

structions to cross to Kingston, if he sees cause to do so."

"Yes, yes. Go on."

"And you must offer a fair reward."

"How much?"

"Well, sir, would you think a couple of hundred to much?"

"I will make it a couple of thousand."

"Bravo!" cried Grestorex. "For two thousand pounds these detective fellows would find you the bones of Adam and Eve."

"Say you so? Then it shall be five thousand. Mr. Keckwith, I authorise you to offer a reward of five thousand pounds in my name."

The head clerk bowed down before Saxon as if he had been a demi-god, and said that it should be done forthwith.

"I'll go myself with the fellow who takes the Paris job," said Mr. Grestorex. "I shall enjoy the excitement of the thing; and you, Trefalden, had better go to Liverpool."

Saxon shook his head.

"No," he said, "my field shall be London."

CHAPTER LXXV. SAXON TAKES HIS OWN COURSE.

"Maybe there's a woman in the case."

Those words caused Saxon to fling himself heart and soul into the pursuit. They roused all the will and energy that were in him. It was but a random guess of Mr. Keckwith's, after all; but it did what the loss of two millions of money had failed to do.

The more he thought of it, the more probable—the more terribly probable—it seemed. So young, so lovely, so fresh to the world as Helen Rivière was, what more likely than that William Trefalden should desire to have her for his own? What more likely than that she, being so poor and so friendless, should accept him? She would be certain to do so, if only for her mother's sake. For Saxon did not now believe that Mrs. Rivière was dead. As he had once trusted his cousin with an infinite trust, he now regarded his every word and deed with unbounded suspicion. He neither believed that Mrs. Rivière was dead, nor that Helen was gone to Florence, nor that any statement that William Trefalden had ever made to him at any time was other than deliberately and blackly false.

Granting, however, that Mrs. Rivière might be no more—and it was, after all, sufficiently likely to be true—would not the lonely girl cling to whoever was nearest and kindest to her at the time? And then Saxon remembered how gentlemanly, how gracious, how persuasive his cousin could be; how sweet his smile was, how pleasant and low his voice!

Poor Helen! Poor, pretty, trustful, gentle Helen! What a fate for her! It made his heart ache and his blood boil, and brought to the surface all that was tenderest and manliest in his nature only to think of it.

Within five minutes after he had announced his decision, the three men parted at the door of William Trefalden's office. Each went his separate way—Keckwith to engage the detectives, Grestorex to make arrangements for his temporary absence, and Saxon to pursue his own quest according to his own plan.

He went straight to Brudenell-terrace, Camberwell, and inquired for Miss Rivière.

The belligerent maid-servant reconnoitred through a couple of inches of open doorway before replying.

"Miss Rivers don't live here now," she said, sharply.

This, however, was only what Saxon had expected to hear.

"Can you oblige me, then," he said, "with her present address?"

"No, I can't."

"But surely Miss Rivière must have left an address when she removed from here?"

"There was an address left," replied the girl; "but it ain't right, so it's of no use to any one."

"How do you know that it is not right?"

"Because it's been tried, of course. But I can't stand here all day."

And the girl made as if she was about to shut the door in Saxon's face; but, seeing his fingers on their way to his waistcoat-pocket, relented. He placed a sovereign in her hand.

"I want to know all that you can tell me on this subject," he said.

She looked at the coin and at him, and shook her head suspiciously.

"What's this for?" she said.

"For your information. I would not mind what I gave to any one who could put me in the way of finding where those ladies are gone."

"But I can't tell you what I don't know."

"That's true, but you may as well tell me all you do."

The girl, still looking at him somewhat doubtfully, invited him to step inside the passage.

"I can show you the card," she said; "but I know it's of no use. There was a gentleman here the other day—he came from a great London shop, and would have put pounds and pounds of painting in Miss Rivers's way—and though he wrote it all down exact, he couldn't find the place."

And with this she plunged into the little empty front parlour, and brought out a card on which were pencilled, in William Trefalden's own hand, the following words:

*Mrs. Rivière,
Braufort Villa, St. John's Wood.*

Saxon almost started on seeing his cousin's well-known hand.

"Who wrote this?" he asked, quickly.

"It was Mr. Forsyth that wrote it, after the ladies were in the cab."

"Mr. Forsyth?" he repeated.

And then the girl, grown suddenly communicative, went on to say that Mr. Forsyth was a rich gentleman who, having known "Mr. Rivers" a great many years ago, had sought the ladies out, paid enormous prices for Mr. Rivers's pictures, and induced Mrs. and Miss Rivers to remove to a pleasant part of London. Even in this matter he took all the trouble off their hands, and they never so much as saw their new lodgings before he came to take them there. There never was such a kind, thoughtful, pleasant gentleman, to be sure! As for the address, Mrs. Rivers never thought of it till just at the last moment, and then Mr. Forsyth wrote it out as he stood in the passage—the ladies being already in the fly, and ready to drive off.

