

it? I'm sure I'm much obliged to him. And when, may I ask, did he bore you with his opinion of me?"

"Last night, when he came to see William Jones. He said I wasn't to be took no more, 'cause you was a scoundrel poking and prying."

Brinkley began to whistle, and went on for a while vigorously touching up his work. Then he looked up and regarded the girl curiously.

"Mr. Monk seems to be very much interested in you, Matt!"

The girl nodded her head vigorously; then remembering the odious careers to which Mr. Monk had subjected her, she began to rub her cheek again.

"Why is Mr. Monk so interested in you? Do you know?"

"P'raps it's 'cause he found me when I come ashore."

"Oh, he found you, did he? Then why doesn't he keep you?"

"He do, only I live along o' William Jones."

Again Brinkley began whistling lightly, and working away vigorously with his brush. Presently the conversation began again.

"Matt, what things did you come ashore in?"

"I dunno!"

"You have never heard whether anything was found with you which might lead to your finding your relations?"

"No; no more has William Jones. He says maybe they'll find me some day and reward him, but Mr. Monk says they were all drowned, and I ain't got no friends, 'cept him and William Jones."

"Well, since he found you, I suppose he ought to know; and since you have no relations, Matt, and no claim upon anybody in the world, it was very kind of Mr. Monk to keep you instead of sending you to the work-house as he might have done."

On this point Matt seemed rather skeptical.

"Well," continued Brinkley, as he went on lightly touching his work, "perhaps I have done my equestrian friend a wrong. Perhaps his unamiable exterior belies his real nature; perhaps he is good and kind, generous to the poor, willing to help the helpless—like you, for instance."

"Is it him?" exclaimed Matt; Monk of Monksburst! Why he don't give nothin' to nobody. No fear."

"And yet, according to your own showing, he has helped to support you all these years—you, who have no claim upon him."

This was an enigma to which Matt had no solution. She said no more, but Brinkley, while he continued painting, silently ruminated thus:

"It strikes me this puzzle would be worth unraveling, if I could only find the key. Query, is the young person the key, if I but knew how to use her? Perhaps, since the amiable Monk evidently dislikes my coming into communication with her. But it would be useless to lay the case before her, since, if she is the key, she is quite unconscious of it herself."

He threw down his brush, rose and stretched himself, and said:

"Look here, Matt, I'm tired of work. The sun shining on those sand-hills and on the far-off sea is too tempting. I shall go for a walk, and you, if you are in the mood, shall be my guide."

She evidently was in the mood, for she was on her feet in an instant.

"All right, master," she said, "I'll go."

"Very well. Tim, bring forth some refreshment. We will refresh the inner man and girl before we start."

Tim disappeared into the caravan. Presently he reappeared bearing a small tray, on which was a small flask of brandy, a large jug of milk, some biscuits and a couple of glasses. These he placed on the campstool, which his master had just vacated, and which, when not in use as a seat, served as a table. Brinkley poured out two glasses of milk, then, looking at Matt, he held the flask on high.

"Brandy, Matt?"

She shook her head.

"Very well, my child; I think you are wise. Here, take the milk and drink confusion to your enemies!"

Matt took the glass of milk and drank it down, while Brinkley hastened to dilute and dispose of the other. Then he gave some orders to Tim, and they started off. As they had no particular object in view, they chose the pleasant route, and clearly the pleasantest lay across the sand-hills. Not because the sand-hills were pleasant in themselves—they were not, especially on a hot day when the sun was scorching the roads and making the sea like a milk-pond—but because by crossing the sand-hills one came on the other side upon a footpath which lead by various windings, gradually to the top of the breezy cliff.

To the sand-hills, therefore, they wended their way. Having gained them, they followed a route which Matt knew full well, and which soon brought them to the narrow footpath beyond. During the walk she was singularly silent, and Brinkley seemed to be busily trying to work out some abstruse problem which had taken possession of his brain.

When they had followed the footpath for some distance and had gained the green sward on the top of the cliffs, the young man threw himself upon the grass and invited Matt to do the same. It was very pleasant there, soothing both to the eye and to the mind. The cliff was covered—somewhat sparsely, it is true—with stunted grass; and just below on their right lay the ocean, calm as any mill-pond, but sighing softly as the water kissed the rocks and flowed back again with rhythmic throbs. On their left lay the sand-hills, glittering like dusty gold in the sun-rays, while just before and below them was the village.

(To be continued.)

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