

The Adventurers

By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON

COPYRIGHT, 1898, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

I opened my dispatch box and spread out the paper on the table once more, poring over it with my pulse throbbing to my finger tips. The meaning was now plain, though the main secret was yet to find. The parchment was clearly the second sheet only of the document which Mr. Kesteven had desired to bring down for my perusal. I sat up at a new and more alarming discovery. Where was the first sheet?

That open window now offered up its secret. That desperate cry was no longer now the scream of mortal agony, but an appeal for help. From the dead fingers I had taken the second sheet of the mysterious document, so pregnant with interest, but from the hands of the living I could not doubt that the first had been violently torn to the course of a struggle in that silent chamber. Terror had surprised the racial at his work—the terror of that sudden and fearful dissolution, of that humped and pitiful body fallen on the floor. And here now with two ends of the secret, whatever it might be, rent asunder and secluded in separate hands, the board of treasure still lay buried in its ancient hiding place as intact and private as it had lain maybe through hundreds of years of silence.

My riddle was read. That certainly was a great step, and in the heat of my discovery, as I sat palpitating with strange emotions of adventure, avarice, even of ferocity, I had no intention to leave the matter where it stood. I was resolved to confront fate and to enter the lists against those undetermined enemies. So far they had kept very silent, working only in the dark, but I swore then and there to meet them, drag them forth into the broad daylight and contest my rights in the hidden treasure, if it existed, against a dozen sorry knaves. I am a patient man and not overquick to take a resolution, but I do not easily lay down a task which I have once undertaken. I swore upon the spot to undertake this.

In the circuit of my fancy I came suddenly upon this consideration, which pulled me up quite sharply, even with a little breathlessness. These unknown antagonists were still banded in arms against me, and I was alone. I had had repeated evidence that I was pursued by their ingenuity and in two ways. On the one hand I was to be evicted from my own house, and simultaneously my bureau was rifled, as I could not now doubt, for the purpose of securing my remnant of the precious document. What would be the next step which these insolent tricksters would essay? I had no one in the castle beyond the estimable Mrs. Main and a neat housemaid, neither of whom was to be counted in a warfare such as the situation promised to my imagination.

The one man that was daily visible about the place slept at Llanellan, as Mr. Kesteven had informed me. What puzzled me at this point was the isolation in which my host had enwrapped himself. He had taken no pains to protect himself. Exposed, as he must have known he was, to the treachery of an unscrupulous foe, he was thrown absolutely upon his own resources unless indeed he relied upon the near proximity of Hood in times of emergency. But Hood perplexed me, recurring in my thoughts, a haunting figure, provoking only a vague uneasiness and a great uncertainty. And once again the odd conjunction of the captain and the innkeeper returned before my eyes. One thing was certain to my newly awakened wit—I must have some companion in my confidence. There were several friends among my old acquaintances who would serve me, but the year was drawing on and the holiday season was at his height. The odds were that I should discover Peggotty or Rogers or Sheppard far enough from London by this. I wanted aid forthwith, and forthwith must have it. So it felt that my mind recurred to Montgomery. He was not very much to my taste, certainly not congenial company, but he was obviously honest, and I could swear that he would be faithful.

And so indeed he proved. I rode over next morning to the farm which constituted now all that was left of the old estate of the family. He was plaiting a whip in his dining room—a high wainscoted chamber, very dingy and untidy and ransacked with all the unimaginable rubbish of a young man's fancy. On my entrance he rose, his eyes glared red, and grasped my hand in an awkward sense of welcome.

"It's good of you to come so soon," said he.

"I've come to take you back," said I. He stared at me. "Oh, all right!" he said, as if this mission of mine had been a matter of course. "Come and have a drink."

It was but 11 in the morning, though the breakfast things still cluttered his table, and so I refused his hospitality, a refusal which did not prevent his pouring himself out a glass of beer.

"Montgomery," said I, "leave that alone and keep your head clear. I want you."

The boy bounded to his feet sheepishly enough to what he doubtless considered my rebuke, but with a show of engrossment which pleased me.

