

*A Romance from a Detective's Case-Book.*



BY DICK DONOVAN.

*Author of "The Man from Manchester," "Tracked to Doom," "Caught at Last," "Who Poisoned Hetty Duncan?" "A Detective's Triumphs," "In the Grip of the Law," etc., etc.*

**I**T was a bitter night in December, now years ago, that a young and handsome man called upon me in great distress, to seek my advice and assistance. It was the third day after Christmas, and having dined, and dined well, I had ensconced myself in my favourite easy chair, before a cheerful fire, and was engaged in the perusal of Charles Dickens's "Cricket on the Hearth," when my visitor was unceremoniously ushered into the room. He held his dripping hat in his hand, and the heavy top-coat he wore was white with snow, which was falling heavily outside. He was well proportioned, of blonde complexion, and his face at once attracted me by its frank, open expression. He had clear, honest eyes, and a graceful moustache shaded a well-formed mouth.

"Pardon me for intruding upon you," he said, in a somewhat excited tone, as he placed his wet hat on the table and began to pull off his thick woollen gloves; "but the fact is, I am in a frame of mind bordering upon distraction. Let me introduce myself, however. My name is Harold Welldom Kingsley; Welldom being an old family name. I am the

son of the late Admiral Kingsley, who, as you may possibly be aware, distinguished himself greatly in the service of his Queen and country."

"Yes," I answered. "I knew your father by reputation, and I remember that when he died some years ago his remains were



"MY VISITOR WAS UNCEREMONIOUSLY USHERED INTO THE ROOM."

accorded a public funeral. I am pleased to make the acquaintance of the son of so distinguished a man. Pray remove your coat and be seated, and let me know in what way I can serve you."

"I am in the Admiralty Office," my visitor continued, as he divested himself of his damp coat, and placing it on the back of a chair sat down. Thereupon I pushed the shaded lamp that stood on the table nearer to him, tilting the shade slightly so that the light might fall upon his face, for it is my habit always to study the face of the person with whom I am in conversation. "And I live with my mother and two sisters at Kensington. For three years I have been engaged to a young lady, who is, I may venture to say, the sweetest woman who ever drew the breath of life."

"Ah!" I murmured, with a smile, as I closely watched my visitor, and saw his face light up with enthusiasm as he thus referred to his *fiancée*, "it is the old story: love is blind and sees no faults until too late."

"In my case it is not so," he exclaimed, with a force of emphasis that carried conviction of his perfect sincerity and a belief in his own infallible judgment. "But we will not discuss that point," he continued. "The business that has brought me here is far too serious for time to be wasted in argument. The young lady who is pledged to me as my wife is, at present, under arrest on the serious charge of having stolen some very valuable jewellery from a well-known firm of jewellers."

"That is a grave charge, indeed," I remarked, with growing interest in my visitor; "but presumably there must have been good *prima facie* evidence to justify her arrest."

"Yes," Mr. Kingsley exclaimed, with an agonized expression, "that is the most terrible part of the whole affair. I am afraid that legally the evidence will go against her; and yet morally I will stake my very soul on her innocence."

"You speak somewhat paradoxically, Mr. Kingsley," I said, with a certain amount of professional sternness, for it seemed to me he was straining to twist facts to suit his own views.

"To you it will seem so," he answered; "but if you have the patience to listen to me I will tell you the whole story, and I think you will say I am right."

I intimated that I was quite prepared to listen to anything he had to say, and leaning back in my chair with the tips of my fingers together and my eyes half closed—an attitude

I always unconsciously assume when engaged in trying to dissect some human puzzle—I waited for him to continue.

"The lady's name is Beryl Artois," he went on. "She was born in France. Her mother was an English lady highly connected; and her father was a Frenchman of independent means. They lived surrounded with every luxury in a small château, on the banks of the Seine, not far from St. Germain. Unhappily, Monsieur Artois was fatally fond of a life of ease and pleasure, and dying suddenly after a night of revel in Paris, at a bal masque, during the *mi-carême*, it was found that he had dissipated his fortune, and left his widow and child totally unprovided for. Even his château was mortgaged up to the hilt, and on his furniture was a bill of sale. Not wishing to be dependent on his relations, Madame Artois and her daughter came to London. Beryl at that time was only six years of age. She was a delicate girl, and needed all her mother's care and attention. For a few years Madame earned her living as a teacher of French, music and drawing, and every spare moment she had she devoted to the education and training of her daughter. Unhappily, before Beryl was twelve years of age her doting mother died, and a bachelor uncle, her mother's only brother, took Beryl under his care, and as he was well off he engaged a highly-qualified governess for her. I first became acquainted with her when she was eighteen years of age. That is now a little over six years ago; and though I have proved the soundness of the old adage which says that the course of true love never did run smooth, I have every reason to congratulate myself, for, as I have before hinted, Beryl is goodness itself."

