POOR DOCUMENT

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THE BETRAYAL

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CHAPTER VI.

Lady Angela Gives Me Some Advice.

Rowchester was a curious medley of a house, a mixture of farmhouse, mansion, and castle, added to apparently in every generation by men with varying ideas of architecture. The front was low and irregular, and a grey stone terrace ran the entire length, with several rows of steps leading down into the garden. On one of these, as I emerged from the house, Lady Angela was standing talking to a gardener. She turned round at the sound of my footsteps, and came at once towards me.

She was bareheaded, and looked as straight and slim as a dart. I fancied that she could be no more than eighteen, her figure and face were so girlish. The quiet composure of her manner, however, and the subdued yet graceful ease of her movements, were so suggestive of the "great lady," that it was hard to believe that she was indeed little more than a school girl.

"I hope that you are better, Mr. Ducaine," she said.

"Thank you, Lady Angela, I have quite recovered," I answered.

She looked at me critically.

"I can assure you," she said, "that you look a very different person. You gave us quite a fright last night."

"I am ashamed to have been so much trouble," I answered. "Such a thing has never happened to me before."

"You must take more care of yourself," she said gravely. "I hope that my father has expressed himself properly about the lecture."

"His Grace has been very kind," I answered. "He has promised me the free use of the hall at any time."

"Of course," she said. "I hope that you will give your lecture soon. I am looking forward very much to hearing it. This always seems to me such a quaint, fascinating corner of the world that I love to read and hear all that people have to say about it."

"You are very kind," I said, "but if you come I am afraid you will be bored. The notes which I have put together are prepared for the comprehension of the village people."

"So much the better," she declared. "I prefer anything which does not make too great a strain upon the intellect. Besides, it is the very simplicity of the country which makes it so beautiful."

"Yet it is a land," I remarked, "of elusive charms."

"Sometimes, unless they are pointed out," she replied, "by one who has the eye and ear for nature, these are the hardest to appreciate. Only the other evening I was standing upon the cliffs, and I thought what a dreary waste of marshes and sands the place was, and then a single gleam of late sunshine seemed to transform everything. There is hidden color everywhere if one looks closely enough, and I suppose it is true that the most beautiful things in the world are those which remain just below the surface—a little invisible until one searches for them. By-the-bye, Mr. Ducaine," she added, "if you are on your way home I can show you a path which will save you nearly half the distance."

"Your are very kind, Lady Angela," I answered. "Cannot I find it, though, without taking you out of your way?"

She smiled.

"You might," she said, "but I walk down to the cliffs every afternoon. I was just starting when you came. It is quite a regular pilgrimage with me. All day long we hear the sea, but except from the upper windows we have no clear view of it. This is the path."

We crossed the Park together. All the while she talked to me easily and naturally of the country around, the great antiquity of its landmark, the survival of many ancient customs and almost obsolete forms of speech. At last we came to a small plantation, through which we emerged on to the cliffs. Here, to my surprise, we came upon a quaintly shaped grey stone cottage almost hidden by the trees. I had passed on the sands below many times without seeing it.

"Rather a strange situation for a house, is it not?" Lady Angela remarked. "My grandfather built it for an old pensioner, but I do not think it has been occupied for some time."

"It is marvellously hidden," I said. "I never had the least idea that there was a house here at all."

We stood now on the edge of the cliff, and she pointed downwards.

"There is a little path there, you see, leading to the sands," she said. "It saves you quite half the distance to your cottage, if you do not mind a scramble. You must take care just at first. So many of the stones are loose."

I understood that I was dismissed, and I thanked her and turned away. But she almost immediately called me back.

"Mr. Ducaine!"

"Lady Angela?"

Her dark eyes were fixed curiously upon my face. She seemed to be weighing something in her mind. I had a fancy that when she spoke it would be without that deliberation—almost restraint—which seemed to accord a little strangely with the girlishness of her appearance and actual years. She stood on the extreme edge of the cliff, her slim straight figure outlined to angularity against the sky. She remained so long without speech that I had time to note all these things. The sunshine, breaking through the thin-topped pine trees, lay everywhere about us; a little brown feathered bird, scarcely a dozen yards away, sang to us so lustily that the soft feathers around his throat stood out like a ruff. Down below the sea came rushing on to the shingles.

"Mr. Ducaine," she said at last, "did my father make you any offer of employment this afternoon?"

It was a direct, almost a blunt question. I was taken by surprise, but I answered her without hesitation.

She smiled a little sadly.

"At least," she said, "let me give you one word of advice. You will be brought into contact with many people whose integrity will seem to you a positive and certain thing. Nevertheless, treat every one alike. Trust no one. Absolutely no one, Mr. Ducaine. It is your only chance. Now go."