"Got your horse?" I asked.

He nodded, all attention now, and I continued:

"Then sling your legs up and be off, and ask your servant to send on your bags. I'm going to keep you for a week."

"Bully!" he said and clattered out of the room in a cheery fashion.

I had already made up my mind not to be too explicit with Montgomery. He was too recent an acquaintance, despite my conviction of his fidelity, to intrust with a precious secret. Indeed, the first occasion of our encounter would not have commended him to many particular people. What I told him, therefore, as we rode back embraced but the general atmosphere of intrigue in which I was involved. The word that stuck in his mind was "burglary," and it greatly excited him.

"Shall we have the police over?" he asked anxiously.

But, strangely enough, although the thought had occurred to me more than once, it was almost in old Kesteven's words that I replied:

"There are none nearer than Raymond." To that I added, "Besides, I think we two are in no need of assistance against a ruffian or two."

The next two days passed very peacefully. As I am fond of laying my plans ahead, I wrote to Sheppard at his chambers asking him if he were still in town and if he felt disposed to pay me a visit, referring briefly to the strange turn which my fortunes had taken. I saw nothing of the captain, at least at the castle, and for some reason or other I felt no desire to revisit him just now. He had evidently forgotten my invitation, nor did I remind him of it when we met casually upon the road the day after Montgomery's arrival. He gave me a civil greeting, cocking his eye at my companion in his good humored, cynical way, and when we had passed, on looking back, I saw him standing at the crossroads, red in hand, gazing intently after us. Seeing me do so, he waved his hand and moved off upon his journey. Montgomery was as docile as a spaniel, submitting readily, I suppose, to the superior will, and I had no complaint to make of him save that he wore a good deal. He himself, however, had a complaint, for he was grievously disappointed that there had been no bloodshed. We saw not a show of a burglar, and I fancy he thought me in his private mind something of an impostor, which possibly was the very reason which made him strike up an acquaintance with Sercombe. I certainly had no right to protest, for the captain was a pleasant fellow and so far as I knew harmless, and moreover, life at the castle was not unenjoyable. But all the same I was a little annoyed to find there upon such close terms with one another.

The third day after Montgomery's arrival I resolved to ride into Raymond to see the little lawyer, and, mounting the black horse which had come to me as part of my inheritance, I left the castle shortly before lunch. The nag was a steady creature, though not very handsome to the eyes, and shortly I was upon the other side of Llanellan and cantering down into the long stretch of forest which lies toward the little town. Here, as it chanced very oddly, whom should I meet but Greenstreet himself, driving out to the castle upon the very point of business on which I was bound for Raymond. Encountering thus we agreed to make a convenience of the locality, since I could not persuade him to turn back with me, and we completed our conversation over a pint of ale at the little hostelry in Llanellan. The transaction was comprised in a brief time, and as I finished I turned my horse's head forthright for home.

As I drew near the park gates I wanted a little of 4 by my watch. The sun beamed sharply overhead, and the great lie by the stone pillars of the gateway threw a black blot of shadow across the drive. I headed the horse across the sward, making for the stables which lay among the farm buildings to the north of the castle. Leaving the animal in charge of the handy man, Williams, I walked back by way of the park, skirting the western wing of the building. Upon this side, as I have said, lay a dense shrubbery, through which the little brook streamed over its pebbly bottom to the waterfall upon the southern declivity of the hill. A pathway ran circuitously through this growth of laurel and box, evidently of comparatively recent origin, and winding by several pretty spots, bordered with the rivulet, finally emerged upon the boundary of the park and joined a cross track from the gateway by a leafy avenue of limes.

As it was early and I was in no mood to face Montgomery all at once, I struck into the shrubbery and sauntered quietly along the pathway. Suddenly at a bend before me and slipping softly round the elbow I beheld the figure of a man, but it was gone ere my senses were fully awake in that sultry afternoon. I stood still a moment, stirred somewhat strangely, and then ran quickly to the corner. Peerling round, I caught sight of a figure stealing among the shrubs. It paused a moment and then, as it seemed to me, slipped stealthily through the bushes and disappeared.