"In what way has your wooing been ruffled?" I asked.

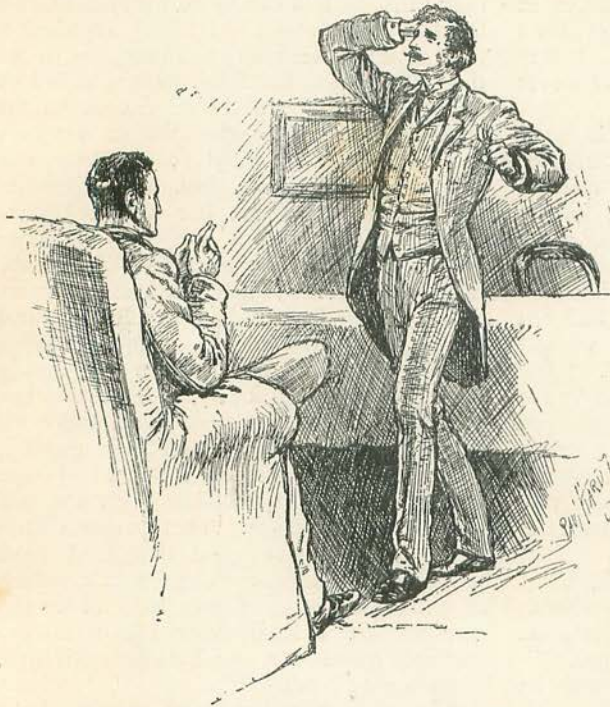
"Well, Mr. Tamworth, her uncle, refused for some time to countenance our engagement, and threw every obstacle in the way; and as Beryl was much under his influence, she struggled between what she considered her duty to her uncle and foster father, and love for me. The love has triumphed, and Mr. Tamworth has consented to our union on condition that we wait three years, and I obtain the promotion I hope to obtain in the Government service in that time."

"This is a very pretty, even a romantic, story," I remarked; "but it is as old as the hills, and yet, like all love stories, ever new. But now for the sequel. How comes it that this well-nurtured and well-cared-for young

lady has fallen under the suspicion of being a thief?"

"Ah! that is where the mystery comes in," exclaimed Mr. Kingsley in great distress. "I ask you now, is it likely that Beryl, who has everything she requires—for her uncle is wealthy—and who would shudder at anything that by any possible means could be construed as wrong-doing, would descend to purloin jewellery from a jeweller's shop?"

I could not help smiling at what seemed to be the sweet simplicity of this love-stricken young man, nor could I refrain from saying:—



"FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE DON'T DRIVE ME MAD!"

"In answer to your question, Mr. Kingsley, permit me to say that the annals of crime contain many such cases. Unhappily, neither education nor moral training is sufficient safeguard against transgression, where the tendency to wrong-doing exists. In the case in point it is very possible that the lady's vanity and love of display have tempted her to her fall."

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Donovan, don't drive me mad," cried my visitor, with an outburst of passionate distress that begot my fullest sympathy. "If all the angels in Heaven were to come down and proclaim Beryl's guilt, I would still believe her innocent."

"May I venture to remark," I answered, "that in all probability this sentiment does more credit to your heart than your head?"

"I tell you, sir," exclaimed Kingsley, almost fiercely, "that Beryl Artois is as innocent as you are!"

"Well, now, Mr. Kingsley," I observed, "as we have had the sentimental and poetical side of the affair, let us go into the more vulgar and prosaic part of the business. Therefore please give me a plain, straightforward answer to the questions I shall put to you. First, where does Mr. Tamworth reside?"

"He resides at Linden House, Thames Ditton."

"You say he is well off?"

"Yes. He keeps numerous servants, rides to hounds, drives his carriage, and is very highly respected."

"Has he always been kind to his niece?"

"In every possible way, I believe."

"And has supplied her with all she has wanted?"

"Yes. I do not think any reasonable request of hers has ever been refused."

"And now, as regards the charge she has to meet. Give me full particulars of that."

"It appears that the day before yesterday she came up to town in the brougham, and drove to Whitney, Blake, and Montague, the well-known jewellers of Regent Street. There she stated that she wished to purchase a diamond bracelet for a New Year's gift, and some costly things were shown to her. But after more than an hour

spent in the shop she could not make up her mind, for though she saw what she wanted, the price was higher than she cared to go to; and, before committing herself to the purchase of the article, she was anxious to consult her uncle, since she is necessarily dependent upon him for her pocket-money. Consequently, she told the assistant in the shop that she would call again the next day and decide. She thereupon took her departure, and entered the brougham, but had not proceeded very far before the assistant tore down the street, accompanied by a policeman, overtook the brougham, which had been brought to a standstill owing to the congested traffic, and accused Miss Artois of having purloined a

diamond pendant worth nearly a thousand pounds. Of course, she most indignantly denied it. But the shopman insisted on giving her in charge."

