

with me on this terrace a few years ago."

"But I come with the same question, General Feversham," Durrance answered.

"And I give you the same answer," answered the General. "I have nothing to say about Harry."

His voice betrayed neither anger nor sorrow; and although he used the Christian name, he used it without a hint of affection."

"Would it please you to know where he has been during the last five years?" Durrance asked.

"Not in the least."

"And on what business he has been engaged?"

The General's reply was no less compromising and direct.

"I am not interested. I do not wish him to starve and I know that he does not starve. I am content with that knowledge, Colonel Durrance."

"Still I should be very glad if you would hear me," Durrance persisted. "I have come straight from the south of Devonshire to tell you of something which occurred yesterday. I think that I now know what it means, but it is important that I should be sure;" and he related what he knew of Willoughby's visit to Southpool, and of the white feather which Ethne had carried so tenderly to her room.

"I put my own explanation upon these events," he continued. "I believe that Captain Willoughby, Colonel Trench and a Major Castleton who is dead, brought an accusation of cowardice against your son. I have reason to believe that Willoughby has withdrawn his. I think I can tell you why." And he told General Feversham of those letters hidden within a wall of a house in the Mahdist city of Berber. And when he had done he repeated his request. "I am very anxious that you should tell me all that you know. It is half the truth, or rather was half. For I think that I have told you something of the other half. I want to know what happened on that night in Donegal."

"Because Harry was your friend?"

General Feversham replied. He had sat quite silent all through Durrance's story. He had not even by a movement revealed any emotion, and he asked his question now with the like indifference.

"No, but because I am engaged to Ethne Eustace," Durrance returned, "and she has not forgotten him."

General Feversham looked curiously at his visitor. But Durrance's face was as impassive as his own.

"You think Harry will come back?" he asked.

"When Trench withdraws his accusation, why should he not?"

The old man neither agreed nor differed. Thought was slow with him, and he sat staring out across the low country beneath the terrace for some little time. Then he said:

"I will tell you. You know so much already, and you have given me to-day the one good piece of news I have had since Harry came down and told me his story five years ago. I do not understand it—even now, less now perhaps than before. It is one of the queer, inexplicable things. I can only tell you just what Harry said to me. He looked me in the face, by gad, straight in the face while he spoke. A telegram came while he sat at dinner. You were there, and so were Trench and Willoughby."

"Ah!" exclaimed Durrance. "So the telegram did play a part."

"It came from Castleton, it told Harry that his regiment was ordered on active service to Egypt, it asked him to tell the news to Trench. You know what happened. Harry crumpled up the telegram and flung it into the fire, and did not tell Trench. That same night he sent in his papers. Somehow Trench and his friends learned the truth. They sent three white feathers to Harry, which were forwarded to Ramelton. They arrived at the house while the dance was going on. Miss Eustace was present when he opened the box in which they came."

Durrance had the facts at last; they fitted in with his conjectures to a nicety.