

SHADOWED ON THE SPA

(Continued from page 11)

a large canvas. "That is grand—magnificent. Only one Englishman of my acquaintance could equal that work."

"You are fortunate in knowing one, Miss Mayburn," returned Mr. Stuart Witless.

"Am I?" laughed the lady. "Then surely you are fortunate in your relations. For the artist I mean is a nephew of yours, young Hugh Marriot!"

Something like a frown gathered on the lawyer's face, and Miss Mayburn bit her lip.

"I have spoken too soon!" she whispered to herself. "Too soon! I must have patience—patience."

With admirable tact and skill she changed the subject and was still doing all the talking when, descending the steps of the Grand Hall, Mr. Stuart Witless pulled up with a perceptible start.

For the fraction of a second he had caught the eye of a tall, military-looking man who passed slowly along the promenade below.

"Excuse me one moment, Miss Mayburn!" he said, hurriedly.

Scarce waiting for the reply, he sped down the few remaining steps, passed out on to the promenade and swung round to the left.

"You, Ferrier!" he gasped, as the tall man drew him under the balcony. "How does the busiest detective in London find time to visit Scarborough?"

"Business brings him, sir," was the reply. "And we had better get to that business at once. The lady you have just left, sir! Do you know her?"

"Of course! Of course! Her name is Miss Mayburn."

"Indeed!" returned the detective, a grim smile on his features. "Have you known her long, sir?"

With something in the nature of a shock Mr. Stuart Witless remembered that he had not. He was describing just and when he had made the lady's acquaintance when Ferrier produced a photograph.

"Look at that, sir," he said.

"Miss Mayburn!" gasped Stuart, "Surely though," he added doubtfully, "she would never dress like that. It's—it's more after the style of a third-rate music-hall!"

"As Miss Mayburn she wouldn't dress like that," remarked Ferrier, drily; "but as Vera Dewiskoff she might!"

Vera Dewiskoff! Stuart Witless, K. C. remembered that name, and shivered at the remembrance. She was a lady with a leaning towards anarchy.

He had not yet seen her in the flesh, and was in no particular hurry to do so. She had once requested the favour of an interview, but, not being bomb-proof, Mr. Stuart Witless had declined to see the lady.

Vera Dewiskoff! Two of her brother were members of the gang which had graced the dock a week or two before. They had now gone into retirement for a matter of ten years, thanks in no small measure to Stuart Witless's masterly handling of the case against them.

She disappeared from her customary haunts on the day you came to Scarborough, sir, went on the detective. "Knowing her vengeful spirit, and suspecting the truth, I decided to look you up and warn you. And here I find you on the Spa with the most dangerous woman in the world at your elbow!"

Poor Stuart Witless! His nerves had not improved so very much after all. He was distinctly alarmed, and looked it. True, his hair didn't stand on end—the feeble few remaining could scarcely be expected to rise to the occasion—but he had that look in his eyes which had been one of the reasons why his doctor had advised complete rest and quiet at Scarborough.

IV.

Now—this has been said before, and will be said again—people will talk!

Strange tales began to filter through to High Nottsford, which was not so very far from Scarborough, after all. Hugh Marriot, the young artist, heard them one by one, and laughed quietly to himself.

There came a day when he heard a tale—and he didn't laugh! It was told not by an old woman but by a school-chum, a man he could trust, who had just returned from Scarborough.

"What!" almost roared Hugh Marriot.

"Fact, I assure you!" went on his informant, calmly. "I don't want to cause any trouble, but we've been chums so long that I'm forced to speak. The bounder is old, of course, but he has name, fame, and any amount of money behind him. Hang it all, man! They are here, there and everywhere together. It certainly wants looking into!"

And it certainly was in a fair way to being looked into! Hugh Marriot, in a mood which caused some of his fellow travellers to regard him as a semi-lunatic, was in the next train for Scarborough.

All unconscious of the trouble in store, Mr. Stuart Witless was slowly recovering his spirits. For a couple of days after his heartless desertion of Miss Mayburn on the steps of the Grand Hall he did not go far from Brigg View.

A fellow-guest at that establishment had unfortunately sprained his ankle. He was glad of the little lawyer's company, and the two old gentlemen became quite friendly.

Rather late one afternoon Mr. Stuart Witless screwed up his courage and paid another visit to the Spa. Almost immediately he encountered the gardener, with whom he had already made friends. In fulfilment of a promise already given the gardener offered to show the gentleman "something special" he had under glass at the little white house on the Undercliff which stretches away in wild grandeur to the south of the Spa grounds.

Taking a key from his pocket the gardener unlocked a door and led the way through an arch under the cliff tramway, and so on to the Undercliff.

Ascending the narrow, winding track used only by the gardeners, Mr. Witless's guide remembered that he had left his "baccy" in the tool-house. Leaving the little lawyer there, hidden among the trees, he hurried off to fetch it.

Barely had he done so when Mr. Stuart Witless heard a slight sound behind him. Wheeling round he stared straight into the laughing eyes of his fair shadower, Miss Mayburn!

To do the lady justice, it must be said that this really was an accidental meeting. She had long wished to explore the Undercliff, which looked so tempting from the Spa grounds, and, finding the door open, she had passed through to the forbidden territory.

She did not know that Mr. Stuart Witless was just in front—she did not know that someone else was close behind! Her movements had been watched. The fair shadower was shadowed.

"Dear me!" she laughed merrily now we meet again! Isn't it delightful? And we are trespassing, I believe!"

Miss Mayburn was scarcely prepared for the reply. Backing hastily away he shielded his face with his hands.

"Go away, woman!" he blurted out. "Go away! I'll—I'll shout for assistance! I know you, Vera Dewiskoff!"

