

passing they continued. Her ladyship rang. When the servant entered:

"Who is that walking noisily in the corridor?"

"The gentleman just come from England, your ladyship. I told him half an hour; and he at once began walking fearfully."

"That cannot be Mr. Schoolar. Place the door ajar; move the screen a little."

It was Mr. Schoolar. Still he wore the full bosomed cambric frills and cuffs; black silk stockings; silver buckles at knees, and on shoes, as you and I saw him three years ago in Chancery Lane, binding Toby Oman to secrecy, when sending him forth in search of the heir of Lillymere. The grey hair was still the abundant bush; the whiskers still neatly trimmed; and the compact, handsome, elderly personage, as certainly a gentleman as previously. But the quiet, penetrating eye of the Solicitor was now the eye of a bereaved father and deceived man. Grief and other of the father's passions burned from brain to finger and toe nails. Burned in the heart the hottest; stirred to flame just now, by the message of Lady Mary to wait half an hour.

As he trod the passage, emotions arose, which spoken might have stood thus:

"Wait half an hour! As if I hadn't crossed the ocean to redress my daughter's wrong at hands of that young fiend and traitor, Oman, falsely calling himself Lillymere?"

"Wait half an hour! As if, instead of finding my poor child alive, to take with me home, I hear they have destroyed her? Done my beautiful darling to death in the very week she should have been at home, an honoured bride."

"Wait half an hour! As if my child, too faithful to the misleading of Lady Mary, had not partaken of the Mortimer hallucination; assuming disguise; and by its mishaps probably left to insanity and death in prison. But I avoid premature disturbance."

"Wait half an hour! As if I had not seen the garments of my child in keeping of the police: the satin boots she was to have worn as a bride, her name written therein."

"Wait half an hour! And if the fleshless bones in possession of the police, be not the skeleton of the missing woman, Anna Liffey, they must be—horror! horror! the bones of my murdered child! dishonoured child! murdered child!"

At this crisis in the reverie of passion, Mr. Schoolar heard the voices of ladies passing. One with a newspaper said:

"What a relief this item of intelligence is? The question of Anna Liffey's safety is now at rest. Listen, Nellie, dear. Ah! here is the Hon. Mrs. Pensyldine also. Good morning, Sylvia. News this morning, and something to make all in the hotel happy. Listen to this: 'Married, at Detroit, Mich. U. S., on 17th inst., Ocean Horn, Esq., M. D., formerly of Conway, Canada, to Miss Anna Liffey, lately of Rama, County of Conway, Canada.' Isn't that welcome? No more question why Anna disappeared."

Mr. Schoolar had been a minute breathless, poised between hope and despair as on brink of a precipice. He plunged:

"Wait half an hour! I've waited to hear confirmation of doom, hopeless despair. Can stand on courtesy no longer."

Then he entered. Advancing to the edge of the screen; he bowed low, instantly resuming the position of proud anger.

Lady Mary moved a step to offer welcome, but quailed under the old man's eye and remained mute; till seeing him struggle with emotion and falter in speech, a mental flash shot to her own heart.

"Dear Mr. Schoolar," she said; "you are ill! let me assist to a chair."

"I am ill, my lady, never again to recover this side the grave; never to recover this side the grave; but my business here is not to sit; it is to speak and act."

"About Agnes? Is Agnes not with you?"

"My daughter should be with you, Lady Mary; where is she?"

"I parted with Miss Schoolar in England, urging her return home to fulfil your family arrangements; haven't seen her since."

"You've heard of her since?"

"I heard that her engagement to Adam Schoolar was finally broken with your concurrence. That with family friends accompanying, Agnes embarked for New York to be a season absent from London, beyond reach of the person she refused to marry."

"My daughter, by invitation, left London to join your ladyship in this country, nearly three months ago. Have you not in all that time concerned yourself about her?"

"I've not seen her. Nor have I had communication with Miss Schoolar written or otherwise. From a gentleman of H. M. service I heard that Agnes, with accompanying friends, intended to remain abroad some months to avoid the persecution of the person whom she refused to marry. As that unlovable suitor was likely to track her footsteps, or look for them in places visited by me, I comprehended why Agnes did not expose herself to Adam Schoolar's emissaries by coming hither."