"And that is all you know about it?" asked Saxon, still turning the card over and over.

"Every word."

"I suppose I may keep the card?"

"Oh yes, if you like; but you'll find there's no such place."

"Did Mrs. Rivière seem to be much worse before she left here?"

"No. We thought she was better, and so did Miss Rivers."

Saxon turned reluctantly towards the door.

"Thank you," he said. "I wish you could have told me more."

"I suppose you are a friend of the family?" said the girl, inquisitively.

Saxon nodded.

"You—you can't tell me, I suppose, whether Mr. —"

"Forsyth?"

"Ay—whether Mr. Forsyth was engaged to Miss Rivière?" said he, with some hesitation.

She screwed her mouth up, and jerked her head expressively.

"They weren't when they left here," she replied; "but anybody could see how it would be before long."

Then, seeing the trouble in the young man's face, she added quickly:

"On his side, you know. He worshipped the ground Miss Rivers walked upon; but I don't believe she cared a brass farthing for him."

To which Saxon only replied by thanking her again, and then turned despondingly away.

He would go to St. John's Wood; but he felt beforehand that it would be useless. It was to be expected that William Trefalden would give a false address. It was, of course, a part of his plan to do so.

In the midst of these reflections, just as he had reached the further end of the terrace, the girl came running after him.

"Sir, sir," she said, breathlessly, "I've just thought of Doctor Fisher. He was Mrs. Rivers's

doctor, and he'll be sure to know where they went."

"God bless you for that thought, my girl!" said Saxon. "Where does he live?"

"I don't know; but it's somewhere about Camberwell. You'll be sure to find him."

"Yes, yes—easily." And again Saxon dipped his fingers into his waistcoat-pocket. But the girl shook her head.

"Lord love you!" said she, "I don't want any more of your money—you've given me too much already!"

And with this she laughed, and ran away.

Saxon jumped back into his cab, and desired to be driven to the first chemist's shop on the road.

"For the chemists," muttered he to himself as he rattled along, "are sure to know all about the doctors."

CHAPTER LXXVI. DOCTOR FISHER.

Doctor Fisher dwelt in a big, stucco-fronted, many-windowed house, with gates and a portico—a strictly professional-looking house that stood back from the road, as if with a sulky sense of its own superiority to the humbler dwellings round about—a house before whose grim portals no organ-boy would presume to linger, and no Punch to set up his temporary stage. A solemn-looking servant in a sad-coloured livery opened the door, and ushered Saxon to the physician's presence.

Dr. Fisher was a massive man, with an important manner, and a deep rolling voice like the pedal pipes of an organ. He received his visitor courteously, begged him to be seated, and replied clearly and readily to all Saxon's inquiries. Mrs. Rivière was indeed dead. She died about a fortnight before, and was buried in Norwood cemetery. The Rivière had removed from Camberwell about two, or it might be nearly three, months previous to this catastrophe. During the first six or eight weeks of her sojourn at Sydenham, Mrs. Rivière had gained strength, and was so far improved as to be on the point of undertaking a voyage to Madeira, when she unfortunately took that cold which resulted in her death. Dr. Fisher did not attend Mrs. Rivière's funeral. He believed that Miss Rivière and Mr. Forsyth were the only mourners. He had never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Forsyth, but he had heard both Mrs. and Miss Rivière make frequent reference to him, as a friend to whom they were bound by many ties of gratitude and regard. Miss Rivière, he believed, was well. He had called upon her in the morning of the day following that on which her mother was buried; but not since. Her present address was Beulah Villa, Sydenham. He regretted that he had no further information to offer; protested that he was entirely at his visitor's service; and wished him a gracious "good morning."

Ushered out again by the solemn lacquy, Saxon pushed on at once to Sydenham.

Beulah Villa proved to be one of a series of semi-detached houses in a quiet side-road overlooking some fields, about half a mile from the Crystal Palace. His cab had no sooner pulled up, however, before the gate, than an ominous card in the dining-room window prepared him for a fresh disappointment.

Miss Rivière had left nearly a week ago.

"She went away, sir, the second day after her poor ma's funeral," explained the good woman of the house, a cheery, kindly, good-humoured-looking body, with floury hands and a white apron. "She couldn't abide the place, pretty dear, after what had happened."

"If you will be so kind as to oblige me with Miss Rivière's present address —"

"Well, sir, I'm sorry to say that is just what I can not do," interrupted the landlady. "Miss Rivière didn't know it herself—not to be certain about it."

"But surely something must have been said—something by which one could form some idea," said Saxon. "Do you think she was going abroad?"

"Oh dear no, sir. She was going to the seaside."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, sir—positive."