ever heard what I said, but repeated—

"My God, it's come at last!"

In a minute Rosewarne rose and left the cafe, I following. We went up to his room, and there he sat by the open window, staring into the windy dark.

"This is folly," I said sternly. "Be a man. You're not a coward. The whole thing's preposterous."

"It's the end," he said, "the appointed end." I was almost in despair.

"The man isn't even staying at this hotel. He only dropped in casually."

"What of that?"

"Do you recognize him?"

"The scar!"

"But not the man—after thirty years; a man you only saw once when you were mad with drink?"

"There can be no mistake," he said wearily.

"Look here, Rosewarne," I said. "Will you promise to remain here for half-an-hour?"

"Why not?"

"And for heaven's sake fight with yourself, strangle this thing, hammer it dead!"

It was with some trepidation, I confess, that I returned to the cafe; after all, there was just a lurking possibility that Rosewarne might be right. The Englishman was still sitting there,

smoking English tobacco, and reading an English newspaper. I seated myself at his table, and at once began to talk of Le Croisic, the fishing, this and that.

"It's good to come across a fellow countryman," he said cordially. "Of course, I saw at once that you and your friend were English. I'm a bit lonely till my wife and kids join me."

"Have you travelled much?"

"Well, only in the way of duty. I'm a soldier. I've been stationed at Gib., and seen service in India and South Africa."

"Then you've never 'rolled to Rio,' as Kipling wants to in the song?"

"Rio? Bless your soul, no! Rio's out of my beat. But you should hear my boy sing that song; you shall, if you're here when he comes."

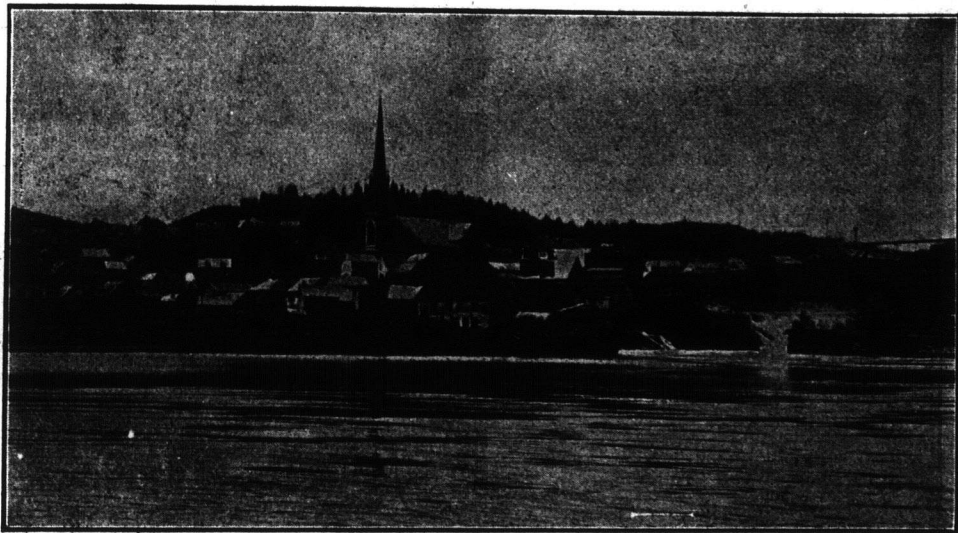
There was no doubting the man's truthfulness. The relief I experienced told me how much I, too, had been afraid.

I made an excuse to leave my companion for a few minutes, and returned to Rosewarne's room. He was perfectly composed now and smoking a cigarette. He listened to me quietly, and then said:

"Well, it may be so. Anyway, I've got the fear under. I'm ready for whatever may come."

"Won't you come down and assure yourself—talk to this good-natured, decent chap?"

He shook his head. "No, I won't do that. I'll get to bed. I think I shall sleep; don't worry about me. You've



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been awfully good to me, I can't thank you enough." He took my hand and pressed it lingeringly. "It's you," he said, "who have scotched the snake, driven the beast back to the jungle."

"My dear Rosewarne," I said, "your own will has done it. Sure you don't want anything to-night?"

"Nothing, thanks, except sleep. Good night, friend."

Once more I returned to the cafe, this time with an extraordinary sense of exaltation. It was as though I had seen a tortured body saved from the rack. I felt that now Rosewarne would win through.

I spent the rest of the evening with Major Brodie. He went off to his hotel about eleven o'clock, and I sat up till close on midnight, revolving in my mind the day's happenings, and wondering, though with a glint of comprehension, at Rosewarne's terrible obsession. It was remorse for that sudden and senseless act of mutilation that had preyed upon him; he made no allowances for himself; he had deliberately, as it were, rooted it into his soul.

I awoke about five o'clock and looked out of my window. The mists were rolling away from the salt-marshes; the sun lay broad upon the moving waters; already Le Croisic was awake. Sabots clattered, voices called. It was a morning on which to take the freshness of the world into one's being; it might almost complete Rosewarne's cure.

I slipped on a dressing gown and went to his room. I knocked lightly, and opened the door without waiting for a reply. And then I stood still for a moment, advanced, stood still, advanced—

I had seen dead men before, and I knew at once that Rosewarne was dead. I am not afraid of death nor of the sight of death, nor was I afraid then. My hesitation was rather of wonderment, mingled with an unutterable thankful-

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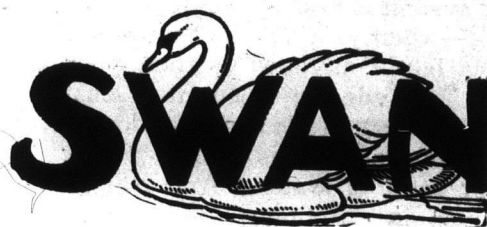
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