Her gesture of dismissal was almost imperative. I scrambled down the path and gained the sands. When I looked up she was still standing there. The wind blew her skirts around her slim young limbs, and her hair was streaming behind her. Her face seemed like a piece of delicate oval statuary, her steady eyes seemed fixed upon some point where the clouds and sea meet. She took no heed of, she did not even see, my gesture of farewell. I left her there inscrutable, a child with the face of a Sphinx. She had set me a riddle which I could not solve.

CHAPTER VII.

Colonel Ray's Ring.

The ring lay on the table between us. Colonel Ray had not yet given it up. In grim silence he listened to my faltering words. When I finished he smiled upon me as one might upon a child that needed humoring.

"So," he said, slipping the ring upon his finger, "you have saved me from the hangman. What remains? Your reward, eh?"

"It may seem to you," I answered hotly, "a fitting subject for jokes. I am sorry that my sense of humor is not in touch with yours. You are a great traveler, and you have shaken death by the hand before. For me it is a new thing. The man's face haunts me! I cannot sleep or rest for thinking of it—as I have seen it dead, and as I saw it alive pressed against my window—that night. Who was he What did he want with me?"

"How do you know," Ray asked, "that he wanted anything from you?"

"He looked in at my window."

"He might have seen me enter."

Then I told him what I had meant to keep secret.

"He asked for me in the village. He was directed to my cottage."

Ray had been filling his pipe. His fingers paused in their task. He looked at me steadily.

"How do you know that?" he asked.

"The person to whom he spoke in the village told me so."

"Then why did that person not appear at the inquest?"

"Because I asked her not to," I told him. "If she had given evidence the verdict must have been a different one."

"It seems to me," he said quietly, "that you have acted foolishly. If that young woman, whoever she may be, chooses to tell the truth later on you will be in an awkward position."

"If she had told the truth yesterday," I answered, "the position would have been quite awkward enough. Let that go! I want to know who that man was, what he wanted with me."

Colonel Ray shrugged his shoulders.

"My young friend," he said, "have you come from Braster to ask that question?"

"To give you the ring and to ask you that question."

"How do you know that the ring is mine?"

"I saw it on your finger when you were giving me wine."

"Then you believe," he said, "that I killed him?"

"It is no concern of mine," I cried hoarsely. "I do not want to know. I do not want to hear. But I tell you that the man's face haunts me. He asked for me in the village. I feel that he came to Rowchester to see me. And he is dead. Whatever he came to say or to tell me will be buried with him. Who was he? Tell me that?"

Ray smoked on for a few moments reflectively.

"Sit down, sit down!" he said gruffly, "and do abandon that tragical aspect. The creature was not worth all this agitation. He lived like a dog, and he died like one."

"It is true, then?" I murmured.

"If you insist upon knowing," Ray said coolly, "I killed him! There are insects upon which one's foot falls, reptiles which one removes from the earth without a vestige of a qualm, with a certain sense of relief. He was of this order."

"He was a human being," I answered.

"He was none the better for that," Ray declared. "I have known animals of finer disposition."

"You at least," I said fiercely, "were not his judge. You struck him in the dark, too. It was a cowardly action."

Ray turned his head. Then I saw that around his neck was a circular bandage.

"If it interests you to know it," he remarked drily, "I was not the assailant. But for the fact that I was warned it might have been my body which you came across on the sands. I started a second too soon for our friend—and our exchange of compliments sent him to eternity."

"It was in self-defence, then?"

"Scarcely that. He would have run away if he could. I decided otherwise."

"Tell me who he was," I insisted.

Ray shook his head.

"Better for you not to know," he remarked reflectively. "Much better."

My cheeks grew hot with anger.

"Colonel Ray," I said, "this may yet be a serious affair for you. Why you should assume that I am willing to be a silent accessory to your crime I cannot imagine. I insist upon knowing who this man was."

"You have come to London," Ray answered quietly, "to ask me this?"

"I have told you before why I am here," I answered. "I will not be put off any longer. Who was that man, and what did he want with me?"

For a period of time which I could not measure, but which seemed to me of great duration, there was silence between us. Then Ray leaned over towards me.

"I think," he said, "that it is my turn to talk. You have come to me like a hysterical schoolboy, you seem ignorant of the primeval elements of justice. After all it is not wonderful. As yet you have only looked in upon life. You look in, but you do not understand. You have called me a coward. It is only a year or so since His Majesty pinned a little cross upon my coat—for valor. I won that for saving a man's life. Mind you, he was a man. He was a man and a comrade. To save him I rode through a hell of bullets. It ought to have meant death. As a matter of fact it didn't. That was my luck. But you mustn't call me a coward, Ducaine. It is an insult to my decoration."

