

want you, since you are to be there, to hand this to your uncle for Phoebe."

"I am delighted, I am sure," says John, feeling anything but pleased at the arrangement, and so, with the case in his pocket, he departs. Now I want to reveal my lady's secrets, but I cannot tell this story properly without letting you know that as John was in the very act of leaving, he somehow encountered Angela in the lamplit twilight of the hall, and moving his suit to be prosperous, and being, therefore, full of what I understand to be a lover's natural tender derring, he ventured to take both her hands in his, and to kiss them, as he said good bye. You may be tolerably sure that he would not have ventured on this if he had been conscious of the presence of his rival, but he had no sooner raised his head from the salute, than he saw Robert glowering at him with a face writhing and pale with jealous hate. The girl became aware of his presence also, and was probably a little awkward and conscious, though she behaved with great self-possession, as, I am told, girls generally do in such cases, being naturally more courageous than the fighting male, who is rarely equal to that sort of occasion.

"The two youngsters left the house together, and for a mile or two their ways were the same. The weather had cleared a little, and there was a feel of frost in the air, and I have heard from John that as he walked along with an occasional glance at his companion, he could see his teeth driving out from his lips like smoke, as if he had an inward fire, and this was the only sign of it. Where and how the diabolical idea which ultimately got hold of Robert first laid a finger on his shoulder I cannot guess, but I suppose that from the moment when he had seen that salute in the lamplit hall he was ripe for mischief. The chapter of accident held a leaf or two in his favor, as it often seems to do in the case of villainy.

"The scene is laid away up north, and on the sea coast. They met next morning on the pier, with their portmanteaus, and my secondry advanced to his old friend and shook hands with no allusion to the affairs of yesterday, as if he had accepted his fate and were prepared to make the best of it.

"The weather, I should have told you, had begun to look bright, and there was a fairish sea on, but not enough to frighten anybody. My young John was naturally extremely anxious to get on, for he had accepted a commission from his sweetheart's father, and would not have failed in that for the world if he could have helped it. The bargain for the trip being closed they went on to the hotel and waited until the lugger should be got out, and whilst there my John, seeing no danger in the thing at all—as how should he!—must draw the morocco case from his breast pocket and take a look at its contents. The two were alone in the coffee room, and the other came prowling up and laid hands on it in what the custodian of the diamonds thought a strange way, and stood staring at the stones with a look so odd, and something to the other's fancy so mischievous and threatening, that he scarce knew what to make of it. By and by he throws the diamonds down on the table, so that they fell clattering out of the case, and then without a word he marches from the room and slams the door behind him.

"And now," pursued the narrator, glancing once more around him, "how he saw his way to the fulfillment of his design nobody will ever know until the day when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed. But he marched down into the bar, and having begun to drink there with the landlord he made an amazing statement.

"'Strachan,' said he, 'there's something on my mind, and I must tell it to somebody.' The landlord noticed that he looked wild and distressed, and listened with amazement, thinking when he heard it that the young man had gone mad. The something on the diabolical young scoundrel's mind was simply this. He told the story of the diamonds, and added that his friend was terribly in debt and was greatly tempted to appropriate them. He was indeed resolved to have them, and had devised a scheme by which he might secure them. He had provided himself with a duplicate case, the which he intended to lose overboard, and then by raising a dreadful outcry about its loss divert all suspicion. Strachan was sworn to secrecy about this for the present, as it was my young villain's professed hope to be able to frustrate his rival's nefarious scheme.

"Well, the two young men got on board. They were a bit undermanned, and the weather was growing rougher and rougher, but there was no danger to be anticipated, and both the youngsters were good sailors. The two had borrowed the tarpaulin from the skipper, and lounged about the deck in the rain and wind scarcely exchanging a word. It began to grow dark earlier than usual, even at this season of the year, for the black skies hung low over it had been dusk all day. It was a dreary time and seemed to grow drearier every minute, and at last John, having comfortably arranged a coil of rope on deck, sat down on it with his back to the bulwark, made himself all taut and snug, and began to smoke. He watched the red glare of his pipe, and by and by, with the rocking of the vessel and the darkness and the soothing influence of tobacco, he began to nod. He never believed that he altogether fell asleep, but in any case he was wide awake all on a sudden with a gust of wind blowing coldly and keenly all through him, and a hand in his inner breast pocket. The thought of the diamonds was on him in a second, but he never fancied who the owner of the hand might be, when he leapt to his feet to seize him. The deck was slippery, and the boat was pitching wildly so that he came up with a stagger, and he was encumbered with the heavy tarpaulin coat he wore. It was merely lintoned about him, and he had not put his arms through the sleeves, so that he was like a man in a sack. But he went with a spring and a lurch against the thief and knew him at a flash, saw his wild face and eyes and outstretched hands, as the shallow bulwark took him behind the knees, saw the very case in his right hand as he went over with a cry and a mad clutch at the empty air. He himself fell heavily and cut his face against the bulwark's edge, but he cried 'Man Overboard!' as he rolled on the deck, and in a second he was afoot again tearing off the tarpaulin and casting coat and waistcoat left and right.

