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THE BETRAYAL

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CHAPTER III.

The Cry in the Night.

"You'd be having company last night, sir?" Mrs. Hollings remarked inquisitively.

Mrs. Hollings was an elderly widow, who devoted two hours of her morning to cleaning my rooms and perparing my breakfast.

"Some friends did call," I answered, pouring out the coffee.

"Friends! Good Samaritans I should call 'em," Mrs. Hollings declared, "if so be as they left all the things I found here this morning. Why, there's a whole chicken, to say nothing of tongue and biscuits, and butter, and relishes, and savouries, the names of which isn't often heard in this part of the world. There's wine, too, with gold paper round the top, champagne wine, I do believe."

"Is the tide up this morning?" I asked.

"None to speak of," Mrs. Hollings answered, "though the road's been washed dry, and the creeks are brimming. I've scarcely set foot in the village this morning, but they're all a-talking about the soldier gentleman the Duke brought down to the village hall last night. Might you have seen him, sir?"

"Yes, I saw him," I answered.

"A sad shame as it was the night of your lecture, sir," the woman babbled on, "for they were all crazy to hear him. My! the hall was packed."

"Would you mind seeing to my room now, Mrs. Hollings?" I asked. "I am going out early this morning."

Mrs. Hollings ascended my frail little staircase. I finished my breakfast in haste, and catching up my hat escaped out of doors.

I shall never forget the glory of that morning. The sky was blue and cloudless, the sun was as hot as though this were indeed a midsummer morning. The whole land, saturated still with the fast receding sea, seemed to gleam and glitter with a strange iridescence. Great pools in unaccustomed places shone like burnished silver, the wet sands were sparkling and brilliant, the creeks had become swollen rivers full of huge masses of emerald seaweed, running far up into the marshland and spreading themselves out over the meadows beyond. There was salt in the very atmosphere. I felt it on my tongue, and my cheeks were rough with it. Overhead the seagulls in great flocks were returning from shelter, screaming as though with joy as they dived down to the sea. It was a wonderful morning.

About 200 yards past my cottage the road, which from the village ran perfectly straight, took a sharp turn inland, leaving the coast abruptly on account of the greater stretch of marshland beyond. It was towards this bend I walked and curiously enough, with every step I took some inexplicable sense of nervous excitement grew stronger and stronger within me. The fresh morning air and the sunlight seemed powerless to dissipate for a moment the haunting terror of last night. It was a real face which I had seen pressed against the window, and where had Ray been when he returned with sand-clogged boots and the tell-tale seaweed upon his trousers? And later on, had I dreamed it, or had there really been a cry? It came back to me with horrible distinctness. It was a real cry, the cry of a man in terror for his life. I stopped short in the road and wiped my damp forehead. What a fool I was! The night was over. Here in the garish day there was surely nothing to fear? Nevertheless, I, who had started out thirsting only to breathe the fresh salt air, now walked along with stealthy nervous footsteps, looking all the time from left to right, starting at the sight of a dark log on the sands, terrified at a broken buoy which had floated up one of the creeks. Some fear had come over me which I could not shake off. I was afraid of what I might see.

So I walked to the bend of the road. Here, in case the turn might be too sharp for some to see at night, a dozen yards or so of white posts and railings bordered the marshes. I leaned over them for a moment, telling myself that I paused only to admire the strange colors drawn by the sunlight from the sea-soaked wilderness, the deep brown, the strange purple, the faint pink of the distant sands. But it was none of these which my eyes sought with such fierce eagerness. It was none of the artist's fervour which burned my limbs into dead weights, which drew the color even from my lips, and set my heart beating with fierce quick throbs. Half in the creek and half out, not a dozen yards from the road, was the figure of a man. His head and shoulders were beneath the water, his body and legs and outstretched arms were upon the marsh. And although never before had I looked upon death, I knew very well that I was face to face with it now.

How long it was before I moved I cannot tell. At last, however, I climbed the palings, jumped at its narrowest point a smaller creek, and with slow footsteps approached the dead man. Even when I stood by his side I dared not touch him. I dared not turn him round to see his face. I saw that he was of middle size, fairly well dressed, and as some blown sand had drifted over his boots and ankles I knew that he had been there for some hours. There was blood upon his collar, and the fingers of his right hand were tightly clenched. I told myself that I was a coward, and I set my teeth. I must lift his head from the water, and cover him up with my own coat while I fetched help. But when I stooped down a deadly faintness came over me. My fingers were palsied with horror. I had a sudden irresistible conviction I could not touch him. It was a sheer impossibility. There was something between us more potent than the dread of a dead man—something inimical between us two, the dead and the living. I staggered away and ran reeling to the road, plunging blindly through the creek.

