

Miss Eustace. So it would be one of his friends. Ah, I know—it was Trench."

"So it was," answered Willoughby. "It will be a long time, I am afraid, before we dine in Trench's company again."

"Very long," Durrance agreed. "And we shall never dine again with Castleton."

"Castleton wasn't there," Willoughby exclaimed, and quickly enough to betray that however much he might pretend to a bad memory, the little dinner in Feversham's rooms was at all events distinct in his recollections.

"No, but he was expected," Durrance replied. "Wait a bit! Was he expected? No, he was dining somewhere else—I remember, with a War Office man."

That dinner party certainly deserved consideration. Willoughby, Trench, Castleton—with these three men Ethne connected Harry Feversham's disgrace and disappearance. Durrance tried to recollect all the details of the evening; but he had been much occupied himself on that occasion. He remembered leaning against the window above St. James's Park; he remembered hearing the tattoo from the parade ground of Wellington barracks—and a telegram had come.

Durrance made up another picture in his mind. Harry Feversham at the table reading and re-reading his telegram, Trench and Willoughby waiting silently, perhaps expectantly, and himself paying no heed but staring out from the bright room into the quiet and the cool of the park. It was upon that night that Feversham had sent in his papers—yes, for so Feversham had told him, the last time they rode together in the Row. Was the telegram a factor in the mystery, he wondered. But of his wonder he gave no sign.

His recollections of the dinner party he put aside, however. There was a definite piece of information which he must extract from Willoughby before the train reached London and Bristol had been already passed. It was not, indeed, until the train slowed up at

Westbourne Road for the collection of the tickets that Durrance chanced to speak of his last reconnaissance on the Tinkat plateau.

"By the way," he interrupted his story to exclaim. "It was on that reconnaissance that I first heard of the Gordon letters which were hidden in Berber. An Arab of the Kabbalish, Abou Fatma, told me of them. He was escaping to Suakin. I suppose that he went back afterwards and recovered them."

"No," answered Willoughby, "I don't think it was Abou Fatma who recovered them."

"Who, then?"

Captain Willoughby sprang up from his seat and took his traps down from the rack. "Here's Paddington," he said, and as soon as the train stopped he made his escape. Durrance made no effort to detain him, nor did he repeat his question. He had caught again the accent of wariness in Willoughby's voice; there had been something too abrupt in Willoughby's departure; Durrance guessed, and as it happened, guessed the truth.

He drove across London and three hours later stood upon General Feversham's terrace. The General had never been remarkable for tact, and age had brought with it no improvement. He came up the steps from his garden in which he now spent the greater part of the day, and drew on his coat, a little shrunken in body and feature perhaps, and rather heavier in his walk than he had been five years ago, but his back was as straight and the blue inexpressive eyes as bright.

"I am sorry, Durrance," he said. "You have joined the veterans before your time. A sunstroke wasn't it? Sutch told me."

"Sutch?"

"Yes, are you surprised? I can tell you he watched your career with interest. Well, it's over I am afraid. By George, I can't really imagine a worse calamity. It wants pluck to stand up to it. Even then it will pull a fellow down, eh? Yes, you are not the same man, Durrance, who walked