"Oh, I know that you are brave enough," I answered, "but this man was a poor weak creature, a baby in your hands."

"So are the snakes we stamp beneath our feet," he answered coolly. "Yet we kill them. In Egypt I have been in more than one hot corner where we fought hand to hand. I have killed men more than once. I have watched them galloping up with waving swords, and their fine faces ablaze with the joy of battle, and all the time one's revolver went spit, and the saddles were empty. Yet never once have I sent a brave man to his last account without regret, enemy and fanatic though he was. I am not a bloodthirsty man. When I kill, it is because necessity demands it. As for that creature whom you found in the marshes, well, if there were a dozen such in this room now, I would do my best to rid the earth of them. Take my advice. Dismiss the whole subject from your mind. Go back to Braster and wait. Something may happen within the next twenty-four hours which will be very much to your benefit. Go back to Braster and wait."

"You will tell me nothing, then?" I asked. "It is treating me like a child. I am not a sentimentalist. If the man deserved death the matter is between you and your conscience. But he came to Rowchester to see me. I want to know why."

"Go back to Rowchester and wait," Ray said. "I shall tell you nothing. Depend upon it that his business with you, if he had any, was evil business. He and his whole brood left their mark for evil wherever they crawled."

"His name?" I asked.

"Were there no papers upon him" Ray demanded.

"None."

"So much the better," Ray declared grimly. "Now, my young friend, I have given you all the time I can spare. Beyond what I have said I shall say nothing. If you had known me better—you would not be here still."

So I left him. His words gave me no loophole of hope. His silence was the silence of a strong man, and I had no weapons with which to assail it. I had wasted the money which I could ill afford on this journey to London. Certainly Ray's advice was good. The sooner I was back in Braster the better.

From the station I had walked straight to Ray's house, and from Ray's house I returned, without any deviation, direct to the great terminus. For a man with less than fifty pounds in the world London is scarcely a hospitable city. I caught a slow train, and after four hours of jolting, cold, and the usual third-class miseries, alighted at Rowchester Junction. Already I had started on the three-mile tramp home, my coat collar turned up as some slight protection against the drizzling rain, when a two-wheeled trap overtook me, and Mr. Moyat shouted out a gruff greeting. He raised the water-proof apron, and I clambered in by his side.

"Been to Sunbridge?" he inquired cheerfully.

"I have been to London," I answered.

"You haven't been long about it," he remarked. "I saw you on the eight-twenty, didn't I?"

I nodded.

"My business was soon over," I said.

"I've been to Sunbridge," he told me. "Went over with his Grace. My girl was talking about you the other night, Mr. Ducaine."

I started.

"Indeed?" I answered.

"Seemed to think," he continued, "that things had been growing a bit rough for you, losing those pupils after you'd been at the expense of taking the Grange, and all that, you know."

"It was rather bad luck," I admitted quietly.

"I've been wondering," he continued, with some difficulty, "whether you'd care for a bit of work in my office, just to carry you along till things looked up. Blanche, she was set upon it that I should ask you anyway. Of course, you being a college young gentleman might not care about it, but there's times when any sort of a job is better than none, eh?"

"It is very kind of you, Mr. Moyat," I answered, "and very kind of Miss Blanche to have thought of it. A week ago I shouldn't have hesitated. But within the last few days I have had a sort of offer—I don't know whether it will come to anything, but it may. Might I leave it open for the present?"

I think that Mr. Moyat was a little disappointed. He flicked the cob with the whip, and looked straight ahead into the driving mist.

"Just as you say," he declared. "I ain't particular in want of any one, but I'm getting to find my own bookkeeping a bit hard, especially now that my eyes ain't what they were. Of course it would only be a thirty bob a week job, but I suppose you'd live on that all right, unless you were thinking of getting married, eh?"

I laughed derisively.

"Married, Mr. Moyat!" I exclaimed. "Why, I'm next door to a pauper."

"There's such a thing," he remarked thoughtfully, "if one's a steady sort of chap, and means work, as picking up a girl with a bit of bras now and then."

"I can assure you, Mr. Moyat," I said coolly as possible, "that anything of that sort is out of the question so far as I am concerned. I should never dream of even thinking of getting married till I had a home of my own and an income."

He seemed about to say something, but checked himself. We drove on in silence till we came to a dark pile of buildings standing a little way back from the road. He moved his head towards it.

"They tell me Braster Grange is took after all," he remarked. "Mr. Hulshaw told me so this morning."

I was very little interested, but was prepared to welcome any change in the conversation.

"Do you know who is coming there?" I asked.