"And was the pendant found either in the brougham or on her person?"

"Oh, dear, no. Miss Artois begged that the policeman and the shopman would get into the brougham, and that they should drive straight to Scotland Yard. This was done; and though the young lady and the brougham were alike searched, the pendant was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, the shopman persisted in his accusation, and so there was no alternative but to place Miss Artois under arrest."

"This is a very remarkable story," I answered, "and may prove a very serious business indeed for the firm of jewellers if they cannot justify their charge."

"They will never be able to do that," said

night, but immediately after breakfast the following morning I jumped into a hansom and drove to Whitney, Blake, and Montague's place. As everyone knows, they are a firm of world-wide renown, and I could not imagine them committing such a grave error as to accuse a lady of theft, unless they had very strong reason for believing they were right. I requested an interview with Mr. Whitney, and his version of the affair was substantially the same as that told to me by Mr. Kingsley.

"Of course," added Mr. Whitney, "we rely entirely upon the statement of our manager, Mr. John Coleman, who attended to the lady. Mr. Coleman, I may inform you, has been with the firm since he was seventeen years of age, and he is now over fifty. And as he is a partner in the firm, our faith in him is justified. However, you shall see Coleman and judge for yourself."



"HE GAVE ME HIS ACCOUNT OF THE AFFAIR.

Kingsley, warmly, "and you may depend upon it, they will have to pay dearly for their error. They maintain, however, that they have certainly lost the jewel; that no one else could possibly have taken it except Miss Artois; and that she must have managed to secrete it in some way. The whole charge, however, is preposterous, and I wish you to thoroughly prove the young lady's innocence in order that an action may be commenced against Whitney, Blake, and Montague."

Promising my visitor that I would do my utmost in his interests, he took his departure, and then, lighting a cigar, I fell to pondering on this—as I had to admit to myself—very remarkable case, assuming that all the facts were as stated by Mr. Kingsley.

It was too late to take any steps that

Mr. Whitney sounded his bell and requested that Mr. Coleman would come to the room. In a few minutes Coleman entered. He at once struck me as being a very shrewd, keen-eyed man of business. And without any unnecessary verbiage he gave me his account of the affair; according to which he devoted special attention to the young lady, as he thought she was going to be a good customer. There were other customers in the shop at the time, but he conducted her to one end of the counter where there was no one else. She caused him a good deal of trouble, and looked at a large number of things, but did not seem to know her own mind; and at last went away without purchasing anything.

For some few moments just before she

left, his attention was drawn off by one of the assistants coming to him to ask a question, and during that time he had little doubt she availed herself of the opportunity to abstract the pendant from the jewel tray upon which he had displayed the things for her inspection.

On her deciding not to purchase then, he placed the tray temporarily in the glass case on the counter, locked the case, putting the key in his pocket, and then conducted Miss Artois to her brougham. He was certainly not absent more than five minutes. By that time there were very few people in the shop, and he proceeded immediately to the case, took out the tray and began to sort the jewels preparatory to restoring them to their respective positions amongst the stock. It was then he missed the pendant which Miss Artois had examined with eager interest, and had asked him many questions about the quality of the stones, their intrinsic value, and their setting. The pendant had originally been made to the order of a lady of title from specially selected stones; but she died before the order was completed, and her executors declined to take the pendant, and, therefore, in order to dispose of it quickly, the firm had offered it for sale at the low price of one thousand pounds.

As soon as he discovered the loss Mr. Coleman ran out of the shop and down the street, and passing a policeman on the way, he demanded his services. As it was the busiest part of the day there was a great deal of traffic, and Miss Artois' brougham had been unable to proceed very far. So convinced was he in his own mind that she was guilty, that though he was fully alive to the risks he ran if he made a mistake, he did not hesitate to give her into custody, and he was quite prepared to stand or fall by his act.

Although I subjected Mr. Coleman to a very close questioning, I could not shake his evidence in any way. I pointed out to him that there was one serious fact in connection with the case, and that was, he had failed to find the pendant either in the brougham or on Miss Artois' person; and that, however morally certain he might be that the young lady was guilty, no magistrate would convict her on such evidence.

