

CHAPTER III

Princess.

The Key and the Label. "Miss Oakley!" Jim exclaimed, springing from his chair and going towards her, in town." pre conscious of the photograph among the lilies and the look of glittering copper

hair on the waite tablecloth than of the lady's charre. Yet she was charming, and had never

face softened into blushing embarrass-ment: "And now that I've come here to your She was in evening dress, white and gold, under a long cloak of primrose yel-by Har hain structure was begun. At their destination it was Jim who low. Her hair, piled high on her small head and elaborately waved, was prim-ly indifferent to me?" head and elaborately waved, was prim- 1y rose yellow, too; and her large eyes, under long lashes which her enemies deto be thanked for that perfect com-plexion); and altogether, she was this evening a symphony in yellow and white "Now. I hope that you really think of me as a friend," he said. from the crown of her pale gold head to the brighter gold of a slipper which showed a pointed gleam under the folds less voice. "But I am keeping you waitthe difference between a woman of dare not go alone. Will you?" young men in their lodgings, yet here she Are we to go now?" was, this exquisite creature who was supposed at this moment to be amusing herself and others in a gay country house near Brighton. But it would only embarrass her the more to betray how much her visit had surprised him, and Jim controlled the astonishment in face and voice after his first ejaculation.

She saw the change, and understood it. "Oh, it is no use to pretend you are not surprised!" she exclaimed. "But don't be more shocked than you can help. I am paying you a great compliment."

"Don't you think I appreciate that?" torted Breakspear. He would have been at his ease and rather enjoying the nusual situation, if he had had time to unusual situation, if he had had time to hide away the curl of hair and the photo-graph. But as he drew Miss Oakley into the room his quickened self-conscious the room, his guickened self-conscihad stopped at the pictured face among s. At this, he rated himself for to his forchead as if he had been a he could prevent the flush from spreadhad transferred itself from the photo- ly make up his mind to go out of the graph to him. Each could read the other's | house leaving his treasures where they thought; yet nothing could be said of it were, to be stared at by the servant who

her host offered (out of sight of what the lilies framed), and moved across the room to the fireplace. Whether or not o the fireplace. Whether or not this fact had been in her mind, from the beautiful visitor pass out, making as if chosen place of vantage the photograph could be plainly seen, the extraordinary ber himself, he exclaimed: beauty of the face which might have been missed at a greater distance, offer-must go back for. I won't be an ining its own explanation of its presence stant." on a young man's dinner table. Matters | "But an instant is too long, if you are would, however, only have been rendered worse by removing the picture now, and pleaded Vivien, laying a detaining hand it had to remain where it was; also the on his arm. "Please don't go back for curl of hair which could hardly hope to anything. I shall think it will bring us pass unnoticed.

changed voice. "I knew you wouldn't unconditionally to do anything-anything misunderstand me, and I thought you | I asked." would be ready to help me. There aren't What could Breakspear do? There Oakley, therefore Breakspear picked it many men a woman could come to, in was nothing for it but to set his teeth up without hesitation. The blank side of

echoed Jim. "Don't you think it still?" Do you sympathize with the same quality graph.

women," said Breakspear. "But tell me, hands. In the entrance hall of the house what I can do for you. I promise you was the servant whose business it was twenty minutes soor rel's she exclaimed, that you may depend upon me, whatever to attend to the door, and with him with the admiring ga te which all women

knowing what I mean to ask?" eves. It was a reckless promise; but it absence.

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where I dare not go alone. It is only to

impulsively broke in Jim. challenge. "What do you mean?" she dear, shining curl and the photograph.

"Why, I only meant that I was on the rancher, who has distinguished himself as gone, our trains would perhaps have running down to Brighton to see Vivien Oakley, a girl he had met at several "At eager. "Why are you very glad? Is being conducted, and is led by curlosity missed securing a great treasure, and was with a clever young woman of the an old portmanteau, marked with a Maltese cross, and its contents. He finds by incidents on the way home that some But instead, he only told the "convenby incidents on the way home that solution person or persons are eager by any means to procure possession of his purchase. On arriving at his lodgings, he examines his prize, and finds costumes of various na-

"Yet you came near going, you say, "Yes. That was before I-er-knew about the business which will keep me

"Oh, I see!" She spoke drily. "But suppose your going to Brighton was included in the promise you've allowed me to exact from you?"

seductive as she asked this question, clared to be artificially darkened, were which would have thrilled through the vellow-brown as topazes. Her skin was warm blood in Breakspear's veins only marble white, save for the thin coral last night; but now another face seemed thread of her lips (some people-women, to have come between him and her, fadof course, doubted that nature alone was ing her beauty into cold insignificance for terious communication, which had cost

Her eyes droped, and she bit her lip.

of her trailing dress. After her striking ing all this time to know what is the serbeauty, one noticed next about Vivien Oakley what essentially "good form" she was; how correct every detail that makes the "smart" world and one who only tries to copy such women. She did not as you call it, I wish there were more, to look at all the sort of girl to call upon show you how much I would do for you.