"About two hundred yards further down the road was a small lodge at one of the entrances of Rowchester. It was towards this I turned and ran. The door was closed, and I beat upon it fiercely with clenched fists. The woman who answered it stared at me strangely. I suppose that I was a wild-looking object.

"It's Mr. Ducaine, isn't it?" she exclaimed. "Why, sakes alive! what's wrong, sir?"

"A dead man in the marshes," I faltered.

She was interested enough, but her comely weather-hardened face reflected none of the horror which she must have seen on mine.

"Lordy me! whereabouts, sir?" she inquired.

I pointed with a trembling forefinger. She stood by my side on the threshold of the cottage and shaded her eyes with her hand, for the glare of the sun was dazzling.

"Well, I never did!" she remarked. "But I said to John last night that I pitied them at sea. He's been washed up by the tide, I suppose, and I count there'll be more before the day's out. A year come next September there was six of 'em, gentlefolk, too, who'd been yachting. Er, but it's a cruel thing is the sea."

"Where is your husband?" I asked.

"Up chopping wood in "Fernham Spinney," she answered. "I'd best send one of the children for him. He'll have a cart with him. Will you step inside, sir?"

I shook my head and answered her vaguely. She sent a boy with a message, and brought me out a chair, dusting it carefully with her apron.

"You'd best sit down sir. You look all struck of a heap, so to speak. Maybe you came upon it sudden."

I was glad enough to sit down, but I answered her at random. She re-entered the cottage and continued some household duties. I sat quite still, with my eyes steadily fixed upon a dark object a little to the left of those white pailings. Above my head a starling in a wicker cage was making an insane cackling, on the green patch in front a couple of tame rabbits sat and watched me, pink-eyed, imperturbable. Inside I could hear the slow ticking of an eight-day clock. The woman was humming to herself as she worked. All these things, which my senses took quick note of and retained, seemed to me to belong to another world. I myself was under some sort of spell. My brain was numb with terror, the fire of life had left my veins, so that I sat there in the warm sunshine and shivered until my teeth chattered. Inside, the woman was singing over her work.

And then the spell developed. A nameless but loathsome fascination drew me from my seat, drew me with uneven and reluctant footsteps out of the gate and down the narrow straight road. There was still not a soul in sight. I drew nearer and nearer to the spot. Once more I essayed to move him. It was utterly in vain. Such nerve as I possessed had left me wholly and altogether. A sense of repulsion, nauseating, invincible, made a child of me. I stood up and looked around wildly. It was then for the first time I saw what my right food had trodden into the sand.

I picked it up, and a little cry, unheard save by the sea-birds which circled about my head, broke from my lips. It was a man's signet ring, thin and worn smooth with age. It was quaintly shaped, and in the centre was set a small jet-black stone. The device was a bird, and underneath the motto—"Vinco!"

My hand closed suddenly upon it, and again I looked searchingly around. There was not a soull in sight. I slipped the ring into my waistcoat pocket and moved back to the white railings. I leaned against them, and, taking a pipe and tobacco from my pocket, began to smoke.

Strangely enough, I had now recovered my nerve. I was able to think and reason calmly. The woman at the lodge had taken it for granted that this man's body had been thrown up by the sea. Was that a possible conclusion? There was a line all down the sands where the tide had reached, a straggling uneven line marked with huge masses of wet seaweeds, fragments of timber, the flotsam and jetsam of the sea. The creek where the man's body was lying was forty yards above this. Yet on such a night who could say where those great breakers, driven in by the wind as well as by their own mighty force, might not have cast their prey? Within a few yards of him was a jagged mass of timber. The cause of those wounds would be obvious enough. I felt the ring in my waistcoat pocket—it was there, safely enough hidden, and I looked toward the lodge. As yet there were no signs of John or the cart.

But behind me, coming from the village, I heard the sound of light and rapid footsteps. I turned my head. It was Blanche Moyat, short-skirted, a stick in her hand, a feather stuck through her Tam-o'-Shanter.

"Good-morning," she cried out heartily; "I've been to call at your cottage."

"Very kind of you," I answered, hesitatingly.

Miss Moyat was good-hearted, but a little over-powering—and in certain moods she reminded me of her father.

"Oh, I had an errand," she explained, laughing. "Father said if I saw you I was to say that he has to call on the Duke this afternoon, and, if you liked, he would explain about your lecture last night and try and get the village hall for you for nothing. The Duke is very good-natured, and if he knows that he spoilt your evening, father thinks he might let you have it for nothing."

"It is very kind of your father," I answered. "I do not think that I shall ever give that lecture again."

"Why not?" she protested. "I am sure I thought it a beautiful lecture, and I'm not keen on churches and ruins, myself," she added, with a laugh which somehow grated upon me. "What are you doing here?"