"An American lady, I believe, name of Lessing. I don't know what strangers want coming to such a place, I'm sure."

I glanced involuntarily over my shoulder. Braster Grange was a long grim pile of buildings, which had been unoccupied for many years. Between it and the sea was nothing but empty marshland. It was one of the bleakest spots along the coast—to the casual observer nothing but an arid waste of sands in the summer, a wilderness of desolation in the winter. Only those who have dwelt in those parts are able to feel the fascination of that great empty land, a fascination potent enough, but of slow growth. Mr. Moyat's remark was justified.

We drove into his stable yard and clambered down.

"You'll come in and have a bit of supper," Mr. Moyat insisted.

I hesitated. I felt that it would be wiser to refuse, but I was cold and wet, and the thought of my fireless room depressed me. So I was ushered into the long, low dining-room, with its old hunting prints and black oak furniture, and, best of all, with its huge log fire. Mrs. Moyat greeted me with her usual negative courtesy. I do not think that I was a favorite of hers, but whatever her welcome lacked in impressiveness Blanch's made up for. She kept looking at me as though anxious that I should remember our common secret. More than once I was almost sorry that I had not let her speak.

"You've had swell callers again," she remarked, as we sat side by side at supper time. "A carriage from Rowchester was outside your door when I passed."

"Ah, he's a good sort is the Duke," Mr. Moyat declared appreciatively. "A clever chap, too. He's A1 in politics, and a first-class business man, chairman of the great Southern Railway Company, and on the board of several other City companies."

"I can't see what the gentry want to meddle with such things at all for," Mrs. Moyat said. "There's some as says as the Duke's lost more than he can afford by speculations."

"The Duke's a shrewd man," Mr. Moyat declared. "It's easy to talk."

"If he hasn't lost money," Mrs. Moyat demanded, "why is Rowchester Castle let to that American millionaire? Why doesn't he live there himself?"

"Prefers the East Coast," Mr. Moyat declared cheerfully. "More bracing, and suits his constitution better. I've heard him say so himself."

"That is all very well," Mrs. Moyat said, "but I can't see that Rowchester is a fit country house for a nobleman. What do you think, Mr. Ducaine?"

I was more interested in the discussion than anxious to be drawn into it, so I returned an evasive reply. Mrs. Moyat nodded sympathetically.

"Of course," she said, "you haven't seen the house except from the road, but I've been over it many a time when Mrs. Felton was housekeeper and the Duke didn't come down so often, and I say that it's a poor place for a Duke."

"Well, well, mother, we won't quarrel about it," Mr. Moyat declared, rising from the table. "I must just have a look at the mare. Do you look after Mr. Ducaine, Blanche."

To my annoyance the retreat of Mr. and Mrs. Moyat was evidently planned, and accelerated by a frown from their daughter. Blanche and I were left alone —whereupon I, too, rose to my feet."

"I must be going," I said, looking at the clock.

Blanche only laughed, and bade me sit down by her side.

"I'm so glad dad brought you in tonight," she said. "Did he say anything to you?"

"What about?"

"Never mind," she answered archly. "Did he say anything at all?"

"He remarked once or twice that it was a wet night," I said.

"Stupid!" she exclaimed. "You know what I mean."

"He did make me a very kind offer," I admitted.

She looked at me eagerly.

"Well?"

"I told him that I am expecting an offer of work of some sort from the Duke. Of course it may not come. In any case, it was very kind of Mr. Moyat."

She drew a little closer to me.

"It was my idea," she whispered. "I put it into his head."

"Then it was very kind of you, too," I answered.

She was apparently disappointed. We sat for several moments in silence. Then she looked around with an air of mystery, and whispered still more softly into my ear—

"I haven't said a word about that—to anybody."

"Thank you very much," I answered. "I was quite sure that you wouldn't, as you had promised."

Again there was silence. She looked at me with some return of that half fearsome curiosity which had first come into her eyes when I made my request.

"Wasn't the inquest horrid?" she said. "Father says they were five hours deciding —and there's old Joe Hassell; even now he won't believe that—that—he came from the sea."

"It isn't a pleasant subject," I said quietly. "Let us talk of something else."

She was swinging a very much beaded slipper backwards and forwards and gazing at it thoughtfully.

"I don't know," she said. "I can't help thinking of it sometimes. I suppose it is terribly wicked to keep anything back like, isn't it?"

"If you feel that," I answered, "you had better go and tell your father everything."

She looked at me quickly.

"Now you're cross," she exclaimed. "I'm sure I don't know why."

"I am not cross," I said, "but I do not wish you to feel unhappy about it."

"I don't mind that," she answered, lifting her eyes to mine, "if it is better for you."

