

Then they saluted and Tubby got in.

He had hardly dared to glance at Theo yet, for the dancing eyes and brilliant little face showed such flattering delight at seeing him that his spirits had gone down to zero at the thought of her witnessing his degradation.

Now, with the handcuffs no longer dangling between them, he could not only look at her but express to her, without words, the reciprocal joy he felt—the realization that she was very dear to him. She seemed to have changed from a flapper into a very stately and lovely young woman and, after a murmured word or two which the others were too absorbed to hear, Tubby's hand sought and found hers, under the rug, and held it fast.

Meanwhile Laurie had begun his explanation.

"The reason," he said, "why you are both scot-free is that Inspector Lawson has had the warrant against you withdrawn. It appears that a new clue has been found and a warrant is out for the arrest of the sailor—the man who sold us the knife—because since you left, it has transpired that the poor girl had a sailor friend—a man who knew her at Bristol—who was fond of her and who had arrived back in England after a long voyage, about a week before the sailor called at the Chase.

"The description of the Bristol man tallies with our sailor, and there are reports that he was seen once near the canal, at Chatter Alley, about a fortnight before the murder."

"Why didn't the police fix on him sooner?" asked Fenella.

"It appears they have been searching for him quietly all along, without success. Now they are offering a reward of a hundred pounds for information about him. But of course they will never get him. It's too long an interval. He has had ample time to get clean away."

"Then they understand they were on a wrong scent with us?" said Tubby, adding, "By the way, where are you taking us, Pridham?"

"To the Cecil. I'm stopping there. I thought we could lunch and then talk things out."

"Right-O." Tubby pressed the little hand clasped in his own, to signify his appreciation of this pleasant arrangement. There never was a merrier luncheon party than the quartette made. Theo and Tubby vied with each other in gay inconsequence and overflowing spirits.

The colour had come back to Fenella's wan cheeks and the brilliance to her eyes. She was animated, sparkling, radiant, with the joy-light that had suddenly come to dispel the darkness.

Immediately lunch was over, Laurie led the way to the Palm Court.

"Can you entertain Tubby?" he said to Theo, "for a quarter-of-an-hour, while I talk to Fen?" Then he drew Fenella to a quiet corner where they could talk, undisturbed. "There is only one way," he said, "to end all the trouble and avoid any possible further complications. Do you care for me still, Fen?"

SHE looked at him in surprised reproach and her eyes were eloquent in response.

"Yes, I know," he said quickly, "I don't deserve such sacrifices as you have given me. My sweet! will you make one more sacrifice. Will you marry me this afternoon?"

"This afternoon?" For an instant Fenella thought that Laurie must be off his head, but his smile reassured her.

"I have the license in my pocket," he went on, "and I have arranged with the vicar of St. James's to be there at two o'clock to-day."

"But Laurie," she stammered, "what would your father and mother say?"

"They will be reconciled to it when they see it is irrevocable," he answered. "We will go down to The Chase directly it is over and tell them and we can return to town again this evening. Fen, you can trust me to be good to you, can't you? I simply worship you."

(To be continued.)



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