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CHAPTER XXX.

Gaunt went down to his cabin—the best in the vessel—and found everything arranged comfortably.

After a few minutes he went on deck, and lighting a cigar, got into a quiet corner and leaned against the side, apparently watching the bustling crowd, but in reality seeing nothing of it. A girl's face, white and terror-stricken, with quivering lips and straining eyes, floated before him. Above the shouts of the men and the clatter of the arriving passengers, he heard Decima's voice:

"Your wife! your wife!"

About half an hour before the sailing-time, Gaunt saw a man come along the gang-way, carrying a bag in his hand. He was a young man, with red hair and a pale face, with small, bloodshot eyes. The collar of his overcoat was turned up, and he looked cold and ill.

He came across the deck and gazed by Gaunt, and looked round. Gaunt watched him listlessly, scarcely noticing him. Presently the steward came to him, and asked him the number of his berth.

The young fellow hesitated a moment, then he said, in a dull, expressionless voice, "My name is Jackson; I wired for a berth this morning."

The steward consulted his list.

"Ah, yes; Jackson. That's right, sir. I got the wire. I'm afraid you won't think the cabin first-class, but it's short notice, you see."

Mr. Jackson nodded.

"I didn't know I was going till last night," he said. "Important business over there—sprung on me suddenly."

The steward nodded. A great many persons had, of late, had important business "sprung upon them from Africa, and had been compelled to rush over there suddenly and at short notice.

"No, 63, sir," he said; "if you'll come down, I'll show you."

"Thanks," said Mr. Jackson. "When—when do we start?"

"Almost immediately, sir," said the steward, bustling ahead.

The young fellow glanced toward the quay and round the deck then followed him below.

The bustle and confusion increased, when suddenly the signal sounded for the departure from the vessel of those who were not going the voyage, and the usual parting of relatives and friends took place, and the visitors hurried ashore. A few minutes later the vessel started, and amid cheering and handkerchief-waving, slowed from the quay. Gaunt still remained in his quiet corner, and presently he saw the red-headed Mr. Jackson come up.

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from the saloon. He stood at the entrance for a moment or two, then came across the deck and looked gloomily, and yet vacantly, at the now fast-receding quay. As he did so, he took out a cigar-case, and absently put a cigar between his lips. It was evident that his match-box was empty, for he dropped it into his pocket again and looked round.

Gaunt was standing near, and absently extended his box. Mr. Jackson took it and lighted a match, and Gaunt noticed that the man's hand shook. He looked across the lighted match as he held it to his cigar, and caught Gaunt's eye; and as if he knew that Gaunt had noticed the shaking hand, he said, rather reluctantly:

"Cold, this morning."

Gaunt nodded. He was not in the humor for conversation.

"Beastly cold," said Mr. Jackson with a faint shudder; "but I'm seedy—and—feel it more than I should otherwise do, I suppose."

He was silent for a moment, then he asked carelessly:

"Do we stop at Madeira, do you happen to know? I've had to start suddenly—important business at the Cape—only heard last night—and so I don't know."

"No; this is not one of the regular vessels. We stop at the Canaries."

The young fellow nodded.

"Ah, thanks!" he said in a low voice.

Gaunt moved away, and presently went down to his cabin to avoid any further talk. His heart was aching as badly as any on board—aching with an agony beyond words. He was leaving England and Decima forever! Love, and all hope is lost. Despair stretched darkly before him.

About an hour after Trevor had stolen from Prince's Mansions, the parlor-maid glanced up at the clock in the kitchen.

"I suppose his lordship isn't coming back to-night or he'd have told me to get a room ready," she remarked to the cook, who yawned in sympathy; "and yet he's left his coat."

"Perhaps he's come back and got it," suggested the cook.

"No, or I should have heard him, for I've been listening. I wonder when Mrs. Lalton left? I didn't see her go, and his lordship didn't ring. She and Mr. Deane's sister must have gone together, I suppose. Now, there's a pretty girl, if you like, cook, and the image of her brother. We'd had quite a lot of visitors to-night," and she laughed.

"Perhaps they're in the drawing-room now," said the cook.

Jane shook her head.

"No; it's all quiet. I went and listened at the door just now, and not hearing any one I knocked and looked in. There was no one there. I got a start though," she added, with a smile.

"How do you mean?"

"Well, his lordship had thrown his fur coat on the sofa, and it looked for all the world as if somebody was lying there," replied Jane. She yawned again. "Well, I think we'd better go to bed; it's no use sitting up for Mr. Deane; I expect he's at Cardigan Terrace, and if so, he won't be home till the small hours."