The door opened and Mr. Moyat appeared. Blanche was obviously annoyed, I was correspondingly relieved. I rose at once, and took my leave.

"Blanche got you to change your mind?" he said, looking at me closely.

"Miss Moyat hasn't tried," I answered, shaking him by the hand. "We were talking about something else."

Blanche pushed past her father and came to let me out. We stood for a moment at the open door. She pointed down the street.

"It was just there he stopped me," she said in a low tone. "He was very pale, and he had such a slow, strange voice, just like a foreigner. It was in the shadow of the market-hall there. I wish I'd never seen him."

A note of real fear seemed to have crept into her voice. Her eyes were straining through darkness. I forced a laugh as I lit my cigarette.

"You mustn't get fanciful," I declared. "Men die every day, you know, and I fancy that this one was on his last legs. Good-night."

Her lips parted as though in an answering greeting, but it was inaudible. As I looked around at the top of the street I saw her still standing there in the little flood of yellow light, gazing across towards the old market-hall.

CHAPER VIII.

A Wonderful Offer.

On my little table lay the letter I expected, large, square and white. I tore it open with trembling fingers. The handwriting was firm and yet delicate. I knew at once whose it was.

Rowchester, Tuesday.

Dear Mr. Ducaine,—My father wishes me to say that he and Lord Chelsford will call upon you tomorrow morning, between ten and eleven o'clock.—With best regards, I am,

"Yours sincerely,
"ANGELA HARBERLY."

The letter slipped from my hands on to the table. Lord Chelsford was a cabinet minister and a famous man. What could he have to do with any appointment which the Duke might offer me? I read the few words over and over again. The handwriting, the very faint perfume which seemed to steal out of the envelope, a moment's swift retrospective thought, and my fancy had conjured her into actual life. She was there in the room with me, slim and shadowy, with her quiet voice and movements, and with that haunting, doubtful look in her dark eyes. What had she meant by that curious warning? What was the knowledge or the fear which inspired it? If one could only understand!

I sat down in my chair and tried to read, but the effort was useless. Directly opposite to me was that black uncurtained window. Every time I looked up it seemed to become once more the frame for a white evil face. At last I could bear it no longer. I rose and left the house. I wandered capless across the marshes to where the wet seaweed lay strewn about, and the long waves came rolling shorewards; a wilderness now indeed of gray mists, of dark silent tongues of sea-water cleaving the land. There was no wind—no other sound than the steadfast monotonous lapping of the waves upon the sands. Along the road he had come; the faintly burning light upon my table showed where he had pressed his face against the window. Then he had wandered on, past the storm-bent tree at the turn of the road pointing landwards. A few yards farther was the creek from which we had dragged him. The events of the night struggled to reconstruct themselves in my mind, and I fought against their slow coalescence. I did not wish to remember—to believe. In my heart I felt that for some hidden reason Ray was my friend. This visit of the Duke's, with whatever it might portend, was without doubt inspired by him. And, on the other hand, there was the warning of Lady Anegla, so earnestly expressed, so solemn, almost sad. How could I see light through all these things? How could I hope to understand?

The Duke came punctually, spruce and debonnair, a small rose in his buttonhole, his wizened cheeks aglow with the smart of the stinging east wind. With him came Lord Chelsford, whose face and figure were familiar enough to me from the pages of the illustrated papers. Dark, spare, and tall, he spoke seldom, but I felt all the while the merciless investigation of his searching eyes. The Duke, on the other hand, seemed to have thrown aside some part of his customary reserve. He spoke at greater length and with more freedom than I had heard him.

"You see, Mr. Ducaine," he began, "I am not a man who makes idle promises. I am here to offer you employment, if you are open to accept a post of some importance, and also, to be frank with you, of some danger."

"If I am qualified for the post, your Grace," I answered, "I shall be only too willing to do my best. But you must excuse me if I express exactly what is in my mind. I am almost a stranger to you. I am a complete stranger to Lord Chelsford. How can you rely upon my trustworthiness? You must have so many young men to choose from who are personally known to you. Why do you come to me?"

The Duke smiled grimly.

"In the first place," he said, "we are only strangers from the personal point of view, which is possibly an advantage. I have in my pocket a close record of your days since you entered the university. I know those who have been your friends, your tastes, how you have spent your time. Don't be foolish, young sir," he added sharply, as he saw the color rise in my cheeks; "you will have a trust reposed in you such as few men have ever borne before. This prying into your life is from no motives of private curiosity. Wait until you hear the importance of the things which I am going to say to you."

I was impressed into silence.

The Duke continued—

"You have heard, my young friend," he said, "of the Committee of National Defence?"