> "Yes, now-now!" cried Miss Oakley, suddenly showing signs of impatience. "And when the errand is done, you will take me home, where I am to spend the night. My uncle thinks I am dining with the Brandon-Paynes. My friends at Red Down Hall think that my unc. wasn't well, and that I came to see for myself how he was. So you see I have been obliged to tell some fibs. But no matter. Nothing matters, really! And now we will go. I ought not to have delayed so long, for every minute counts. You are very good to come, and you will be still more good to make haste. Your hat and coat? Oh, there they are, on would be quite "blue" and unhappy, and

table, resting one hand upon it. To take her at Victoria in time for the 10.30 a fool because the blood would rush up the curl and the photograph, and put train to Brighton. Not that he actually guest, but the guest had no smile to give them in his pocket as he wished to do, intended to arrange it, for everything "Team bloy; yet the more he tried the less ould prevent the flush from spread-Miss Oakley, and drawing her attention ing ;and he knew that the lady's gaze to the fact. Yet Breakspear could hardwould come in to clear away his dinner. Miss Oakley ignored the chair which While he debated what to do, he crossed the room and picked up his coat and hat.

ss unnoticed. I came to you because I felt so sure it's horribly unlucky to return for a ing questions. He walked back to the I might depend upon your friendship," Miss Oakley went on, in a slightly away. Please-please! You promised to a paper label, lying on the floor.

such a way as this; but I was sure you together and humor her, or break his the label was turned towards him, and were-the only one among all the men I word. So he chose the former course. as the hansom drove off the instant that But he wondered grimly how he could the lost property had been retrieved, "You say you thought all this of me," ever for a moment have imagined himself Jim could not have examined the latter on the road to love Miss Oakley. She even had he been eager to do so, until "Oh, I suppose so!" she exclaimed. did not appear even pretty to him now. he had a light once more. ems so much worse than 1 He thought her an unreasonable, petucome, I know. But you are audacious. and he at home again-with the photo the cabman. As he

"I like courage, whether in men or to safeguard the latter from irreverent for the late returning lodgers. Breakspear left hasty instructions that of whatever class, bestowed upon hand-You promise me that, without even on no account was his table to be cleared some Jim Breakspear. "You wouldn't

s from a man to a woman who had Leaving this message required but the twenty minutes since he went." was from a man to a woman who had taken an unusual step in applying to him for help. "Thank you, thank you!" She spoke in the cab which had been waiting for

strained, and the expression of her topaz in Seymour street. eyes matched it. "I must go to a house A few hours ago, the prospect of a long drive alone in a hansom cab with leave a letter, but-I must take the letter Vivien Oakley, after dark, would have Brandon-Payne, and it was rather a myself. You see, it is for a friend—a seemed to Breakspear a delicious adven-friend whom I could not refuse when I ture. Though he was not exactly in tioned between him and Vivien Oakley heard that it was almost a question of love, and might have been sorry next day life or death. I came from Brighton on for what he had done in a moment of imrpose to do this thing—" pulse, he would very likely have told her Paynes—a gay young married coup "Then I very nearly passed you on the that he cared for her. To-night, however, he was in a fever of impatience To his surprise, she gave a quick when he heard that he was to drive out tart, her yellow eyes opening wide and as far as the Boltons. It would be an friends. Still, there was no reason why tilating, their look fixed on him, as if in age before he could get back to that Tom Brandon-Payne should not have called upon him, and waited

Nevertheless, he managed to hide all traces of his selfish annovance; and to do point of starting for Brighton this after- this ought not to have been difficult, for TER: Jim Breakspear, an ex-Colorado noon," Breakspear explained. "If I had never in her life had Miss Oakley been more charming. She was keyed to a a Yeoman in the South African war, and is being feted in London society, intends I didn't go, as things have turned out." see that, though she kept herself splendidly in hand-but she was still able to bring all the electric battery of her Oakley, a girl he had met at several it. Homes," but misses his train. Strolling about Victoria station he lights upon a room in which a sale of derelict property "Because if I'd gone, I should have time to be a sole of derelict property "Because if I'd gone, I should have the beat the beat upon Breakspear. For a few moments she would be bright and witty, just to remind him that he was with a dever young woman of the to bid his whole available money (£20) for falling in love with the most beautiful world who knew how to drop diamonds rom her lips when she chose. Then, not to let him forget that she was a girl, who ad flung herself upon his chivalry, her manner would soften into pathos.

