

dabbed his forehead with his blue cotton pocket-handkerchief. Respectable as he was, Saxon regarded the man with inexpressible aversion. To him, Mr. Abel Keckwitch was simply a spy and an informer; and spies and informers, according to Saxon's creed, scarcely came within the pale of humanity.

"Of course, gentlemen, you've seen nothin' as yet," pursued the head clerk, when he had recovered breath. "Not likely. About eight o'clock, or from eight to half-past, will be about the time to look out. Most of the expresses start towards nine, and he's safe to be off by one of 'em. Now, I've got a cab waitin' round the corner, and all we shall have to do will be to watch him out of the house, jump in, and follow."

"Keckwitch thinks of everything," said Greatorex, approvingly.

"The main question is, where's he a-goin' to? I say America."

"America, of course."

"Well, then, you see he might start from the London Docks, or Southampton, or Glasgow, or Liverpool; but most likely Liverpool. Now, there ain't no boat either to-day or to-morrow from either of those ports—that I've ascertained; but then he's safe to get away somehow, and keep quiet till the chance turns up. He might catch up the Liverpool boat, you know, at Kingstown, or the Southampton boat at Havre. In short, we must be prepared for him everywhere, and keep our eyes open all round."

"Yours seem all right, Keckwitch, at any rate," said the banker.

"Well, sir, I ain't closed 'em for one half minute since you were at Pentonville," replied Mr. Keckwitch, complacently. "One needs to be special watchful, having no professionals to help us forward."

At this moment the church clock began striking eight, and the postman made his appearance at the upper end of Stude's-lane. The head clerk at once disengaged himself from the group, and, desiring his fellow-watchers to keep aloof, began sauntering up and down, within a few yards of the gates of Elton House. Presently the postman crossed over, letters in hand, and rang the gate bell. Mr. Keckwitch was at his elbow in a moment.

"Can you tell me, postman," said he, blandly, "if there's any party of the name of Henley residin' in this street?"

"Henley?" repeated the letter-carrier. "No, not that I know of. There's a Henry in Silverstreet, if that's what you mean."

But that was not at all what Mr. Keckwitch meant. Mr. Keckwitch only meant to read the address upon the letter in the postman's hand, and having done so hastened back to Saxon and Greatorex at the bottom of the street.

"By the Lord, gentlemen," he exclaimed, striking his clenched fist against his open palm, "he's off!"

"Off?" repeated Saxon and Greatorex, in one breath.

"Ay. I saw his writin' on the envelope. It's one of our office envelopes, and has been posted in a pillar-box overnight. He's off, and we might dodge about here till doomsday for all the good we could do by it."

"He has secured two hours' start, too, curse him," said Greatorex, fiercely.

"Curse him, with all my heart," echoed the head clerk, fervently.

CHAPTER LXXXIII. A TENDER EPISODE.

Mr. Keckwitch rang boldly at the gate of Elton House, and requested to see Mrs. Filmer. Mrs. Filmer was Madame Duvernay's serious housekeeper. The head clerk, for prudential reasons, had never ventured to call upon her before; but the time for prudence was now gone by, and the time for boldness was come.

There was an air of flurry and confusion about the place, which Mr. Keckwitch detected as soon as he set foot across madame's threshold. The servant who admitted him had a scared look upon her face, and, having shown him to the door of the housekeeper's room, scampered away again as fast as her legs could carry her. Presently a bell was rung violently up-stairs, and was fol-

lowed by a sound of running feet and rustling skirts along the passage. Then came an interval of dead silence, and by-and-by Mrs. Filmer made her appearance with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Jennings" she said, "you come at a sad moment, sir. We are in terrible trouble here this morning."

The head clerk, who had introduced himself to Mrs. Filmer in one of those church-going conversations by the unassuming name of Jennings, here pressed the housekeeper's hand in both of his own, and replied that he was sorry for anything which made her unhappy.

Mrs. Filmer then went on to say that madam had just received the cruellest letter from master. Master had actually gone away, nobody knew where, without even bidding madam good-bye, and as good as told her, in plain black and white, that he should never come back again. Madam had been in hysterics ever since. Poor madam! Such a kind, dear, sweet-natured lady, to—but there, what could one expect? Men were such brutes.

"Not all men, my dear Mrs. Filmer," wheezed the head clerk, tenderly reproachful.

Whereupon Mrs. Filmer tossed her head, and believed that there wasn't so much difference between the best and the worst, as some folks imagined.

"There's myself, for instance," said Mr. Keckwitch. "I abhor perfidy; I do, indeed, ma'am."

"Ah, so you say, Mr. Jennings," sighed the housekeeper.

"I'll prove it to you, Mrs. Filmer. If you'll get me a sight of that letter, so that I could examine the writin' and postmark, I'll go down at once to the City, and push inquiry in certain quarters that I know of; and if I don't succeed in findin' out which way your scamp of a master's gone, I give you leave never to speak to me again."

