

about eight o'clock that Thursday evening. And Mr. Kidd was late.

The clock in the bar had struck eight long ago. The clock of St. John's Church, close by, had struck a quarter-past, and then half-past, and still Mr. Kidd was not forthcoming. The head clerk looked at his watch, sighed, shook his head, poured out a glass of the brown sherry and drank it contemplatively. Before he had quite got to the end of it, a jovial voice in the bar, and a noisy hand upon the latch of the glass door, announced his friend's arrival.

Mr. Kidd came in—a tall, florid, good-humoured looking fellow, with a frank laugh, a loud cheery voice, and a magnificent pair of red whiskers. The practical observer, however, noting his white hat, his showy watch guard, his free and easy bearing, would have pronounced him at first sight to be a commercial traveller; but the practised observer would for once have been wrong.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. Keckwitch," said he, nodding familiarly to his entertainer, drawing a chair to the opposite side of the fire, and helping himself at once to a glass of wine. "Not my fault, I assure you. Sherry, eh? Capital sherry, too. Don't know a better cellar in London, and that's saying something."

"I'm very glad you have been able to look in, Mr. Kidd," said the head clerk, deferentially, "I was particularly anxious to see you."

Mr. Kidd laughed and helped himself to another glass.

"It's one of the peculiarities of my profession," said he, "that I find the world divided into two classes of people—those who are particularly anxious to see me, and those who are particularly anxious not to see me. Uncommon good sherry, and no mistake!"

Mr. Keckwitch glanced towards the glass-door, edged his chair a little nearer to that of his guest, and said huskily:

"Have you had time, Mr. Kidd, to think over that little matter we were speaking about the other day?"

"That little matter?" repeated Mr. Kidd, in the same loud, off-hand way as before. "Oh yes—I've not forgotten it."

He said this, filling his glass for the third time, and holding it in a knowing fashion between his eye and the lamp. The head clerk came an inch or two nearer, and, bending forward with his two fat hands upon his knees, ejaculated:

"Well?"

"Well, Mr. Keckwitch?"

"What is your opinion?"

Mr. Kidd tossed off the third glass, leaned back in his chair, and, with a smile of delightful candour said:

"Well sir, to be plain with you, I can give no opinion till you and I understand each other a little better."

Mr. Keckwitch breathed hard.

"What do you mean, Mr. Kidd?" said he, "Haven't I made myself understood?"

Mr. Kidd pushed his glass away, thrust his hands into his pockets, and became suddenly grave and business-like.

"Well, sir," replied he, dropping his noisy voice and jovial smile, as if they had been a domino and mask, "this, you see, is an unusual case. It's a sort of case we're not accustomed to. We don't go into things without a motive, and you've given us no motive to go upon."

The clerk's face darkened.

"Isn't it motive enough," said he, "that I want information, and am willing to pay for it?"

"Why, no, Mr. Keckwitch—not quite. We must be satisfied of the use you will make of that information."

"And supposiu' I don't want to make use of it at all?"

"Then, sir, I'm afraid we can't help you. We are not spies; we are a legal force. Our business is to promote the ends of justice—not to serve private curiosity."

Mr. Keckwitch looked down, silent, baffled, perplexed.

"I should have thought," said he, "that the mere fact of any professional man keepin' his house and his ways so deadly secret, would be motive enough for inquiry. Where there's mys-

tery, there's safe to be something wrong. People ain't so close when they've nothin' to hide."

"Some folks are eccentric, you know, Mr. Keckwitch."

"It ain't eccentricity," replied the clerk promptly.

"What then?"

"I can't say. I may have my suspicions; and my suspicions may be right, or may be wrong. Anyhow, one can't see far in the dark."

"No, that's true," replied Mr. Kidd.

"If it was no more than his address, I'd be satisfied," added Keckwitch, staring hard at the fire.

"Now I tell you what it is, sir," said the other, "we must have your motive. Why do you want to know a certain person's address? What is it to you where he lives or how he lives?"

"It is a great deal to me," replied Mr. Keckwitch. "I'm a respectable man, and I don't choose to work under any but a respectable employer."

Mr. Kidd nodded, and caressed the red whiskers.

"If, as I suspect, there's somethin' wrong somewhere," the clerk went on to say, "I don't want to be mixed up in it, when the day of reck'nin' comes round."

"Of course not."

"And there's my motive."

"Have you always been on good terms, Mr. Keckwitch, with the party in question?"

This was said very sharply and suddenly; but the clerk's face remained stolid and inexpressive as ever.

"Well, Mr. Kidd," said he, "I can't say there's ever been much love lost between us. I've done my duty, and I don't deny that he's done his; but we've been neither friends nor enemies."

Mr. Kidd stared at Mr. Keckwitch, and Mr. Keckwitch stared at the fire; the one all scrutiny, the other all unconsciousness. For some minutes both were silent, and the loud mirth at the bar became more distinctly audible. Then Mr. Kidd drew a deep breath, pushed his chair back with the air of one who arrives at a sudden resolution, drew a slip of paper from his waistcoat-pocket, and said:

"Well, sir, if the address is all you require—here it is."