"I have read it," I answered.

"Good! This committee has been formed and sanctioned by the War Office in consequence of the shocking revelation of inefficiency which came to light during the recent war. It occurred to the Prime Minister, as I dare say it did to most of the thinking men in the country, that if our unreadiness to take the offensive was so obvious, it was possible that our defensive precautions had also been neglected. A board was therefore formed to act independently of all existing institutions, and composed chiefly of military and naval men. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Chelsford, Colonel Ray, and myself are amongst the members. Our mandate is to keep our attention solely fixed upon the defences of the country, to elaborate different schemes for repelling different methods of attack, and in short to make ourselves responsible to the country for the safety of the Empire. Every harbor on the south and east coast is supposed to be known to us, every yards of railway feeding the seaports from London, all the secret fortifications and places south of London, capable of being held by inferior forces. The mobilization of troops to any one point has been gone thoroughly into, and every possible movement and combination of the fleet. These are only a few of the things which have become our care, but they are sufficient for the purpose of illustration. The importance of this Board must be apparent to you; also the importance of absolute secrecy as regards its doings and movements."

I was fascinated by the greatness of the subject. However, I answered him as quickly as possible, and emphatically.

"The Board," the Duke continued, "has been meeting in London. For the last few months we have had business of the utmost importance on hand. But on January 10, that is just six weeks ago, we came to a full stop. The Commander-in-Chief had no alternative but temporarily to dissolve the assembly. We found ourselves in a terrible and disastrous position. Lord Ronald Matheson had been acting as secretary for us. We met always with locked doors, and the names of the twelve members of the Board are the most honored in England. Yet twenty-four hours after our meetings a verbatim report of them, with full particulars of all our schemes, was in the hands of the French Secret Service."

"Good God!" I exclaimed, startled for the moment out of my respectful silence.

The Duke himself seemed affected by the revelation which he had made. He sat forward in his chair with puckered brows and bent head. His voice, which had been growing lower and lower, had sunk almost to a whisper. It seemed to me that he made a sign to Lord Chelsford to continue. Almost for the first time the man who had done little since his entrance save watch me, spoke.

"My own political career, Mr. Ducaine," he said, "has been a long one, but I have never before found myself confronted with such a situation. Even you can doubtless realize its effect. The whole good of our work is undone. If we cannot recommence, and with different results, I am afraid, as an Englishman, to say what may happen. War between England and France today would be like a great game of chess between two masters of equal strength—one having a secret knowledge of his opponent's each ensuing move. You can guess what the end of that would be. Our only hope is at once to reconstruct our plans. We are hard at it now by day and by night, but the time has arrived when we can go no further without a meeting, and the actual committal to paper and diagram of our new schemes. We have discussed the whole matter most carefully, and we have come to the following decision. We have reduced the number of the Board by half, those who have resigned, with certain exceptions, having done so by ballot. We have decided that instead of holding our meetings at the War Office they shall take place down here at the Duke's house, and so far as possible secretly. Then, as regards the secretaryship. No shadow of suspicion rests upon Lord Ronald any more than upon his predecessors, but, as you may have read in the newspapers, he has temporarily lost his reason owing to the shock, and has been obliged to go to a private home. We have decided to engage some one absolutely without political connexions, and whose detachment from political life must be complete. You have had a warm advocate in Colonel Mostyn Ray, and, subject to some stringent and absolute conditions, I may say that we have decided to offer you the post."

I looked from one to the other. I have no doubt that I looked as bewildered as I felt.

"I am a complete stranger to all of you," I murmured. "I am not deserving in any way of such a position."

Lord Chelsford smiled.

"You underrate yourself, young man," he said drily, "or your college professors have wandered from the truth. Still, your surprise is natural, I admit. I will explain a little further. Our choice is more limited than you might think. At least fifty names were proposed, all of them of young men of the highest character. Each one, however, had some possibly doubtful relative or association or custom in life. It is evident that there is treachery somewhere in the very highest quarters. These young men were sure to be brought into contact with it. Now it was Ray's idea to seek for some one wholly outside the diplomatic world, living in a spot remote from London, with as few friends as possible, who would have no sentimental objections to the surveillance of detectives. You appear to us to be suitable."

"It is a wonderful offer!" I exclaimed.

"In a sense it is," Lord Chelsford continued. "The remuneration, of course, will be high, but the post itself may not be a permanency, and you will live all the time at high pressure. The Duke will place a small house at your disposal, and it will be required that you form no new acquaintances without reference to him, nor must you leave this place on any account without permission. You will virtually be a prisoner, and if certain of my suspicions are correct you may even find the post one of great physical danger. On the other hand, you will have a thousand a year salary, and a sum of five thousand pounds in two years' time if all is well."