"Oh, Mr. Jennings, do you really mean that?"

"Mean it, ma'am? Bless you! This sort of thing is all in my way. Many and many's the runaway bankrupt we've caught just as he was steppin' aboard of the steamer that was to carry him to Boulogne or New York. Do you think you can put your hand on the letter?"

"I think so. It was lying on the floor just now, down by madam's bedside, and a bank-note for five hundred pounds as well, which I picked up and put in her purse. She didn't regard the money, poor soul."

"Women never do," said the head clerk. "Their little hearts are so tender."

Mrs. Filmer looked down, and sighed again. "I'm sure yours is. I hope it is, my dear," added he; and, sidling a step nearer, that respectable man actually kissed her.

About ten minutes later, Mr. Keckwitch came out from the gates of Elton House, radiant with triumph. He had William Trefalden's letter in his pocket-book. It contained only these words:

"Adieu, Thérèse. Circumstances over which I have no control compel me to leave England—perhaps, for ever. I bid you farewell with tender regret. Try to think of me kindly, and believe that, if you knew all, you would not blame me for the step which I now find myself compelled to take. I enclose a Bank of England note for five hundred pounds. The house, and all that it contains, is yours. Once more, farewell. May you be happier in the future than I have made you in the past.

"W. TREFALDEN."

CHAPTER LXXXIV. IS IT A TRAP?

They went first of all to the office in Chancery-lane, where they found the clerks just settling to their work, and the housemaid blacking the grate in William Trefalden's private room. To put a summary stop to this damsel's proceedings, dismiss her, lock the door, and institute a strict but rapid investigation of all that the place contained, was their next course. They examined the contents of the waste-paper basket, turned out the table-drawers, broke open the safe; but found nothing of any value or importance.

"Look here," said Saxon, presently. "What is this?"

It was only a crumpled envelope, the inside of which was covered with pencilled memoranda.

Greatorex uttered a cry of triumph.

"A sketch of his route, by Heaven!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find this?"

"On the mantelshelf here, beside the almanack."

"Listen: 'London to Boulogne by steamer—three A.M. Eight hours. Boulogne to Paris—eleven A.M. Paris to Marseilles—8.40, through Marseilles to Algiers, nine P.M. Or Constantinople, five P.M.'"

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Keckwitch.

"All—and he was off of course, by the early Boulogne boat by three this morning. Eight hours' passage—confound him! he will be landing in half an hour; and by six or seven this evening will be in Paris, whence he will go straight through to Marseilles by that eight-forty express."

"The eight-forty express reaches Marseilles at three forty-five the following afternoon," said Mr. Keckwitch, who had wisely provided himself with a continental time-table.

"And the next through train from London?" asked Greatorex.

"Half-past eight this evening."

The banker uttered an angry oath; but Mr. Keckwitch only took up the envelope, and examined it thoughtfully.

"I shall not attempt to overtake him," said Saxon. "He has seventeen hours' start. It would be sheer folly."

"If you would but consent to telegraph to the police at Paris," began the banker—but Saxon silenced him with a gesture.

"No," he said, resolutely. "Nothing shall induce me to do that. Once for all, I will not deal with him as with a felon."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Keckwitch, still examining the envelope. "I'm not sure that this paper ain't just a trap."

"A trap?"

The head clerk nodded.

"He's such a clever chap," said he. "Too clever by half to commit a blunder of this sort. I no more believe he's gone by the Boulogne boat than I believe he's gone to Paradise."

"Where, then, do you suppose he is gone?" said the banker, impatiently.

"Likely enough that he ain't left London at all. And, somehow or another I have my doubts—"

"Doubts of what?"

Mr. Keckwitch rubbed his fat hands over and over, and wagged his head knowingly before replying.

"That, maybe, there's a woman in the case."

The banker laughed outright at the absurdity of this notion; but over Saxon's mind there flashed a sudden, strange suspicion—a suspicion so vivid, that it stood to him for a conviction; a conviction so startling, that it came to him like a revelation.

Helen Rivière!

The name almost escaped his lips, with the shock of discovery. He saw the whole plot now—saw it as plainly as if his cousin's secret soul had been laid bare before him. His course was taken on the instant. With conviction came decision; with quick sight, prompt action.

"I have changed my mind," he said. "I will pursue the search. I am willing to employ any means, short of bringing my cousin before a court of justice. Tell me what is best to be done, and I will do it."

His resolute tone took them by surprise.

"Come," said Greatorex, "this is common sense."

But Saxon, who had been all irresolution up to this moment, was now all impatience.

"For Heaven's sake," he exclaimed, "let us lose no more time in talking! Moments are precious. What is to be done?"

"Well, sir, in the first place," replied Mr. Keckwitch, "you must give private employment to three or four sharp fellows. My friend, Mr. Kidd, will know where to find 'em for you."

"Good. Go on."

"One must search in and about London; one must go upon this foreign track, just for safety; and one must run down to Liverpool, with in-