"Watching the dead," I answered grimly.

She looked at me for an explanation. I pointed to the dark object by the side of the creek. She gave a violent start. Then she screamed and caught hold of my arm.

"Mr. Ducaine!" she cried. "What is it"

"A dead man!" I answered.

Her face was a strange study. There was fear mingled with unwholesome curiosity, the heritage of her natural lack of refinement. She leaned over the palings.

"Oh, how horrible!" she exclaimed. "I don't know whether I want to look or not. I've never seen any one dead."

"I should advise you," I said, "to go away."

It was apparently the last thing she desired to do. Of the various emotions which had possessed her, curiosity was the one which survived.

"You are sure he is dead?" she asked.

"Quite," I answered.

"Was he drowned, then?"

"I think," I replied, "that he has been washed up by the tide. There has probably been a shipwreck."

"Gracious!" she exclaimed. "It is just a sailor then?"

"I have not looked at his face," I answered, "and I should not advise you to. He has been tossed about and injured. His clothes, though, are not a seaman's."

She passed through a gap in the palings. "I must look [illegible] closer." [illegible] exclaimed. "Do come with me, Mr. Ducaine. I'm horribly afraid."

"Then don't go near him," I advised. "A dead man is surely not a pleasant spectacle for you. Come away, Miss Moyat."

But she had advanced to within a couple of yards of him. Then she stopped short, and a little exclamation escaped from her lips.

"Why, Mr. Ducaine," she cried out, "this is the very man who stopped me last night outside our house, and asked the way to your cottage."

CHAPTER IV.

Miss Moyat's Promise.

We stood looking at one another on the edge of the marsh. In the clear morning sunlight I had no chance of escape or subterfuge. There was terror in my face, and she could see it.

"You—you cannot be sure!" I exclaimed. "It may not be the same man."

"It is the same man," she answered confidently. "He stopped me and asked if I could direct him to your house. It was about half an hour after you had gone. He spoke very softly and almost like a foreigner. I told him exactly where your cottage was. Didn't he come to you?"

"No," I answered. "I have never seen him before in my life."

"Why do you look—so terrified?" she asked. "You are as pale as a ghost."

I clutched hold of the railings. She came over to my side. Up the road I heard in the distance the crunching of heavy wheels. A wagon was passing through the lodge gates. John, the woodman, was walking with unaccustomed briskness by the horses' heads, cracking his whip as he came. I looked into the girl's face by my side.

"Miss Moyat," I said hoarsely, "can't you forget that you saw this man?"

"Why?" she asked bewildered.

"I don't want to be dragged into it," I answered, glancing nervously over my shoulder along the road. "on't you see that if he is just found here with his head and shoulders in the creek, and nothing is known about him, they will take it that he has been washed up by the sea in the storm last night? But if it is known that he came from the land, that he was seen in the village asking for me—then there will be many things said."

"I don't see as it matters," she answered, puzzled. "He didn't come, and you don't know anything about him. But, of course, if you want me to say nothing ——"

She paused. I clutched her arm.

"Miss Moyat," I said, "I have strong reasons for not wishing to be brought into this."

"All right," she said, dropping her voice. "I will do—as you ask."

There was an absurd meaning in her little side-glance, which at another time would have put me on my guard. But just then I was engrossed with my own vague fears. I forgot even to remove my hand from her arm. So we were standing, when a moment later the silence was broken by the sound of a galloping horse coming fast across the marshes. We started aside. Lady Angela reined in a great bay mare a few yards away from us. Her habit was all bespattered with mud. She had evidently ridden across country from one of the private entrances to the Park.

"What is this terrible story, Mr. Ducaine?" she exclaimed. "Is there really a shipwreck? I can see no signs of it."

"No shipwreck that I know of, Lady Angela," I answered. "There is a dead man here—one only. I have heard of nothing else."

Her eyes followed my outstretched hand, and she saw the body half on the sands, half on the marsh. She shivered a little.

"Poor fellow!" she exclaimed. "Is it any one from the village, Mr. Ducaine?"

"It is a stranger, Lady Angela," I answered. "We think that his body must have been washed in from the sea."

She measured the distance from high-water mark with a glance, and shook her head.

"Too far away," she declared.

"There was a wild sea last night," I answered, "and such a tide as I have never seen here before."

"What are you doing with it?" she asked, pointing with her whip.

"John Hefford is bringing a wagon," I answered. "I suppose he had better take it to the police station."

She wheeled her horse round.

"I am glad that it is no worse," she said. "There are reports going about of a terrible shipwreck. I trust that you are feeling better, Mr. Ducaine?"

"I am quite recovered—thanks to your kindness and Colonel Ray's," I answered.

She nodded.

"You will hear from my father during the day," she said. "He is quite anxious to come to your lecture. Good morning."