She did not attempt to explain the nystery of her errand, but by dropping prize, and finds costumes of various na-tionalities, all marked with the Maltese "If that is the only reason you're glad a scandal for a dear, dear friend, she let cross, a death mask taken from some per-son who seemed to have come to a violent plied "row will have gone to Brighton," she re-it be plainly seen that the concealment is that she was almost risking in and clear away now, or would you rather wait till I come in the morning to son who seemed to have come to a violent end, a photograph, a coil of golden hair, to-morrow." Her eyes were on his face. was merely for the friend's sake, not her own at all, and gave Breakspear a and five sheets of paper covered with mys-terious allusions to various localities, dates, stammered, uncomfortably. "The fact stammered, uncomfortably. "The fact ber friendship. If a woman had in her and sums of money. The photograph is that of a girl so lovely that Breakspear telling you how awfully sorry I was not would she be when her love was awakenfeels irresistibly compelled to follow up the to be able to see you in Brighton after ed? That was the question that Jim ought to have asked himself, but he did already about the key picked up in the not. He was wondering whether those cab, and thrust it mechanically in his idiots of servants in Seymour street had pocket with his own latch-key as he let his treasures alone.

scarcely to appreciate the necessity for it up, his eyes at once seeking the table speed which Miss Oakley had urged so strongly or leaving the house, for though Breakspear more than once urged him to hasten, the same jog-trot pace was "In that case, I should lay aside my business and go. But I haven't flattered two, from Seymour street all the way to been more so, poshaps, than now as she stood hesitating on the threshold, the hardness which was the one defect of here. to you, Miss Oakley, whether I went or bind here the store defect of here. The store defect of here to you, the bardness which was the one defect of here. The store defect of here to you, the bardness which was the one defect of here. same nervous impatience which had characterized her manner before the

> Vivien Oakley's voice was soft and stopped a letter given him by his com- grace when he finis hed to put them back panion. A servant took it from him, exhibiting no surprise, and Breakspear re-turned to Miss Oakley without having learnt-or even wished to learn-the name of the person for whom the mysso much trouble; was intended.

Instead of seeming happier now that her object was successfully accomplished, Vivien's excitement died away. She became visibly depressed, and was apparently no longer able to struggle against some hidden trouble. Breakspear heard her sigh once or twice, and that, being a warm-hearted fellow, he forgave her once and for all for the spear, angrily. "I suppose he tho anxiety which her whim had caused

The house of Vivien's uncle. Sir Richard Kennedy, with whom she had lived for several years, was in Manchester square, therefore the two had a long drive together after leaving the Boltons; and then Miss Oakley kept Breakspear talking with her for some minutes at the door before she would let him ring. She had to thank him all over again, many times, for what he had done for her, and reassure herself that he did not misunderstand; that he was not shocked; that he really, really did not like her any the less for what she had done. Then she had to beg that he would reconsider and go to Brighton next day. They As she spoke, she moved quickly away from the fireplace and stord by the As she spoke, she moved quickly away away, Jim had to say that, if he could will in the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace are the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace are the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace are the fireplace and stood by the possibly arrange to do so, he would meet the fireplace are unconnected with a certain divine of his anger almost breaking through the Young David Herbert the Victim of a interesting and irrelevant. He could cool crust of self-control, "to ask you 'o reature unknown, appeared to him unwith a regretful note.

Manchester square and Seymour street are near neighbors, but Jim decided to eep the cab rather than walk, for do so would save a little time, and he vas foolish enough to feel that every minute counted. It was as if he had left his love waiting for him. At his own house he jumped out quick

when the cabman called to him. "You've dropped something, sir." The hansom was a good one, with a

the driver was peering down through the Jim could not think what he had drop-

cab, looked in, and saw a key attached No such key had ever been in his po What could Breakspear do? There Oakley, therefore Breakspear picked it

Holding the key in his hand, he open had imagined, now that I'm actually lant, silly, superstitious woman, and he ed the door with his own, which he had already fitted into place when called by the cabman. As he entered, one of the maids employed in the house was in the But at least it was still in his power act of putting on the hall table candles

until his return. Nothing in the sitting have missed your friend. He waited Jim leoked straight into her room was to be touched during his ever so long for you, but finally he had to go away. It can't be more than

Breakspear certainly knew a Mr. this very evening, for it was not one often in his thoughts. The Brandon-Paynes-a gay young married couplehim since his return from South Africa, but they were acquaintances, rather than friends. Still, there was no reason why called upon him, and waited. "By Jove!" thought Jim, "he mus

have seen the photograph, and the curl, too. What a beastly bore!" "Was Mr. Brandon-Payne here long lid you say?" he added, aloud, to Sallie, the maid.

"Oh, yes, sir, that he was. He wasn' ten minutes behind you, and seemed so disappointed. William had gone out on an errand, so I let him in, and took him your sitting room."

