

and when Pipanta dies, he will take her soul, and put it into the body of a poisonous toad, and it will remain a toad for ever. And then Mogaddo will follow the same fate: the spell is on them both."

The lad started up, his mobile lips quivering with white passion, and his blue eyes all aflame. He sidled up behind Brackenridge's chair, and laying a long thin finger on the chemist's arm, said in a sort of shrill whisper: "Jerry will kill him!"

"Hush! my poor boy; you must not talk in that wild way," said Brackenridge soothingly. "Do you know who he is—this terrible magician? You see him nearly every day."

"No! Who?" said Jerry in an eager whisper.

"He who lives next door, who makes the sun take pictures for him—the tall man with the long black beard." Jerry fell back a foot or two in dismay. "What stranger but he," continued Brackenridge, "ever played with Pipanta as he played with her the first time he saw her? It was then he cast his spell over her. Lovely Pipanta must die."

"Pipanta shall not die!" exclaimed Jerry, all aglow with nervous excitement. "Give Jerry some of that nice white powder out of the jar on the top shelf in the shop, and Jerry will mix it with what the magician eats, and he shall die. Hoo, hoo, hoo!"

"Nay, nay, Jerry, my man; that would never do," said the chemist. "We cannot prevent Pipanta dying, unless"—And again he paused, and looked earnestly at Jerry. "Listen to me," he resumed. "He of whom we have been speaking is going on Friday to the island of Inchmallow, and I want you, Jerry, to row him across."

"Want Jerry to do it? No, no, no; Jerry dare not!"

"Tush, man! he has no power to harm you, or I would not ask you to go with him. But to make everything quite sure, I will give you a charm which I have up stairs, locked up in an iron chest, with which you may set at defiance all the enchanters and witches in the world.—And now, come nearer; I want to talk to you seriously. You must be at Finger Bay at half-past ten on Friday morning. He will come there, and you will row him across to the island.—And now attend carefully to what I am about to say;" and with that, the chemist's voice sank to a whisper. Jerry, sitting motionless by his side, drank in his words eagerly.

Half an hour later, Brackenridge himself let Jerry out by the front-door, and then stood listening to the lad's retreating footsteps, as he went swiftly down the hill. "A devilish thing to do," muttered the chemist to himself; "but I'm not going to funk it now." And as he turned to go indoors, he heard with a shudder the faint sound of Jerry's weird laughter far down the road.

CHAPTER XIX.—THE ISLAND OF INCHMALLOW.

John English, walking up from Normanford to Cliff Cottage on Thursday evening, was overtaken by Brackenridge. "Your purpose still holds good, I suppose, to go off to the island to-morrow?" said the latter, after the usual greetings. "You could not have more favourable weather—mild and bright, and no frost."

"I have not forgotten my promise," said John, "and I certainly intend to keep it."

"I have arranged for a boat to be ready for you at half-past ten, as agreed on," said the chemist. "For myself, I am going from home to-morrow, and shall not be back for nearly a week."

A mild and genial morning was that of Friday, but less bright and sunny than the mornings of several preceding days had been, and John English's practised eye told him that a change of weather was impending. "It will hold fair till I get back," he said, as he scanned the clouds again; and then he set off at a rapid pace on his way to Finger Bay. The distance was only six miles and a half, and that was nothing of a walk to John English.

He had got beyond the toll-bar on the East-ridingham road—beyond the toll-bar, but not quite so far as the lodge of Ashleigh Park, when he

heard the approaching clatter of hoofs on the hard road behind him. He did not look round; but the sound ceased close at his elbow, and a voice that thrilled him, a voice that he loved to hear better than any other in the world, addressed him: "Mr. English, of all people in the world! Why have you been so long without coming to see us at Belair?"

John turned, and took the little hand so frankly proffered, and bared his head for a moment, as his long brown fingers closed softly over it.

"Do you not know," he said, "that I received a polite *congé* from Lady Spencelaugh several weeks ago?"

"I know nothing of the kind," replied Frederica; "neither can I in any way account for such treatment. Sir Philip has asked after you several times, and I was obliged to put him off with some vague excuse, being myself at a loss to understand why you had never come up to Belair since the last occasion on which you dined there."

"You cannot be more at a loss than I am, Miss Spencelaugh, to account for my sudden dismissal."

"It cannot be accounted for," said Frederica. "But Lady Spencelaugh is mistress of her own house, and has the privilege of doing as she likes in such cases. And so enough of an unpleasant topic. Will you take a commission from me, Mr. English?"

John signified how happy it would make him to do so.

"I want you to obtain for me a complete set of your Roman photographs," said Frederica. "By what day can you get them for me?"

"I shall have to write to London for them; can hardly get them down before Tuesday."

"On Tuesday, then, I shall expect them. But do not send them up to the Hall, Mr. English; bring them yourself—that is, if you are not otherwise engaged. On Tuesday, between eleven and three, remember. And now I must bid you good-morning, for my way lies down here to Ashleigh Park."