She galloped away. Miss Moyat turned towards me eagerly.

"Why, Mr. Ducaine," she exclaimed, "I had no idea that you knew Lady Angela."

"Nor do I," I answered shortly. "Our acquaintance is of the slightest."

"What did she mean about the lecture?"

I affected not to hear. John the wagoner had pulled up his team by the side of the palings, and was touching his hat respectfully.

"Another job for the dead 'ouse, sir, my missis tells me."

"There is the body of a dead man here, John," I answered, "washed up by the tide, I suppose. It isn't an uncommon occurrence here, is it?"

"Lor bless you, no, sir," the man answered, stepping over the palings. "I had three of them here in one month last year. If you'll just give me a hand, sir, we'll take him down to the police station."

I set my teeth and advanced towards the dead man. John Hefford proved at once that he was superior to all such trifles as nerves. He lifted the body up and laid it for the first time flat upon the sands.

"My! he's had a nasty smash on the head," John remarked, looking down at him with simple curiosity. "Quite the gent too, I should say. Will you give me a hand, sir, and we'll have him in the wagon."

So I was forced to touch him after all. Nevertheless I kept my eyes as far as possible from the ghastly face with the long hideous wound across it. I saw now, however, in one swift unwilling glance, what manner of man this was. He had thin features, a high forehead, deep eyes too close together, a thin iron gray moustache. Whatever his station in life may have been, he was not of the labouring classes, for his hands were soft and his nails well cared for. We laid him in the bottom of the wagon, and covered him over with a couple of sacks. John cracked the whip and strode along by the side of the horses. Blanche Moyat and I followed behind.

She was unusually silent, and once or twice I caught her glancing curiously at me, as though she had something which it was in her mind to say, but needed encouragement. As we neared my cottage she asked me a question.

"Why don't you want me to say that I saw this man in the village last night, and that he asked for you, Mr. Ducaine? I can't understand what difference it makes. He may have spoken to others besides me, and then it is bound to be known. What harm can it do you?"

"I cannot explain how I feel about it," I answered. "I am not sure that I know myself. Only you must see that if it were known that he set out from the village last ni[illegible] upon me, people might say un[illegible]"

"You mean—that they might suspect you of killing him?"

"Why not? Nobody knows much about me here, and it would seem suspicious. It was I who found him, and only a few hundred yards from my cottage. If it were known that he had left the village last night to see me, don't you think that it would occur to any one to wonder if we had met—and quarrelled? There could be no proof, of course, but the mere suggestion is unpleasant enough."

We were in the middle of the open road, and the wagon was several yards in front. Nevertheless she drew a little closer to me, and almost whispered in my ear—

"Do you know who he is, what he wanted to see you about?"

"I have no idea," I answered. "I am quite sure that I never saw him before in my life."

"Did you see him last night " she asked.

"Not to speak to," I answered "I did catch just a glimpse of him, I believe, in rather a strange way. But that was all."

"What do you mean "

"I saw him looking in through my window, but he came no nearer. Lady Angela and Colonel Ray were in the room."

"In your room?"

"Yes. Colonel Ray called to say that he was sorry to have spoilt my lecture."

"And Lady Angela?"

"Yes."

"She came in too?"

The girl's open-mouthed curiosity irritated me.

"I happened to be ill when Colonel Ray came. They were both very kind to me."

"This man, then," she continued, "he looked in and went away?"

"I suppose so," I answered. "I saw no more of him."

She turned towards me breathlessly.

"I don't see how a fall could have killed him, or how he could have wandered off into the marshes just there. The creek isn't nearly deep enough to have drowned him unless he had walked deliberately in and lain down. He was quite sober, too, when he spoke to me. Mr. Ducaine, how did he die? What killed him?"

I shook my head.

"If I could answer you these questions," I said, "I should feel much easier in my own mind. But I cannot. I know no more about it than you do."

We were both silent for a time, but I saw that there was a new look in her face. It was a welcome relief when a groom from Rowchester overtook us and pulled up his horse by our side.

"Are you Mr. Ducaine, sir?" he asked, touching his hat.

"Yes," I answered.

"I have a note for you from his Grace, sir," he said. "I was to take back an answer if I found you at home."

He handed it to me, and I tore it open. It contained only a few lines, in a large sprawling hand-writing.

"Rowchester, Wednesday morning.

"The Duke of Rowchester presents his compliments to Mr. Ducaine, and would be much obliged if he could make it convenient to call upon him at Rowchester between three and four o'clock this afternoon."

I folded the note up and turned to the groom.

"Will you tell his Grace," I said, "that you found me on the road, and I was unable, therefore, to write my answer, but I will call at the time he mentions?"

The man touched his hat and rode away. Blanche Moyat, who had been standing a few yards off, rejoined me.

