

fawning," was what Rory used to say. *Eh bien!* Though Dick Stewart cannot exactly turn his back on the object of his search—"Don't know the point of the compass, point of fact!" he reminds himself—he can turn his back on his method of search for it so far. His method so far has been to search according to rule and rote, by map and system. Well, he is abandoning that now; he turns his back on rule and system; henceforward at haphazard he will go.

To France he had come in quest of a hidden and mysterious and elusive place, with delectable treasure in it. There are scores of places of the kind in France—heaps of them, piles of them, holocausts of them burned and ruined, he knew; though only one of them held his treasure. Yet these places were not so many that they could not each be visited in turn, he had told himself, on a day in Lincoln's Inn Fields five or six weeks ago, when he was thinking the enterprise out and planning a careful game.

He had felt so sure of winning, then. With time and a map, with patience and scientific chessplay, he would surely find the clue and follow up the trail! Odiously certain he had been about it, then. "Francis Benedick Stewart my life long friend," he had said to himself that day in Lincoln's Inn Fields, "why should you hesitate? Bosh! You know you are only pretending to hesitate—you know you quite mean it, in the end! You have too much leisure and quite enough cash—you are no good here—go yonder! Go to France. France is a land of pleasant scamps and scampers. In France there's an occupation beckoning you, my dear fellow! An adventure—an *adventure!* With just the chance of a ravishing reward. No twopenny ha'penny adventure either, mind you, but a downright rich lottery chance. You can do it—you know you long to do it—lord, man, don't hesitate! Let yourself go!"

And that was what he had done—in a way. In a way he had let himself go. But *how* had he let himself go? "Imbecile!" he now growls at himself, as he remembers. He had crossed the Channel and become absurdly energetic by deputy—he had let a leathery ogre of a mechanic rush