The steady light so rarely seen there flashed into Abel Keckwitch's eyes, and his hand closed on the paper as if it had been a living thing, trying to fly away. He did not even look at it, but imprisoned it at once in a plethoric pocket-book with a massive metal clasp that snapped like a handcuff.

"What's the fee?" said he, eagerly. "What's the fee for this little service, Mr. Kidd?"

"That's a question you must ask at headquarters, sir," replied Mr. Kidd, eyeing the clerk somewhat curiously, and already moving towards the door.

"But you'll take another glass of sherry before you go?"

"Not a drop, sir, thank you—not a drop. Wish you good evening, sir."

And in another moment, Mr. Kidd, with the white hat a trifle on one side, and the jovial smile seeming to irradiate his whole person, had presented himself at the bar, and was saying agreeable things to the young lady with the ringlets.

"Ah, sir," observed she playfully, "I don't care for compliments."

"Then, my dear, a man must be dumb to please you; for if he has eyes and a tongue, what can he do but tell you you're an angel?"

The barmaid giggled, and bade the gallant stranger "get along!"

"It's a remarkable fact," said Mr. Kidd, "that the prettiest women are always the most hard-hearted. And it's an equally remarkable fact, that the sight of beauty always makes me thirsty. I'll trouble you, Mary, my love, for a bottle of Schweppes."

"That's a good sort of fellow, I'll be bound," ejaculated a stout woman, looking admiringly after Mr. Kidd, as he presently went out with an irresistible air of gentlemanly swagger.

"You think so, do you ma'am?" said a seedy bystander. "Humph! That's Kidd, the detec-

CHAPTER XXXI. ABOUT SWITZERLAND.

Your English match-maker is, for the most part, a comfortable matron, plump, good natured, kindly, with a turn for sentiment and diplomacy. She has "The Etiquette of Courtship and Marriage" at her fingers' ends; and gives copies of that invaluable little manual to her young friends, as soon as they are engaged. When the sermon is dull, she amuses herself by reading the Solemnization of Matrimony. She delights in novels that have a great deal of love in them, and thinks Miss Bremer a finer writer than Mr. Tuckervay. To patch up lovers' quarrels, to pave the way for a proposal, to propitiate reluctant guardians, are offices in which her very soul rejoices; and, like the death-bed hag in the *Bride of Lammermoor*, who surveyed all her fellow-creatures from a professional point of view, seeing "a bonny corpse" in every fine young man about that country-side, she beholds only bridegrooms and brides elect in the very children of her friends, when they come home for the holidays.

Lady Arabella Walkingshaw was an enthusiastic match-maker. She had married off her own daughters with brilliant success, and, being a real lover of the art of matrimony, delighted "to keep her hand in" among the young people of her acquaintance. What whist was to Mrs. Battle, match-making was to Lady Arabella Walkingshaw. "It was her business, her duty, what she came into the world to do." She went about it scientifically. She had abstruse theories with respect to eyes, complexions, ages, and christian names; and even plunged into unknown physiological depths on the subject of races, genealogies, ties of consanguinity, and hereditary characteristics. In short, she constructed her model matches after a private ideal of her own. But hers was not altogether a sentimental, nor even a physiological, ideal. She was essentially a woman of the world; and took an interest quite as deep, if not deeper, in the pairing of fortunes as of faces. To introduce an income of ten thousand a year to a dowry of fifty thousand pounds, and unite the two sums in the bonds (and settlements) of wedlock, was to Lady Arabella an enterprise of surpassing interest. She would play for such a result as eagerly and passionately as if her own happiness depended on the cards, and the stakes were for her own winning.

With such a hobby kept perpetually saddled in the chambers of her imagination, it was not surprising that the sight of Saxon Trefalden leading Miss Hatherton down to dance, should have sufficed to send Lady Arabella off at a canter.

"What a charming match that would be," she said to Mrs. Bunyon. Mrs. Bunyon was the wife of the handsome Bishop, tall, aristocratic-looking, and many years his junior. Both ladies were standing near their hostess, and she was still welcoming the coming guests.

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Bunyon, doubtfully. "I don't see why."

"My dear Mrs. Bunyon—two such splendid fortunes!"

"The less reason that either should marry for money," replied the Bishop's wife. "Besides, look at the difference of age!"

"Not more than five years," said Lady Arabella.

"But it would be five years on the wrong side. What do you say, Lady Castletowers—would they make a desirable couple?"

"I did not hear the names," replied Lady Castletowers, with one of her most gracious smiles.

"We were speaking," said the match-maker, "of Miss Hatherton and Mr. Trefalden."

The smile vanished from Lady Castletowers' lip.

"I should think it a most injudicious connexion," she said, coldly. "Mr. Trefalden is a mere boy, and has no prestige beyond that of wealth."

"But fortune is position," said Lady Arabella, defending her ground inch by inch, and thinking perhaps of her own marriage.

"Miss Hatherton has fortune, and may therefore aspire to more than fortune in her matri-