"Has the Duke sent for you to go there?" she asked, with obvious curiosity.

"Yes. He has offered to lend me the village hall," I told her. "I expect that is what he wants to see me about."

She tossed her head.

"You didn't tell me so just now when I told you that father had offered to speak about it," she remarked.

"I am afraid," I said, gravely, "my mind was full of more serious matters."

She said no more until we reached the front of the Moyats' house. Then she did not offer me her hand, but she stood quite close to me, and spoke in an unnaturally low tone.

"You wish me, then," she said, "not to mention about that man—his asking the way to your cottage?"

"It seems quite unnecessary," I answered, "and it would only mean that I should be bothered with questions which I could not answer."

"Very well," she said, "Good-bye!"

I shuddered to myself as I followed the wagon down the narrow street towards the police station. A strange reserve had crept into her manner during the latter portion of our walk. There was something in her mind which she shrank from putting into words. Did she believe that I was responsible for this grim tragedy which had so suddenly thrown its shadow over my humdrum little life?

CHAPTER V.

The Graciousness of the Duke.

At a quarter past three that afternoon I was ushered into the presence of the Duke of Rowchester. I had never seen him before, and his personality at once interested me. He was a small man, grey-haired, keen-eyed, clean shaven. He received me in a somewhat bare apartment, which he alluded to as his workroom, and I found him seated before a desk strewn with papers. He rose immediately at my entrance, and I could feel that he was taking more than usual note of my appearance.

"You are Mr. Ducaine," he said, holding out his hand. "I am very glad to see you."

He motioned me to a chair facing the window, a great uncurtained affair, through which the north light came flooding in, whilst he himself sat in the shadows.

"I trust," he said, "that you have quite recovered from your last night's indisposition. My daughter has been telling me about it."

"Quite, thank you," I answered. "Lady Angela and Colonel Ray were very kind to me."

He nodded, and then glanced at the papers on his desk.

"I have been going through several matters connected with the estate, Mr. Ducaine," he said, "and I have come across one which concerns you."

"The proposed lease of the Grange," I remarked.

"Exactly. It seems that you arranged a three years' tenancy with Mr. Hulshaw, my agent, and were then not prepared to carry it out."

"It was scarcely my own fault," I interposed. "I explained the circumstances to Mr. Hulshaw. I was promised two pupils if I took a suitable house in this neighborhood, but, after all my plans were concluded, their father died unexpectedly, and their new guardian made other arrangements."

"Exactly," the Duke remarked. "The only reason why I alluded to the matter is that I disapprove of the course adopted by my agent, who, I believe, enforced the payment of a year's rent from you."

"He was within his rights, your Grace," I said.

"He may have been," the Duke admitted, "but I consider his action arbitrary. Not only that, but it was unnecessary, for he has already found another tenant for the place. I have instructed him, therefore, to send you a cheque for the amount you paid him, less the actual cost of preparing the lease."

Now my entire capital at that moment was something under three shillings. A gift of fifty pounds, therefore, which after all was not a gift but only the just return of my own money, was more than opportune—it was Heaven-sent. If I could have given way to my feelings I should have sprung up and wrung the little man's hands. As it was, however, I expect my face betrayed my joy. "Your Grace is exceedingly kind," I told him. "The money will be invaluable to me just now."

The Duke inclined his head.

"I am only sorry," he said, "that Hulshaw should have exacted it. It shows how impossible it is to leave the conduct of one's affairs wholly in the hands of another person. Now there is a further matter, Mr. Ducaine, concerning which I desire to speak to you. I refer to your projected lecture last night."

"I beg that your Grace will not allude to it," I said, hastily. "It is really of very little importance."

The Duke had a habit which I began at this time to observe. He appeared to enter into all discussions with his mind wholly made up upon the subject, and any interruptions and interpolations he simply endured with patience, and then continued on his way without the slightest reference to them. He sat during my remark with half-closed eyes, and when I had finished he went on, wholly ignoring it—

"This is a strange little corner of the world," he said, "and the minds of the people here are for the most part like the minds of little children; they need forming. I have heard some remarks concerning the war from one or two of my tenants which have not pleased me. Accordingly, while Colonel Ray was here, I thought it an excellent opportunity to endeavor to instruct them as to the real facts of the case. It was not until after the affair was arranged—not, indeed, until I was actually in the hall—that I heard of our misfortune in selecting the evening which you had already reserved for your own lecture. I trust that you will allow me to offer you the free use of the hall for any other date which you may select. My people here, and I myself, shall esteem it a pleasure to be amongst your audience."