The next instant I had recognized Hood. There was nothing very remarkable in this, but what moved my blood was the sight of a swallow there darted into my mind the recollection of another vision. I identified the memory. It came back upon me with an odd sense of perplexity and a still stranger feeling of fear where and when I had first encountered that lean and stealthy body. I had seen the man disappear in the same furtive fashion upon the banks of the stream in the valley below, and what had then arrested my vague memory now also again attacked it, but this time with certain knowledge. This was the man who had been with Mr. Kesteven upon the day on which I had first encountered him in the wood.

The fact astounded me, thrilled through my warm limbs to the very marrow of my bones. And yet it seemed too absurd to be accepted on the spur of a moment's fancy. I stood pondering in a state of excitement and then, hastily turning about, ran in the direction of the castle.

What was Hood's business there? I asked myself the question without the assurance of an answer. There was really but little to arouse my suspicions, and yet I was agog with curiosity. I entered the castle courtyard and opened the door of the dining hall. The first object that met my eyes was Montgomery sprawling upon the table and stertorous with drunken sleep. Plates were laid for two, and empty bottles upon the table testified to a generous lunch. Leaving him for a moment, I ran upstairs and pushed open my door silently. As I did so there was an exclamation, and I entered and came face to face with Captain Sercombe.

Montgomery sprang upon the table in a drunken sleep. He held one hand in his tightly buttoned coat and looked at me with a watchful eye.

"This is very regrettable, Mr. Greatorex," he said.

The apology sounded so ludicrous in my ears that I broke into a tiny laugh and thereby relieved myself. The time for action was come.

"I must apologize," said I, "for my unexpected return, the more particularly as I have no doubt interrupted you on important business."

"Not at all," he said pleasantly; "not at all. I had quite finished."

"Then if you have been successful, Captain Sercombe, I said I as pleasantly as myself, 'I think we had better understand each other at once.'"

A slight smile ruffled his puffy face, but he kept his hand in his hiding place. "That will be unnecessary, sir, I assure you," he rejoined. "I fear I am a bad hand at crib cracking."

The effrontery of the man amazed me, but I showed nothing in the face of my wit.

"Why not give it up?" I asked smoothly.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Almost you persuade me," he returned jauntily.

"Fishing," I resumed, "is a more equanimous pastime, Captain Sercombe, I have heard."

"No doubt," he responded equally and glancing at the window. A twinging of his mouth belied his calm appearance, and I was disposed to believe that he contemplated a desperate move. I sat down upon a chair by the door and surveyed him coolly.

"May I ask," said I, "if you have found this sort of thing usually profitable?" I nodded at my bureau.

"I was in hopes this would prove so," he answered smoothly. "I am not an old hand at it."

"But you have able assistants?" I asked.

"Come, come, Mr. Greatorex," he replied, with a touch of impatience in his voice, "let us get to business."

"By all means," said I. "You will find me a most reasonable man. In my profession I have had occasion several times to deal with your profession."

If I had expected him to wince at this undisguised thrust I was disappointed. A smile flitted over his face, and that was all. He withdrew his hand from the breast of his coat. "May I sit down?" he inquired in his most courteous manner.

"Come," said I, "it is rather I who should apply to you for permission."

"We will not stand upon ceremony," he answered, whipping a chair deftly beneath him.

"A very natural sentiment upon your part," I retorted ironically.

"Mr. Greatorex," said he, with his smile and now thoroughly in charge of himself, "there is one thing I pride myself upon, and that is command of my temper."

"A very useful trait—in your profession," I remarked.

The captain took a cigarette from his case. "You will not mind," said he. "The window will air your bedroom."

And he puffed the smoke from his nostrils, and it hung about his ragged red mustache. I waited, my eyes fastened on him.

"What are you going to do?" he asked presently.

His own expression carried not a trace of anxiety.

"In these cases," I made answer, "there is a natural course with which



Sunlight Soap is better than other soaps, but is best when used in the Sunlight way. To appreciate the simplicity and ease of washing with Sunlight Soap in the Sunlight way you should follow directions.