Excitement seemed to have steadied my nerves. I forgot all the minor tragedies which had been real enough things to face only a few hours ago. I spoke calmly and decisively.

"I accept, Lord Chelsford," I said. "I shall count my life a small thing indeed against my fidelity."

He drummed idly with his forefinger upon the table. His eyes were wandering around the room absently. His face was calm and expressionless.

"Very well, then," he said, "my business here is settled. I shall leave it with the Duke to acquaint you with the practical details of your work, and our arrangement."

He rose to his feet. The Duke glanced at his watch.

"You have only just time for the train," he remarked. "The car shall take you there. I prefer to walk back, and I have something further to say to Mr. Ducaine."

Lord Chelsford took leave of me briefly, and the Duke, after accompanying him outside, returned to his former seat. I ventured upon an incoherent attempt to express my gratitude, which he at once waived aside. He leaned over the table, and he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon me.

"I am able now," he said, "to ask you a question postponed from the other day. It is concerning the man who was found dead in the creek."

His merciless eyes noted my start.

"Ah!" he continued. "I can see that you know something. I have my suspicions about this man. You can now understand my interest when I hear of strangers in the neighborhood. I don't believe that he was a derelict from the sea. Do you?"

"No," I answered.

He nodded.

"Am I right," he said, "in presuming that you know he was not?"

"I know that he was not," I admitted.

His fingers ceased their beating upon the table. His face became white and maskline.

"Go, on," he said.

"I know that he came through Braster, and he asked for me. He looked in through the window of my cottage when Colonel Ray was with me. I saw him no more after that until I found him dead."

"Ray left you after you had seen this man's face at the window?"

"Yes."

"The wounds about the man's head and body. If he was not thrown up by the sea, can you explain them?"

"No," I answered with a shudder.

"At the inquest it was not mentioned, I think, that the had been seen in the village?"

"It was not," I admitted. "Most of the people were at Colonel Ray's lecture. He spoke to one girl, a Miss Moyat."

"She did not give evidence."

"I thought," I said in a low tone, "that she had better not."

"Did you hear anything after Ray left?" he asked suddenly.

I could have cried out, but my tongue seemed dry in my throat.

"There was a sound," I muttered, "I fancied that it was a cry. But I could not tell. The wind was blowing, and the sea and rain! No, I could not tell.

He rose up.

"You appear," he said drily, "to have discretion. Cultivate it! It is a great gift. I shall look for you at eleven o'clock in the morning. I am having a large house party this week, and amongst them will be our friends."

He left me without any further farewell, and turned slowly homewards. When he reached the bend in the road he paused, and remained there for several moments motionless. His eyes were fixed upon the small creek. He seemed to be measuring the distance between it and the road. He was still lingering there when I closed the door.

(To be continued.)

TWO ARRESTS FOR CAUSING DEATH OF TORONTO WOMAN

Murder Will Be Charged Against Husband of Victim and a Female Malpractitioner.

Toronto, July 20.—Agnes Bridant, a married woman twenty-two years of age, died of blood poisoning shortly after 10 o'clock this morning in the Bristol apartments, corner of Jarvis and King streets.

Her husband, Edmund Bridant, and Mrs. M. J. Miller, who runs the "Dr. De Voss Medicine Company," Queen street, east, are under arrest in connection with her death. A charge of murder will be laid against both of them tomorrow morning.

Said Crown Attorney Corley this afternoon: "The woman's death is believed to have been caused by drugs administered for improper purposes."

MONCTON GRANTS BONUS TO A MONTREAL MAN

A. S. Campbell Must Have a Payroll of $20,000 a Year to Draw $1000 from City—Civic Tax Collections.

Moncton, July 20—This was City Clerk Magee's busy day, being the last day of the five per cent. discount period on taxes. The amount taken in today was about $8,000 less than the same day last year. The sum received was about $21,000, and the total collections to date are about $62,000.

At a meeting of the city council committee this evening, effect was given to the resolution passed by the council favoring granting a bonus of $1,000 per year for fifteen years to A. S. Campbell, of Montreal, who is taking over the Humphrey clothing concern. The city stipulates that the factory must employ eighty hands, and the pay-roll amount to at least $20,000 a year.

A New Ocean Record.

New York, July 20—The French line steamer La Provence, which arrived tonight from Havre, established a new record from that port to New York by making the voyage in six days three hours and ten minutes. The previous record of six days three hours and thirty-five minutes was also made by La Provence.

La Provence came over the southerly course, a distance of 3,155 miles.

There are 54,000 locomotive engineers in the United States, Canada and Mexco, who stand together in a single brotherhood. They compose, perhaps, the most respected, dignified and effective labor organization in the world.