I was quite overwhelmed. I could only murmur my thanks. The Duke went on to speak for a while on general matters, and then skilfully brought the conversation back again to myself and my own affairs. Before I knew where I was I found myself subjected to a close and merciless cross-examination. My youth, my college career, my subsequent adventures seemed all to be subjects of interest to him, and I, although every moment my bewilderment increased, answered him with the obedience of a schoolboy.

It came to an end at last. I found myself confronted with a question which, if I had answered it truthfully, must have disclosed my penniless condition. I rose instead to my feet.

"Your Grace will excuse me," I said, "but I am taking up too much of your time. It is not possible that these small personal details can be of any interest to you."

He waved me back to my chair, which I did not, however, immediately resume. I was not in the least offended. The Duke's manner throughout, and the framing of his questions, had been too tactful to awaken any resentment. But I had no fancy for exposing my ill-luck and friendless state to any one. I was democrat enough to feel that a cross-examination which would have been impertinent in anybody else was becoming a little too personal even from the Duke of Rowchester.

"Sit down, Mr. Ducaine," he said. "I do not blame you for resenting what seems to be curiosity, but you must take my word for it that it is nothing of the sort. I can perhaps explain myself better by asking you still another sort of question. Are you in a position to accept a post of some importance?"

I looked at him in surprise, as well I might.

"Sit down, Mr. Ducaine," he repeated. "I have said enough, I hope, to prove that I am not trifling with you."

"You have managed, at any rate, to surprise me very much, your Grace," I said. "I am eager to receive employment of any sort. May I ask what it was that you had in view?"

He shook his head slowly.

"I cannot tell you today," he said. "It is a matter upon which I should have to consult others."

A sudden thought struck me.

"May I ask at whose suggestion you thought of me " I asked.

"It was Colonel Ray who pointed out certain necessary qualifications which you possess," the Duke answered. "I shall report to him, and to some others, the result of our conversation, and I presume you have no objection to my making such inquiries as I think necessary concerning you?"

"None whatever," I answered.

The Duke rose to his feet. I took up my cap.

"If Colonel Ray is in," I said, "and it is not inconvenient, I should be glad to see him for a moment."

"Colonel Ray left unexpectedly by the first train this morning," the Duke answered, looking at me keenly.

I gave no sign, but my heart sank.

"If it is anything important I can give you his address" he remarked.

"Thank you," I answered, "it is of no consequence."

There was a moment's silence. It seemed to me that the Duke was watching me with peculiar intentness.

"Ray stayed with you late last night," he remarked.

"Colonel Ray was very kind," I answered.

"By-the-bye," he said, "I hear that some stranger lost his life in the storm last night. You found the body, did you not?"

"Yes," I answered. "There was a great deal of wreckage on the shore this morning."

The Duke nodded.

"It was no one belonging to the neighborhood, I understand?" he asked.

"The man was a stranger to all of us," I answered.

The Duke stood with knotted brows. He seemed on the point of asking me some other question, but apparently he abandoned the idea. He nodded again and rang the bell. I was dismissed.

"He made me no definite offer," I said. "At the same time he asked me a great many questions [illegible] he must have [illegible] had some reason, and he gave me the idea that, subject to the approval of some others, he was thinking of me in connection with some post."

"Colonel Ray was telling me," she said, "how unfortunate you have been with your pupils. I wonder—don't you think perhaps that you might get some others?"

"I have tried," I answered. "So far I have not been lucky. At present, too, I scarcely see how I could expect to get any, for I have nowhere to put them. I had to give up the lease of the Grange, and there is no house round here which I could afford to take."

Some portion of her delicate assurance had certainly deserted her. Her manner was almost nervous.

"If you could possibly find the pupils," she said, hesitatingly, "I should like to ask you a favor. The Manor Farm on the other side of the village is my own, and I should so like it occupied. I would let it to you furnished for ten pounds a year. There is a man and his wife living there now as caretakers. They would be able to look after you."

"You are very kind," I said again, "but I am afraid that I could not take advantage of such an offer."

"Why not?"

"I have no claim upon you or your father," I answered. "We are almost strangers, are we not? I might accept and be grateful for employment, but this is charity."

"A very conventional reply, Mr. Ducaine," she remarked, with faint sarcasm. "I gave you credit for a larger view of things."

I found her still inexplicable. She was evidently annoyed, and yet she did not seem to wish me to be. There was a cloud upon her face and a nervousness in her manner which I wholly failed to understand.

"If I were to tell you," she said, raising her eyes suddenly to mine, "that your acceptance of my offer would be a favor—would put me under a real obligation to you?"

"I should still have to remind you," I declared, "that as yet I have no pupils, and it takes time to get them. Further, I have arrived at that position when immediate employment, if it is only as a breaker of stones upon the road, is a necessity to me."

She sighed.

"My father will offer you a post," she said slowly.