"Better see to the drawing-room fire, hadn't you?" said the cook, as she turned down the page of her novel; but Jane shook her head.

"Oh, it doesn't matter. Mr. Deane always goes straight to bed when he comes in—I hear his door shut."

The two women went to bed after a little more talk, and the place was wrapped in silence.

Bobby was not an early riser—few young persons are. It is the middle-aged and the old who find it easier to get up than to lie thinking, and if Bobby got his breakfast by ten o'clock, he was quite suited and satisfied. Lord Gaunt's servants had an easy time of it in that respect.

It was past nine when Jane went into the drawing-room to light the fire. The electric lamp was still burning, and she looked over her shoulder and called to the cook.

"Mr. Deane hasn't come in yet," she said. "I wonder where he is."

The cook grumbled incoherently: "I suppose I had better get breakfast all the same," she said. "If I don't, he'll come rushing in and want it all of a hurry. It always happens like that."

Jane laughed, turned out the lamp, drew back the curtains. As she did so, she was conscious of a faint perfume. She knew it very well, for it was the scent which always hung about Mr. Deane's clothes when he had been to Cardigan Terrace. But

it was stronger than usual in the room this morning.

She opened the window and laid and lighted the fire, then began to sweep the room; but her eyes fell on the costly coat on the sofa.

"I'd better take it into the bedroom," she said to herself, "for it will be smothered with dust. Lor', how careless gentelocks are of their things!"

A moment afterward a shriek ran through the place, and the cook, rushing into the room whence the cry had proceeded, found her fellow-servant leaning against the table with the coat at her feet, and her eyes staring at something on the sofa.

"Good Heavens, Jane! what ever is the matter?" Then she, too, screamed, and the two women stood, clinging to each other, and staring at the motionless figure with terror in their eyes.

Their cries, repeated again and again, brought the porter and the page into the room, followed by two or three occupants of the other flats. Amongst the latter was a retired army doctor, who, taking in the situation at a glance, pushed his way to the couch, and examined the body.

"She is dead," he said, gravely. "Who are the servants here? Ah! Do you know the lady? Who is she?"

Jane, half fainting, gasped out the name:

"It's Mrs. Dalton—Mr. Thorpe's sister! She came here last night!"

She broke into terrified sobs.

"Alone?" asked the doctor. "But stop—better not answer. Let some one go for the gentleman, Mr. Thorpe. Here, boy, take a cab and bring him." He thrust the page-boy from the room, and turned to the porter as he did so. "And you go for the police."

In a very short time two policemen were on the scene. They cleared the room and mounted guard beside the body.

"We've sent to Scotland Yard for a detective officer," one said to the doctor.

He arrived before Morgan Thorpe, and at once, with the sang-froid of experience, took possession of "the case," and with note-book in hand, he was questioning the servants, when Morgan Thorpe burst in.

He was white as death, but the pallor increased to lividity as he bent over the body and gazed at the beautiful face, now placed with the rest and peace of death.

"You know her, identify her?" asked the detective. "Of course, I warn you that anything you say—you understand?"

"Yes; she is—my sister!" said Thorpe, leaning against the table and staring at the dead woman. "My sister; yes!"

"You know she had come here?" Thorpe nodded.

"Why did she come here? Who did she come to see?"

"Deane," replied Thorpe.

In that moment falsehood, evasion were impossible.

"Deane—who is he?"

"He lives here—in these rooms," said Thorpe. "My God—I thought she was at home—in her room! I came back late last night—from the club—it was early this morning. Her door was closed. I—I thought she was in bed. I went to my room and—and I was in bed when they fetched me. Who—was has done it? She has been murdered!"

"I'm afraid so," said the detective, grimly. He looked at the Persian dagger which lay on the floor, as it had dropped from Trevor's hand. "That did it; don't touch it, please," he added, though any of those present would have died rather than do so.

"Why did she come here to see Mr. Deane—a lady—alone—you know?"

Thorpe moistened his parched lips.

"For God's sake, give me something—brandy!"

The detective nodded, and the doctor poured out a glass of brandy for Thorpe. He drank it at a draught.

"I'll tell you all I know. She—she"—he shuddered—"she came here to—to get some money from him."

The detective made a note.

"Go on," she said, gravely. "Come to threaten him?"

"No, no; only—only persuade," said Thorpe. "Oh, Laura! Laura!"

The detective turned to the trembling, shrieking servants.

"Where is Mr. Deane?" he asked. (to be continued.)

4 SUGGESTIONS

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