NEW GLASGOW MINISTER'S HOUSE DYNAMITED

Front of Building Shattered at An Early Hour Yesterday Morning

Rev. Mr. Grant's Activity in Enforcing the Scott Act Thought to Be the Reason for the Dastardly Work-- Other Temperance Workers Have Suffered in the Past.

New Glasgow, N. S., July 20.—Rev. P. R. Grant, who has been very active in temperance work in Pictou county, has given practically his whole time to the enforcement of the Scott Act. At 1 o'clock this morning the town was startled by the roar of a heavy explosion caused by a quantity of dynamite or powder having been placed under the verandah of his residence.

Fortunately the house was unoccupied last night, Mr. Grant being out of town. Owing to the verandah being a considerable heighth from the ground the damage was not so great as it might of been. As it was the steps leading up to it were completely destroyed, the verandah shattered and the glass in front of the house broken. The cause for the vandalism has not been traceable.

Mr. Grant's temperance activity is thought to be the cause, but who the offenders are remains a mystery. A piece of burnt fuse about four feet long and the damaged front are the only traces left of the villanous work.

This is not the first event of malice towards temperance workers in this section. While John McMillan was Scott Act inspector, a year ago, two attempts were made to set fire to his barn by unknown persons and a can of powder was exploded on the front door step.

An attempt to destroy trees on the property of X. A. Green and also at John J. McKay's place can also be traced to their activity in the same work.

ANOTHER SOUTH AMERICAN WAR OVER

Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras Signed Treaty of Peace Friday.

San Jose, Guatemala, July 20—A treaty of peace between Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras was signed today on board the United States cruiser Marblehead on the high seas.

The commissioners of Salvador and Honduras will be landed at Acajutla early tomorrow, Guatemala's commissioners being landed today.

The members of the American legations will land at the respective points where they are accredited.

There was a strenuous discussion and some difficulty in reaching mutually acceptable conditions. The Mexican minister, Senor Gamboa, was active in assisting in bringing about an agreement.

The peace commissioners adopted resolutions thanking the presidents of the United States and Mexico for their intervention.

GUELPH MAN FOUND DEAD ON RAILWAY

Witness at Inquest Testifies to Hearing Cries of "Murder" From Vicinity of Where Mutilated Body was Discovered.

Toronto, July 20.—The body of Robert Barbour, of Guelph, was found on the railway at Orilla today. At the inquest, George B. Cones, a barber living near the track, testified that he distinctly heard a man calling "murder." He heard it fourteen or fifteen times. The body is so badly mutilated that it is impossible to tell whether Barbour was dead before the train struck him.

HEAVY ELECTRICAL STORM AT FREDERICTON

Fredericton, N. B., July 22—A severe electrical storm, accompanied by heavy showers of rain, passed over the city between 8 and 9 o'clock last evening. The lightning was very vivid and continuous while the storm lasted, but so far as can be learned did no damage in this section.

A cricket match here yesterday between the married and single members of the Fredericton club, resulted in a victory for the latter by a score of 88 to 24.

Off to the Camp at Petewawa.

The second detachment of artillerymen for Petewawa (Ont.), left here Saturday night in charge of Major J. M. Robinson. The next detachment will leave this evening and will be in charge of Lieutenant Mosher. On July 28 No. 3 company, commanded by Major Barker, will leave. Other local officers who will be at Petewawa are Captain Paterson and Lieutenant McGowan.

The camping ground is in the north of the province. There will be long range firing. It is expected the Woodstock and Newcastle field battery men will be present, in fact artillerymen from all over the country are assembling.

Augusta Youth Drowned.

Augusta, Me., July 22.—Clarence, the 19 year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Story, of Hallowell, was drowned today in Cascade Pond, Hallowell. He could not swim but was persuaded to enter the water by companions who promised to look after his safety. He jumped from the dam into the water, 18 or 20 feet deep and did not rise. The frightened boys attempted to save him by repeated diving, but were unsuccessful. The body has not yet been recovered.

Radium Discovered in Quebec.

Montreal, July 20—(Special)—Radium has been discovered in the province of Quebec, near Murray Bay, according to samples sent to Paris by A. J. and H. M. Lippens, members of a mining syndicate. Several tests have been made and A. Fienk, an expert from Paris, who has been on the ground for several months, is convinced that the find is a valuable one.

Made Sure of Death.

Providence, R. I., July 20—David Wallace Rintells, salesman for a New York wholesale drug company, was found dead in his room at the Narragansett hotel, in this city, where he registered last night as E. W. Munson, of Boston. He had taken morphine and turned on the gas.