"Had William given my message abou" the table?" Breakspear asked, almost wishing, since there had been a caller. that Sallie had been allowed to remove the things-the curl and the picture mong others. "Yes, sir. Nothing's been touched

I'm afraid you'll find it rather untidylooking. It's not very late-not much past ten, sir; would you like me to come "You can wait till morning, thank you," returned Jim, beginning to go up

stairs two steps at a time. His rooms of which there were threesitting room, bedroom and bathroomwere on the first floor. He had forgotten The cabman who drove them seemed gas was down very low, and he turned where the photograph had been reposing in its frame of lilies.

The lilies were still there; the whole room was sweet with their fragrance. But the photograph was gone from its which had lain beside his plate.

Breakspear's face darkened, his brows drew together. 'Confound the fellow!'' he exclaimed, aloud, doubting not at all that Brandon-Payne, who possessed eve for beauty in women, had solaced the ime of waiting by staring at his absent host's souvenirs, not even having the where he had four I them.

Jim began to search everywhere. On he mantel, on the two or three small tables the big sitting room contained, on the writing desk, on the sideboard, on the chairs, and even on the floor, but the photographi and the lock of hair were owhere. There was something strange about the room, too. Vaguely its tenant noticed that the arrangement of the fur-niture was changed. Chairs were out of place, the sofa was pushed back against the wall, the desk faced to the right instead of to the left. 'I'm hanged if that fellow shan't re

would be a good joke to steal my things. out he'll find out that it's no joke before I've done with him, and, what's more, e'll find it out before he's an hour elder if I have luck."

Without waiting for further inspec tion, which in his mood of savage im-patience he felt would be useless, he marched downstairs again and out of the

Brandon-Payne would not be at home e knew, for Brandon-Payne was not the sort of person to be found in his own ouse in the evening unless his wife were ntertaining guests, which was improbable to-night, as her husband appeared o have been wasting his time in another man's lodgings. The most likely place to look for him now would be one of his clubs, where the cliances were that he had betaken himself on leaving Seymour street:

Breakspear knew what clubs Brandon- food, such as waste meat or raw bones Payne frequented, and at the second one rich he tried the Comiel he moonth rose up smiling to receive his unexpected "I came here," Jim said, with the lave

send a messenger to meet Miss Oakley, ave apparently annexed by way of be ing funny.' "My dear fellow; I don't know what

you are driving at," replied Brandon-The blank bewilderment on the pleas-

ant, not too clever face was so genuine or so remarkably well put on that Breakspear pulled himself up a little. "I suppose you are willing to admit It suppose you are writing to way din-that you saw a photograph on my din-ing table this evening?" he said, more however, looking back, noted that he

moderately. "I hadn't the pleasure of seeing either." drawled Brandon-Pavne. "Dined mall lamp inside, by the aid of which here to-night, and haven't been out of the club since.'

Breakspear began to feel foolish. "That's a dashed queer thing," he com- were in bathing, and inquired the wheremented. "They told me at my place abouts of young Herbert, and underthat you'd been there waiting all the stood them to say he was with them. He evening for me-only just gone. "Nice compliment you pay me, my

dear chap," exclaimed the other. "You Gidley of the Kootenay resulted in the think I've called on you, and missing discovery of the body. It was at once session, but it probably belonged to Miss think I've called on you, and missing some valuables you instantly attribute removed to the shore and every effort their loss to me. Ha, ha! It's your turn to explain. And Jim did explain-as little as pos-

sible, but referring with mock airiness to scene. The body was brought to the city a photograph so pretty that it might have not long afterwards. The poor little feloused covetousness even in so immacu- low had just learned to swim and was late a breast as Brandon-Payne's. In not very thoroughly master of himself in the midst of the explanation another man the water. He was alone on the point. ame forward, who had dined with Bran- or doubtless this deplorable occurrence don-Payne at the club and been talking would not now be chronicled. He was a with him since. There could no longer exist the slightest suspicion that the latter had been in Seymour street. Who & Wilson. He was a very clever lad then had spent the evening there, in and a favorite among his friends, whom "Oh, sir, what a pity you wasn't in Breakspear's absence, gaining admit- this cruel termination of his promising

acquaintance? A strange idea began to dawn in his mind. Having duly apologized to Bran-don-Payne he hurried home again, and on taking his latch-key from his pocket o go away. It can't be more than wenty minutes since he went." "My friend?" echoed Jim, blankly. "My that was his norm?"



low-set fowl.

had disappeared and instinctively sus pected that something was wrong. The launch returned to the spot where the boy had been seen, but he was not to be found. The captain then turned

then proceeded to town.

made to restore life, but fruitlessly.

will not be held.

warmly, yet her voice was curiously her during the quarter hour of her visit girl, glibly. For she had been too well left in the hansom tipped not to remember the name of the

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