"It was as wild a thing to do as ever yet was done in this world, but the man who was robbed went headlong into that raging sea to save the thief. He did not know then that the villain was trying to rob him of his sweetheart and to poison the whole world against him. I asked the noble fellow later on—for I am not going to play tricks with you and keep you in suspense—he came out of it with his life—God bless him!—I asked him later on how it came that he faced almost the certainty of death for a man caught red-handed in such treachery.

"'I knew,' he said as simply as a child, 'that he couldn't swim a stroke, and it seemed horrible to think that a man should die in this case as that.'

"Well, the diamonds were gone and the man was gone. The noble fellow hid the dreadful story for the sake of the lost man's friends, and nobody thought it very hard to fancy that the necklace had been lost in the attempted rescue. But when he got back to the mainland the landlord had told the villain's tale to one or two—had told it to do him justice, in the belief that the originator of it had gone mad, and this grand fellow had for his reward the almost universal belief that he had thrown his friend overboard in order to secure secrecy for his own crime. It was believed that the other had taxed him with his intent, and the mere pretence at a rescue went for nothing. There was no proving anything against certainty of death for a man caught red-handed in such treachery.

"You know the man?" asked one, "and the story is true?"

"The man is a dear friend of mine," said Captain Carr, "and the story is true."

The girl who sat outside the circle rose and moved away, but Lady Sarah rising also put an arm about her waist and whispered in her ear.

"Don't go yet, dear. The story is not finished." "Let me go," said the girl, with a sobbing voice. "Let me go."

"Could you bear to hear it proved, my darling?" asked the keen old lady, with a tear in each of her keen black eyes.

"Not here," said the girl, trembling; "not before these people."

To all the rest it was the ending of the tale, and it was no strange to anybody that the hostess should walk away with her arm about the waist of

her favorite guest. The old lady and the young one turned into a conservatory which opened from the room.

"Can it be proved?" the girl cried. Then, facing her companion with agonized entreaty, "Dear Lady Sarah, who can prove it? How can it be proved?"

"There is a providence over all things, my dear," said the old lady, gravely. "It can be proved. Shall I call Captain Carr? He has the proof."

"Yes, yes. Let me know. How could I ever have allowed so black a thought to creep into my heart?"

"My dear Miss Carruthers," said Captain Carr a minute later, "forgive me if I pained you. But you refused to listen to me. You sent back my letter (containing the proof I hold) unopened. My wretched cousin is not dead. God spared him to repent. He was miraculously preserved. He floated all night supported by a mass of spars and cordage, was picked up at day-break, and, fearing, that John would denounce him, fled abroad. He has written at last, moved, I am afraid, more by want of pen and paper than by any repentance, and I have extorted the whole story from him. John is only fifty miles away, Miss Carruthers. Shall I wire for him?"

She blushed as he bent over her, and a chance onlooker would have taken them for a pair of lovers. She answered "Yes," in a half whisper, and the gallant Captain sighed. "It was the answer he had longingly worked for, but the 'Yes' was not for him.

It was for John.

"THE CHRISTMAS BELL-RINGERS."

HOMELY and happy associations of English rural life in the olden time belong to the ancient institution of bell-ringing, upon duly appointed festive occasions in the village churches, as well as for the invitation to social worship. The tuneful melody pealing from the venerable tower, which seems to preside over a little group of modest private dwellings as the sole conspicuous public edifice, the headquarters of the parish commonwealth, appeals to the sense of neighborly fellowship, speaking an implied message of "peace on earth, goodwill to men." Christmas Day and New Year's Day must be deemed, therefore, such occasions as may appropriately be ushered in by the best performance of this kind. In the pleasant scene which our artist has delineated, the bell-ringers appear to be encouraged by the presence of the Squire and some of his friends, accompanying the Parson, with the churchwarden and the parish clerk, probably, to exert themselves for the general gratification. The costumes of these good people are those which were fashionable in the middle or early part of last century; but we trust that the same influences friendly to social union and cheerful cooperation in parochial affairs, without detriment to a proper regard for distinctions of rank and office, may still prevail in the present, and that agreeable old customs will not lightly be given up. The labor of the bell-ringers must be very fatiguing; and it will be observed that the village innkeeper has been sent for to supply a jug of good ale, which, having been first tasted by the gentry, will be dispensed, with discreet moderation, to refresh the actual performers. In the reign of George III. or George III. nobody would have thought of taking any objection to this part of the arrangements. The drawing must pass, however, as an illustration of the manners of a former age. With regard to the time-honored practice of bell-ringing, its efficacy in awakening the sentiments of attachment to home, and in summoning good folk to religious observances, has been attested by many poets. The subjoined passage is by Longfellow:

The bells themselves are the best of preachers;
Their brass lips are hoarse and hoarse;
From their pulpit of stone in the upper air,
Sounding aloft, without crack or flaw,
Louder than trumpet under law,
Now a sermon, and now a prayer,
The eloquent hammer is the tongue;
This way, that way, beaten and swung;
That from mouth of brass, as from mouth of gold,
May be taught the Testaments New and Old.

Townsend electricity, says Mr. Proctor, might be obtained by utilizing the best zinc sprays applied to the anodes of iron metals, yet the current produced by a temperature of 100° F., at one junction, and say 60° at the other, would be too small to be successful.