"My daughter came hither, following the insane example of your ladyship."

"Mr. Schoolar! what do you mean?"

"She came here in semblance of a maid

servant, and may have been imprisoned for a like cause as your ladyship."

"Impossible; and I not know of it. There was no secret about my poor misadventure. It was in one aspect unfortunate, but that concerned myself only. It has enabled me to be useful to some unjustly suffering persons. I could not have known the people I am now concerned about except for that misadventure. Had your daughter been here some of those persons must have recognised her and informed me."

"Some of those persons, Lady Mary, did know my daughter was here. That young traitor, trickster, radical outcast, Simon Lud, knew. He who was imposed on my firm as clerk under name of Tobias Oman, to satisfy a whim of Lord Royalfort."

"Sir, that young gentleman is my friend."

"Has he deceived you also, the rascal?"

"Mr. Schoolar, be seated please. Let us converse calmly on this serious matter. The person you speak of is no other than the lost heir of Earl Royalfort; for whom your firm are law agents. I suggest that the position of my lord's business agent enjoins more consideration, in my presence, than to term the young gentleman traitor, or trickster, whose identity is traced by me, but may not yet be known to you."

"Lady Mary, I'm informed, through confidential correspondents, of every step taken in connection with that pretender. He presumed to accost my daughter on the streets, and in the parks; assaulting my partner and relative, her affianced husband. To remove the audacious boy from London and beyond any possible annoyance of Agnes, he was appointed to travel and live among the old political radicals, expatriated to the States and Canada, to learn privately if the stolen child, De Lacy Lillymere, were alive. And if alive to inform me."

"Well, sir? Proceed."

"I remitted a liberal allowance for expenses and salary. He reported from time to time his failure to trace the lost heir; but lately professed to have met people who suggested that he was himself that person. At which his allowance ceased to be remitted; the audacious conspiracy having been to me disclosed in all its details."

"Revert to your daughter, please."

"In violation of a solemn oath to me he corresponded with my daughter, encouraged by one not to be yet named."

"Name that one now, sir; best be explicit as you go."

"Yourself, Lady Mortimer. You start; but I repeat—yourself."

"Go on, pray."

"Agnes despised his pretensions; treating the workhouse brat with scorn. But innocently confiding in Lady Mortimer, my daughter came to the town of Conway, to hear only of the eccentricities of that high personage."

"Was this personage absent?"

"In your absence, probably an arranged absence, Lady Mortimer, the traitorous fiend, Simon Lud, or Oman, as the name may be, met my daughter. He sought her complicity in pretending to be the lost heir of Lillymere. Her instinctive fidelity to her father's honour and abhorrence of the low-born knave, prompted my child to repel his advances."

"Upon my word, Mr. Schoolar, this is a wondrous romance some one has woven around you! Go on; what occurred next?"

"Events occurred next which cannot be known to your ladyship; not suspected, not even remotely comprehended, else this unimpassioned coolness were impossible."

"Enigma as well as romance! Will Lord Royalfort's business agent please to be explicit?"

"Your ladyship reminds me of inferior position. But foul wrong to a daughter, and anguish of a father, have no degrees of social position."

"Yet a minute since the grievous wrong you are inflicting on De Lacy Lillymere was emphasised with the epithet low-born. As if the lowly-born may bear any amount of obloquy at your discretion."

"Of Simon Lud I spoke."

"Be Lud the name, to humour Mr. Solomon Schoolar's lineage and position a minute or two. How came Lord Royalfort's business agent in his personal eccentricities—since that is the favourite phrase—to elect this Simon Lud, the outcast, to a confidential agency affecting my lord's private and most tender family interests? binding Lud to a compact under oath to keep every one—even his lordship—uninformed of what you were doing?"

"Another proof this, that the trickster has not been faithful!"

"To me, Mr. Schoolar, the young man whom you entrusted with my lord's most vital interests—discovery of an heir to the title and estates, has disclosed nothing."

"Must have disclosed something, Lady Mortimer, else how should it be known that he was sworn to fidelity?"