After rubbing on the soap, roll up each piece, immerse in the water, and go away.

Sunlight Soap

will do its work in thirty to sixty minutes. Your clothes will be cleaner and whiter than if washed in the old-fashioned way with boiler and hard rubbing.

5c. Buy it and follow directions. 5c. Lever Brothers Limited, Toronto

KUMFORT HEADACHE POWDERS

THE picture illustrates your feelings when in the grasp of these racking and splitting headaches. What you need is not something that deadens your nerves and dulls and otherwise injures you, but a good, safe, reliable medicine like KUMFORT HEADACHE POWDERS. These powders are made of the very ingredients Nature intended for the cure of headaches. They give relief in a few moments and wherever used are recognized as the one quick, safe, sure headache cure.

They have been a standard remedy for many years. They have no superior. We do not claim that these headache powders are cure-alls, or that they will do the impossible, but we do claim that there is nothing else known to medical science which acts so quickly and effectively in cases of headaches of all kinds.

Four druggists sell KUMFORT HEADACHE POWDERS at 10 cents for four powders; 25 cents for twelve powders. If desired, you can secure them direct from us on receipt of price.

John D. Beckley, Merchant at Niagara Falls, N. B., writes: "The best remedy for a headache that I have ever used. They cure in a few minutes, create no habit, and I have found them safe and harmless."

A. V. Savoy, of Niagara, N. B., writes: "They are the most satisfactory and perfect cure for headache I have ever known."

M. S. Milnes, of Newcastle, N. B., writes: "I can safely recommend Kumfort Headache Powders. They are a good thing for my headaches."

THE F. G. WHEATON COMPANY
Limited
FOLLY VILLAGE, N. S.

A PLEASANT WEEK.

Plan your holidays so as to spend the week of September 1st to 8th, next, at

Canada's International Exhibition,
ST. JOHN, N. B.

The Automobile Show will alone be worth going that far to see, and it is only one of a bunch of new features.

A CHEAP FARE FROM EVERYWHERE.

A. O. SKINNER, President.

C. J. MILLIGAN, Manager

Pure Wool

at the Hewson Mills means fresh wool that has never been woven before.

"Pure" wool—in some mills—means rag shoddy (old cloth, torn up and re-woven) and cotton. It is neither pure, clean, fresh nor sanitary.

The Hewson trademark means cleanliness as well as quality.

AT McLEOD'S
Fashionable Tailoring Establishment.

We have opened the finest lot of Black, Blue and Fancy Suitings ever shown in Newcastle. Call and look at them and see for yourself.

Fancy Trouserings in Great Variety.

We will make them up for you in Good Style, put in Good Trimmings, and charge you a Moderate Price.

S. McLEOD, Carter Block

NEW BAKERY.

I have installed a first-class oven and have a capable man in charge, and am prepared to make all kinds of Fancy Cake, Biscuits and Bread. My team will be on shortly, when all goods will be delivered. I also supply at short notice

ICE CREAM AND FANCY ICES,
Temperance Drinks, Etc.

T. J. JARDINE,

Your patronage is solicited:

NEWCASTLE.

BOILERS, SMOKE STACKS, AND ALL KINDS OF SHEET STEEL WORK.

I. MATHESON & CO. LTD.
NEW GLASGOW

Kathleen
Gra
Osb

Office:
Loun
Ni

F. I.

O. J.

Gradu
Jos Eng

Chief
Office

Day

T. H.

All h
ed to

Colle
Fire,
Office

House
Office h

C

B. A.

At I

100

dozen,

Mutton,

sale and

at lowe

M.

Live

I have

of good

es and h

best turn

Char

Hack

and from

O. M.

Just a

Is Au

the Best

For ent

summer va

vacations

We want

learn Short

United St

Stenograph

there is a

promotion

Send to

grapher in

catalogue

address.

Me

The un

Mr. J. B.

Brumack

work. A

so mounted

as to stan

giving the

whole net

show of

preserving

discovered

patented by

E. I.

Take

Seven

100