"One word before you go," said John. "Sir Philip Spencelaugh—is he better than when I saw him last?"

Frederica's dark eyes turned on John with an almost tearful look. She shook her head sadly. "He is no better," she said. "He never leaves the house now. I dare not trust myself to say more. Adieu!"

John stood like one spell-bound till the last flutter of Frederica's veil was lost among the trees. He had seen her again, and she had smiled kindly on him; and he was to see her again the following week—so ran the joyous burden of his thoughts, as he went on his way through lane, and coppice, and solitary by-paths, where no human being seemed to have been for years, till the ocean burst suddenly on his view; and there below him was Finger Bay, with a man pacing the beach, and a tiny boat moored to the rocks. John found a rude footway, by which he scrambled down to the shore; and on approaching, was surprised to find that the man he had seen was none other than Jerry Winch. "Brackenridge has surely never sent *him* to row me across to the island!" muttered John to himself.

"Good-morning, Jerry," he said, as he drew near. "What are you doing at this out-of-the-way spot?"

The lad took off his conical hat, and gave one of his sweeping old-fashioned bows. "Jerry is here to row the gentleman across to Inchmallow," he said.

"I was not aware that the art of rowing was among your accomplishments," said John.

"Jerry knows how to row," said the lad quietly. "He has been to Inchmallow often with people in summer-time to see the ruins. He could find his way there and back in the dark."

"In that case, we will start at once," said John, as he led the way to the boat. He was fond of rowing, and the anticipated pleasure of a good pull had been one great inducement for making the excursion; stripping off his coat, he now took the stroke oar, and having pulled out

into deep water, Jerry set the boat's head for Inchmallow, which was only just visible this morning through the haze.

A long silent pull through the green water, swelling as gently just now as any summer sea, for there had been nearly a month of fine weather—silent, because Jerry was not talkative at the best of times, and in the presence of the great magician, which he believed John to be, it was not to be expected that he should speak, except when spoken to; while John's thoughts were too bright and busy for him to care about conversation. Once or twice, while John rested on his oar for a moment, Jerry's hand wandered into the folds of his waistcoat, to feel whether the amulet, which Brackenridge had lent him as a safeguard against the machinations of the dread Katafango, was still safe. It hung by a ribbon round his neck; and the charm itself, whatever it might be, was stitched up with variegated silks in a piece of sealskin, which smelt strongly of spices and strange drugs. Armed with this potent safeguard, Jerry felt tolerably brave, and went through the duties of the occasion without falling into a state of nervous incapacity, which was what the chemist had dreaded more than anything else.

So, after a time, the mainland began to look dim and distant through the haze; and the little rocky island of Inchmallow rose pleasantly to view out of the green waste of waters. Jerry steered the boat into a little sheltered cove, and made it fast to a large boulder, and then John stepped ashore. Whatever might have been its state of cultivation at some far-distant time, the island was now wild and desolate enough to have suited the tastes of the most unsocial of hermits. It was only about a mile and a quarter in circumference, but the irregularities of its surface made it seem much larger. On three sides, it presented a jagged, irregular frontage of rocks to the sea, known to frequenters of the island as "The Shark's Teeth," and ranging from ten to fifty feet above high-water mark. These rocks were fringed with a thick growth of stunted shrubs and bushes, all with their heads turned inland from the rough wintry sea-wind. The ground inside this rocky barrier was thickly carpeted with long coarse grass, and dipped down towards a central hollow, sheltered, warm, where lay the ruins of the hermitage.

John English, standing on the fragment of a broken pillar, took in the features of the scene. Here and there, a portion of a wall was still standing; with one or two doorways, and part of a small circular tower, with a winding staircase inside, leading originally to a belfry, or, it might be, to a look-out across the sea; but beyond the arch of the chapel window, which had been spoken of by Brackenridge, and which, though small in size, was of exquisite design, there was nothing worthy of John's pencil. He had brought his materials with him, and he sat down at once on the broken pillar, and began to sketch the window. An hour later, with his pipe in his mouth, and his sketch-book under his arm, he wandered slowly back towards the shore. With the completion of his task, his thoughts had flown back to Frederica; and it was rather by instinct than by the exercise of any other faculty, that he retraced his way to the shingly cove where he had landed. The sea was at his feet: he brought himself back by an effort from the delicious dreamland in which he had been wandering, and looked around.

Jerry and the boat were gone!

But gone whither! John scrambled up on to a pinnacle of a rock close by, and looked steadfastly around. There was nothing to be seen but the water in front of him, and the desolate island behind, and over everything the gray mist, growing grayer and denser as the day advanced; but nowhere either Jerry or the boat. John called aloud: "Jerry! Jerry Winch! where are you?" And then he waited breathlessly, but there came no response. "The foolish fellow has grown tired with waiting, and has gone round to some other point of the island," muttered John to himself; and with that he set off to explore the little domain, bounding lightly from rock to rock, examining carefully every little indentation of the shore where it was possible for a boat to