"Now you are a real Samaritan, Lady Angela," I declared. "I only hope that it may be so."

Her face reflected none of my enthusiasm.

"You jump at conclusions," she said, coldly. "How do you know that the post will be one which you will be able to fill?"

"If your father offers it to me," I answered, confidently, "he must take the risk of that."

I was surprised at her speech—perhaps a little nettled. I was an "Honours" man, an exceptional linguist, and twenty-five. It did not seem likely to me that there was any post which the Duke might offer which, on the score of ability, at any rate, I should not be competent to fill.

"He will offer it you," she said, looking steadily dwnwards on to the sands below, "and you will accept it. I am sorry!"

"Sorry!" I exclaimed.

"Very. If I could find you those pupils I would," she continued. "If I could persuade you to lay aside for once the pride which a man seems to think a part of his natural equipment, it would make me very happy. I——"

"Stop," I interrupted. "You must explain this, Lady Angela."

She shook her head.

"Explain is just what I cannot," she said, sadly. "That is what I can never do."

I was completely bewildered now. She was looking seaward, her face steadily averted from mine. As to her attitude towards me, I could make nothing of it. I could not even decide whether it was friendly or inimical. Did she want this post for some one else? If so, surely her influence with her father would be strong enough to secure it. She had spoken to me kindly enough. The faint air of reserve that she seemed to carry with her everywhere, which, coupled with a certain quietness of deportment, appeared to most of the people around to indicate pride, had for these few minutes, at any rate, been lifted. She had come down from the clouds, and spoken to me as any other woman to any other man. And now she had wound up by throwing me into a state of hopeless bewilderment.

"Lady Angela," I said, "I think that you owe me some explanation. If you can assure me that it is in any way against your wishes, if you will give me the shadow of a reason why I should refuse what has not yet been offered to me—well, I will do it. I will do it even if I must starve."

A little forced smile parted her lips. She looked at me kindly.

"I have said a great deal more than I meant to, Mr. Ducaine. I think that it would have been better if I had left most of it unsaid. You must go your own way. I only wanted to guard you against disappointment."

"Disappointment! You think, after all, then——"

"No, that is not what I meant," she interrupted. "I am sure that you will be offered the post, and I am sure that you will not hesitate to accept it. But nevertheless I think that it will bring with it great disappointments. I will tell you this. Already three young men whom I knew very well have held this post, and each in turn has been dismissed. They have lost the confidence of their employers, and though each, I believe, was ambitious and meant to make a career, they have now a black mark against their name."

"You are very mysterious, Lady Angela," I said, doubtfully.

"It is of necessity," she answered. "Perhaps I take rather a morbid view of things, but one of them was the brother of a great friend of mine, and they fear that he has lost his reason. There are peculiar and painful difficulties in connection with this post, Mr. Ducaine, and I think it only fair to give you this warning."

"You are very kind," I said. "I only wish that the whole thing was clearer to me."

(To be continued.)

Ever Have Cramps?

Kind of fierce to be tied up in a knot at midnight with cramps. Keep Nerviline handy. Ten drops quiets cramps instantly. Used occasionally Nerviline prevents this trouble entirely. From Stratford Ont., Wm. Dee writes: "Nothing I know of will give such quick relief to cramps, colic or pain in the stomach as Nerviline. If you feel squeamish or sick, just ten drops of Nerviline in water and you're well next minute."

Think of the protection and comfort contained in a 25c. bottle of Nerviline; get [illegible]

Feet That Fret

No wonder some people's feet fret and sweat, no wonder corns and bunions appear, no wonder they are tender and sensitive. Did you ever spend 25 cents on your feet? You buy chocolates to please your mouth, Tonics to help your stomach, Lotions to keep your skin smooth. Your feet fairly cry out with pain, they sweat, blister, get hot, are tortured and you think all this is necessary. Not so. If your feet were healthy and natural they would not complain in that way.

TREAT THEM TO [illegible] ELM. [illegible]

Remarkable Shooting.

A somewhat remarkable feat of marksmanship was performed by Staff-Sergt. I. H. Simpson, of the Royal Grenadiers on Saturday at the Long Branch rifle ranges, when he made the score of 104 points out of a possible 105, seven shots at each of the 200, 500 and 600 yards ranges, 21 in all. His score was made up of possibles at 200 and 500 yards, seven bulls at each, and six bulls and a very close inner at 600 yards, the inner his fourth shot at this range. The occasion was the first of three matches for the sergeants' inter-regimental Stimson trophy, which is competed for annually by teams of ten sergeants from each regiment, Q. O. R., Royal Grenadiers and 48th Highlanders. This is the first time that this feat has been accomplished on the Long Branch rifle ranges and is rendered all the more creditable as having been made in a squadded competition and under strict match conditions.—Toronto Globe.