She could only stare at him in wild-eyed amazement. Was he mad? Suddenly she remembered a remark made on the promenade, and one never intended for her ears. Someone had referred to her companion as being "half-witted," or "witless" or something of the kind! Could it be true? And she was alone with him here—here in this wild, unfrequented spot!

They were not alone long, as it happened. Someone crashed through the undergrowth and towered above them, his expression black and forbidding as a thundercloud.

It was Hugh Marriot!

Mary Mayburn's surprise was too great for words. As for Mr. Stuart Witless, he quickly arrived at a conclusion, false but not unnatural.

"Another of 'em!" he gasped.

Vera Dewiskoff's accomplice. The executioner! The deed would be done here, and now—here in the wilderness! Why couldn't he scream? Why didn't the gardener return?

Hugh Marriot's first words, abusive as they were, were a positive relief to Mr. Stuart Witless.

"You old rascal!" he roared. "How dare you, sir? How dare you deceive this lady? How dare you pass as my uncle?"

"Eh!" gasped Stuart Witless, K. C. "I—I don't know you, sir! I never was an uncle. I never had a nephew!—I never claimed to be either!"

Hugh glanced at Mary Mayburn, who was growing red and white by turns.

"I—I—I don't understand!" she faltered. "You are staying at Brigg View! You are Mr. Stewart—" "Plain Stuart on the books—"

"But—but I heard a fellow-guest call you Mr. Stewart, the boots of the establishment said you were Mr. Stewart, and I followed you to that seat on the North Cliff and—and—Oh, Hugh! Hugh! I've been making friends with the wrong man!"

"I hope not, my dear—I hope not!" chuckled Stuart Witless, K.C., his fears fleeing as he began to understand. "It may be that after all you have been making friends with the right man! I see! I see! Will you kindly excuse—ha! ha! ha!—an old rascal if he sits down to laugh?"

And sitting on the stump of a tree Mr. Stuart

Witless did laugh—laughed till the tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Ha! ha! ha! I see! And I thought you were Vera Dewiskoff! I was clown to be scared by a photograph, even in Ferrier's hands. Ha! ha! While you were making friends with me, Miss Mayburn, I was worming my way into the affections of the very gentleman you want—Mr. Peter Stewart. He has sprained his ankle, and I have been his sole companion for hours at a stretch. He told me something of his nephew's love affair, and my sympathies were with the nephew from the first. Ha! ha! I really believe I can straighten out this little tangle."

And he did. Shortly afterwards Mr. Stuart Witless had quite a long chat with Mr. Peter Stewart, who heard the full story of Miss Mayburn's attempt to capture his affections. He laughed of course, but he admitted that the girl "had grit!"

And when he heard that Hugh Marriot—"the rising artist, sir!"—had sold his picture for what seemed an enormous sum (Mr. Stuart Witless did not say that he was the buyer!) Mr. Peter Stewart expressed the opinion that the boy had "brains, sir—brains!"

All his objections to Hugh's "unprofitable daubing" vanished into thin air.

He was present at Hugh's wedding. So was Stuart Witless, K. C. That gentleman, in addition to a handsome wedding gift, presented the bride with a rough sketch of a scene on the North Cliff. A seat, a slumbering old gentleman, the roar of a big gun at Burniston—you can guess the rest. It was entitled. "Our Introduction!"

Indifferently drawn it may be, but Mrs. Marriot, of The Elms, thinks a lot of it.

As for the real Vera Dewiskoff! In all probability she never saw Scarborough.

Within the week news reached the Metropolitan police to the effect that the lady who so strikingly resembled Mary Mayburn had been arrested in Paris and handed over to the Russian agents, who could be depended upon to look after her in the future.

An English View of Mr. Bryan.

By M. A. P.

MR. WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN, who has been nominated by the Democratic party as candidate for the United States Presidency, has already been twice beaten at the polls—in 1896 and in 1900—but he has made up his mind to win, and there are many impartial observers who prophesy success for him next time. Mr. Bryan was born in Illinois in the same year that Abraham Lincoln was elected to the Presidency, and as a young man went to Chicago to study for the law. After duly qualifying, he practised as a lawyer for some time, but becoming drawn into politics, he devoted himself whole-heartedly to the Democratic cause, and by his eloquence and enthusiasm leapt into prominence almost at a bound.

Like Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Bryan is a firm believer in the strenuous life, and besides being successful as a politician, he has managed to attain distinction in many other ways. He is one of the best known journalists in America, and was formerly editor of the *Omaha World*. As a lecturer he is enormously popular, his average earnings in this capacity being nearly £10,000 a year. He has travelled all over the world, and has been received in audience by the Pope and the Czar. The year before last he came to London to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Congress, and during his stay he had an interview with the King at Buckingham Palace, when he discussed with his Majesty the question of international peace.

Mr. Bryan's name is known all over the globe, and his fame was on one occasion the means of placing him in a remarkable position. News of his achievements had penetrated even to far-off Japan, and in the land of the chrysanthemum it has been a custom from time immemorial for boys to claim as their adopted fathers any men of eminence they may happen to admire. One day Mr. Bryan received a letter from Japan, which ran somewhat as follows: "I have heard that you are a great and good man, and have chosen you as my father. I am coming at once to the United States." Naturally, Mr. Bryan regarded this communication as a joke, and after a while, forgot all about it. Some weeks later, however, he was much surprised to receive a visit from a smart little Japanese boy, who introduced himself with the simple words: "I have come." Mr. Bryan was much astonished at the whole affair. Nevertheless, he welcomed the lad into his household, and had him educated and brought up with his own son.