"He seems to have been sworn to aid you, the trusted business adviser of the family, to deceive his lordship; and a second time sworn not to disclose he was bound to secrecy. The youth explained nothing to me further than that Mr. Schoolar had broken faith with him. Is this a becoming position for the confiden-

tial agent of Earl Royalfort? Truly, if there be a traitor at this moment his name is Solomon Schoolar."

"Madam, I have ceased to be the Earl's business agent. I knew a conspiracy was on foot to impose this young man on my lord. I was aware, though imperfectly instructed in detail, that this pretender continued to insult my daughter, that, in short, he had done a great personal wickedness. But not until I arrived at Conway, three days ago, had the nature and extent of the wickedness been traced."

"Three days ago? I understood you had just arrived."

"I was within sight of the tumult at Redwald gold fields, and witnessed one of your ladyship's eccentricities, since that is to be the word, in the descent of the Jubal House, and your immersion in the river."

"I should have expected Mr. Schoolar under the circumstances which brought him here, to have been tracing the enemy, or assisting your friends out of the water, out of the fire."

"I was tracing the enemy; and have been only too successful."

"Inform me, please, what was discovered; surely by this, as friend of Agnes, I may be favoured."

"A few minutes since, madam, you were the self-termed friend of her murderer!"

"Schoolar! are you man or demon?"

"I am man; foully wronged by demons. How many, is not yet told me by the angel of vengeance."

"Your daughter murdered?"

"Yes, madam, by hand of, or at instance of your 'friend' Lud; whom you have prettily elected to the name and rights of Lillymere."

"Murdered!"

"No less, Lady Mortimer; and in fearful probability much more."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, madam. Done to death by the hands of devils incarnate; woe is me! woe is me! Her poor mother! Poor mother!"

"Solomon Schoolar; you are mad! or villainous knaves are sporting with your sanity; what ground have you for this horrible address to me? Why not seek the Chief of Police, and magistracy?"

"I've been there, madam; seeing the bones, identifying her clothes!"

"Of Agnes Schoolar? Bones! of Agnes Schoolar? Identifying clothes of your daughter?"

"Yes, madam, saw portions of the intended marriage trousseau. On one article of dress her name, read by aid of the microscope, Agnes Schoolar. The Superintendent of Constables has had my poor child's remains and clothes in possession several weeks, awaiting inquiry and identification."

"Murdered!"

"Yes, Madam; and by the assassin buried in a secret place. Then the body removed from the poor grave and sold to a school of experimental operators; from whence again it was taken to the home of one of the students, and by chemical process converted to a skeleton."

"Impossible! Some horrid delusion possesses you, Mr. Schoolar."

"No delusion; no delusion; a foul crime too truly real. The packing case containing my daughter's remains is known to the Superintendent as one heretofore used in conveying a dead body, or bodies, across the frontier from a certain city in the United States."

They were now interrupted by entrance of the Duke of Sheerness and her ladyship's Secretary. The dismay and emotion of Lady Mary, the unwonted passion of Solomon Schoolar portended some dire event.

Perceiving which the Secretary would have retired, but her ladyship requested he would remain and take notes, while the previous conversation was recapitulated down to the point of interruption. Having heard it the Duke remarked:

"If the packing case be known to have come from the States, with one or more dead bodies, the presumption may be fairly taken that this skeleton came also; and that if murder were committed, of which as yet no proof is stated, the crime occurred on other side of the frontier."

"So, your Grace thinks the accused Simon Lud—alias Oman, falsely called Lillymere, may escape suspicion by that suggestion. No, that wandering impostor was in the States also. The murder may have been done there, and the body brought to Canada for concealment. That is possible, and might be accepted as the fact did I not know my daughter had been in this town alive."

"Mr. Schoolar," said the Duke, "your statement embodies unmistakable anagrams. You shape every suspicion to involve Lillymere. Were you prosecuting counsel at the Old Bailey you could not be more hostile. I suggest that we proceed to the inquiry without prejudice, permitting no hint of it to escape to the public. Let us begin as if nothing were yet told."

"What, in that case, am I to make of information got from private sources before arriving at Conway?"

"Confide it to us. Or, let us severally retain counsel, confiding all circumstances, known or suspected, to them mutually; en-

joining silence until we remove the injunction."

"That would be unfair to my interests," objected Schoolar; "my information is not yet a property to be shared with others."