The record for the time in setting up a telephone exchange for a town is held by a New England company, which equipped and fully fitted out an exchange at Peak's Island (Me.), in three days. It was in complete working order [illegible] of that time.

SAVED FROM CHAIR BY SCANT HOUR

John Johnson, Condemned Murderer, Misses the Grim Reaper When All Is Ready for Death

APPEAL TO HIGHEST COURT

Warden, Told by Telephone of Lawyer's Move, Goes On With Preparations Until Paper Actually Arrives.

(New York Herald.)

John Johnson, who killed his wife in Yonkers more than a year ago, has established a new death cheating record in Sing Sing prison. He would have been dead two months ago had not Albert T. Patrick suggested to him that he he was entitled to a stay because counsel, appointed by the court, had failed to visit him between the date of trial and that set for the execution of the death sentence. On these grounds Governor Higgins granted him a stay which expired at 5 oclock yesterday afternoon.

Johnson was worried. He had been with a priest Sunday and yesterday afternoon. He expected to die last evening. After 5 o'clock the warden could lead him to the execution chamber and turn on the fatal current at any time. The warden went to see him, but did not read the death warrant. He is a humane man and that formality precedes execution by about five minutes at the most.

Attorney General Mayer telephoned to the warden about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon that Meyer Levy, of No. 352 Broadway, Johnson's lawyer, had taken an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, which would act as a stay of execution. The warden took the telephone message and went on with preparations for carrying out the death sentence.

Every joint in the electric plant in the prison was burnished to dazzling perfection. All the connections were ready to transmit a current of thousands of volts to the chair in which the condemned man would presently sit. Many of the witnesses summoned were in the prison to see Johnson die.

Johnson was in the execution chamber. That, as it happens, does not mean the small room in which is the "chair." It includes the cells of the condemned, as well as the cells of those who are held for capital offences whose legal resources have not been exhausted.

This is the conversation between Warden Johnson and a reporter for the Herald at half-past 6 o'clock last night:—

"Is Johnson dead?"

"No; he got a stay."

"Did you recognize the telephone message from Attorney General Mayer?"

"No. Telephone messages and telegrams don't go there. I was served with a copy of the appeal of Johnson's attorney, Meyer Levy, to the Supreme Court of the United States, and that, under the law, acts as a stay."

"When did you receive that?"

"About half-past five or thereabouts."

"When were you going to kill Johnson?"

"Oh, about seven, or between six and seven. The witnesses were here and everything was ready."

"That's about the closest that any man ever came to death in Sing Sing and be spared, isn't it "

"It is, by about a week."

"How did Johnson take it?"

"How would you feel if you thought you were going to die in an hour?"

"How did his family act about it?"

"I don't know. They're all dead. He had only a wife, and he killed her."

Judge Lacombe yesterday afternoon refused the applications of Mr. Levy for a writ of certiorari and a writ of habeas corpus for his client, Johnson. Mr. Levy then filed notice of appeal in the Supreme Court of the United States. No action can now be taken until next October.

PUT OUT ALL THE LIGHTS

Carpenters' Act in Mill Street Also Endangered Their Lives.

Carpenters who were employed on a house near the electric light station Tuesday ran a serious risk without knowing it and when they read these lines they may shudder and be wiser at the recollection.

The men in question had a ladder reared against the side of the house at which they were working. Two electric light wires were hanging near and they evidently decided were to close to be comfortable. So they moved the ladder over and tied it to the other.

Nothing happened then but at night the effect of their act was noticed, for it put out all the lights by causing a short circuit and throwing out the main switch. By investigation the trouble was soon located and set right in a few minutes.

The engineer at the power house said that whoever tied the wires together did so at the risk of their lives, but fortunately it was done in the day time before the fog came in and likely all about them was dry. But last night with fog, wet ladder, wet clothing and wet rope the consequences might have been very serious to them and even as matters were they ran a great risk.

Greatest Female Tonic on Earth

Thousands of women are wan, pallid, run-down and dispirited. No strength to drink in the pleasures of and activities of life. What they need is that nourishing tonic Ferrozone. Soon they regain those laughing eyes, bright spirits and rosy cheeks. Ferrozone does this and more as Mrs. [illegible] F. [illegible]ianson, of Whitney Pier, C. B. [illegible] "My daughter was very much run down and had considerable trouble at times. Often I was at a loss to know what to do. I was advised to give her Ferrozone and I did so. Ferrozone cleared up all the trouble, made my daughter healthy and well. Ferrozone gives good appetite, regulates, strengthens. I consider it a medicine every woman should use regularly if she wants to feel h[illegible] best."

Rebuild with Ferrozone; it is the [illegible] of all cures. Price 50 cts. per box [illegible] dealers [illegible]