The Secretary scribbled some minutes on a sheet of paper, while the Duke, Lady Mary, and Mr. Schoolar were balancing their respective positions in partial silence. His Grace catching Reuben's eye stepped forward, took the paper, read it silently, then spoke:

"Mr. Schoolar, you have ceased to be Earl Royalfort's business adviser. Your private informants on matters prejudicial to De Lacy Lillymere are persons employed by the Estate and Title Recovery Company. This company propose to disinherit a large proportion of British next of kin, by substituting alleged claimants now residing in North and South America. In time the company will change—so they promise—the entire landed proprietary of Great Britain, as was designed by the Land and Labour Bank of Snigs End in 1847-49. The Estate and Title Recovery Company commence operations on the Lillymere properties and titles. Ized Bold, chairman of the company, claiming to succeed to Earl Royalfort's estates by right of his wife, Tabitha Redwald. First of all, are you aware there is such a company, having in view those objects?"

"Your Grace, I might object to answer, as knowledge of that Company, or want of it, cannot affect the question of my poor child's death. Yet I frankly reply that the Company has been named to me. I have no interest in it; and never can. Its objects are utterly abhorrent to my sense of right and wrong. Pass to another topic, please."

"I must pursue this, Mr. Schoolar. Your sense of right and wrong couldn't, I'm quite sure, admit of complicity with this atrocious conspiracy. But it is essential to the conspirators to remove from life, or otherwise ruin the true heir, De Lacy Lillymere; and they may see no means so aptly available as the means now taken to misinform and mislead you in the matter of this great affliction. Or invent circumstances inducing belief in your daughter's death. As a lawyer, don't you suspect all this to be imposture?"

"My daughter would not return to life by my accepting this suggestion. No, no, no; Agnes is dead; was murdered by the young traitor, Lud, whom you name Lillymere."

The Duke and Lady Mary, in astonishment and perplexity, could not prolong this conversation. They only invited Mr. Schoolar's silence until they should have opened other lines of inquiry. His Grace having information of the singular acumen of De Peri and the boy Dod, summoned them. Dod came.

Meanwhile, Lady Mary consulted with the local chief, Mr. Grynd, and detective Alleroo. They, as yet, saw no reason for suspecting Lillymere, beyond the assertion made by Mr. Schoolar; the grounds for which he had not explained even to them. Grynd and Alleroo suspected a person in Conway, but declined to say whom, until they had traced the medical student, Rickaby. The name Agnes Schoolar was shown on the satin boots. Lady Mary recognizing the opera cloak, knew where to look for a name there, and found it. No doubt the cloak had belonged to Agnes. The lady retired in deepest grief.

The De Peri boy was of uncertain age, but older than he seemed. I said on a previous occasion he was a small, curly-haired, blue-eyed lad; and might have been lovable but for the width and variety of his knowledge. His Grace, thinking Dod simple and timid, spoke tenderly of his father's absence in the States. To inspire confidence he patted the child's curly head.

"See you do small messages of inquiry to assist your father?"

"To assist father in working up cases formerly. After which I worked on my own account a series of years. Latterly I have retired from business, but came down to oblige your Grace by taking instructions for father, should the case involve moral principles and high issues. We decline low business entirely. With us it is wholly a profession of psychoscopic science and ethics."

"Psychoscopic science! What may that be in the art of private inquiry?"

"Your Grace had better unfold the case. I shall then be in possession of its ethical bearings, and may suggest where to proceed psychoscopically."

Aware now that he had a genius to treat with, the Duke narrated the whole case gravely, as if addressing the Attorney-General. Dod leant back in his chair, threw one limb over the other, folded his mites of hands across the breast, leant the head slightly down and aside, listening; and shot the sharp un-winking eyes of blue into every feature of his colloquiter. His Grace having concluded, the listener, without stirring, said:

"I know the case; have been familiar with some of its incidents a considerable time; but as previously remarked, I'm now personally out of the profession, and can only refer the Duke of Sheerness to a third party—De Peri, who is still in business; in the higher walks of philosophic discernment, as already said."

"May I enquire, sir, what incidents of the case have already become familiar to you?"

"My Lord Duke, the reply is to be tempered