"I am aware of that," answered Mr. Coleman, "but I have employed Detective Spieglemann, of Scotland Yard, to make some inquiries about the lady, and he informs me that on various occasions when she has visited the shops of well-known tradesmen, goods have afterwards been missed. The victims

have almost invariably been jewellers, and the property purloined has generally been of great value."

"If that is correct there is *prima facie* evidence," I answered; "but still, suspicion is not proof, and unless you have something better to offer, I have no hesitation in saying you will fail to secure a conviction."

Mr. Coleman appeared, for the first time, to be a little disconcerted, and I fancied that I detected signs in his face that he felt he had been somewhat hasty. Nevertheless, he reasserted his belief that the young lady was guilty, though he was utterly unable to suggest what had become of the stolen pendant. Female searchers had subjected Miss Artois to the most rigorous examination, and every nook and cranny of the brougham had been searched.

"May I ask, Mr. Coleman, if Spieglemann was present when the search was made?" I inquired pointedly.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Coleman. "He happened to be in the Yard at the time, and conducted the search."

"Indeed. And did he think of searching the coachman who drove the brougham?"

As I asked this question, a pallor of alarm spread itself over Coleman's face, and he and Mr. Whitney looked at each other, as each saw, for the first time, that a grave oversight had been committed.

Detective Spieglemann was a German, who had long been attached to the force of Scotland Yard. But though he bore the reputation of being almost preternaturally acute, I had never been able to regard him in any other light than as a very ordinary person, whose German stolidity prevented him from getting out of well-worn grooves.

Of course this expression of opinion will be denounced as mere professional jealousy, but I shall be able to justify my view by hard and indisputable facts.

I have always maintained that the unravelling of anything like a mystery is capable of being elevated to the position of a fine art. Spieglemann, on the other hand, asserted that the whole process was merely a mechanical one, and that only a mechanical mind could succeed. On these points we totally differed, and as I had frequently had the good fortune to be successful where my rival had failed, I was entitled to claim that my process was the correct one. Mr. Coleman's answer was another item of evidence in my favour. He confessed with unmistakable concern that the coachman had not been searched, and that nobody had

suggested that he should be. In fact, no suspicion had fallen upon him. I really could not resist something like a smile as I remarked:—

“That was really a most extraordinary oversight, and may prove very serious for you. For, assuming that you are right, and that Spieglemann is right in his statement that the lady lies under suspicion of having been concerned in other cases of a similar kind, is it not highly probable that the coachman has been in collusion with her, and she passed the stolen property to him? If this is not so, how did she get rid of the pendant? Nothing is truer than that in criminal cases it is the seemingly improbable that is most probable.

“Certainly, on the face of it nothing could seem more improbable than that a young lady, well connected and well off, afflicted with kleptomania, should make a confidant of her coachman. Yet it is the most probable thing imaginable, but both you and Spieglemann have overlooked it.”

Mr. Coleman was perfectly crestfallen, and freely admitted that a very grave oversight had been committed. Thanking him and Mr. Whitney I withdrew, and it was perfectly clear to me that I left the two gentlemen in a very different frame of mind to what they had been in when I first saw them.

In passing all the facts, as I now knew them, under review, I could not deny that circumstances looked dark against Miss Artois; and putting aside the possibility that somebody else might have stolen the pendant, I admitted the strong probability that she was in reality the thief. That being so, the idea struck me—and it evidently had not struck anyone else, not even the renowned Spieglemann—that she was a confederate, more likely than not a victim, of the coachman. On this supposition I determined to act, and my next step was to seek an interview with

Miss Artois, in order that I might form some opinion of her from personal knowledge. I obtained this interview through the solicitors who had been engaged on her behalf by her devoted lover, Harold Kingsley. Although prepared to find her good looking, I certainly was not prepared for the type of beauty she represented.

I don't think I ever looked upon a more perfect, a sweeter, and I will go so far as to say a more angelic face than she possessed, while her form and mould were such that an artist would have gone into raptures about her. I was informed that she had undergone a preliminary examination before the police magistrate, who had remanded her without bail, although bail had been offered to an unlimited amount by her uncle; but the magistrate had stated that he would consider the question of bail the next time she came before him.

As I entered the little cell she occupied at the police station, and introduced myself, giving her to understand at the same time that I was there by request of Mr. Kingsley, she rose from the table at which she had been sitting engaged in the perusal of a book, which I subsequently discovered to be a well-thumbed, dilapidated, and somewhat dirty copy of Moore's *Lallah Rookh*; and bowing with exquisite grace she said in a low, musical, and touchingly pathetic voice:—

“It is good of you to come, and more than kind of Mr. Kingsley to send you; but I am sorry that you have come, and I wish that you would leave me without another word.”

Her soft, gazelle-like eyes, although apparently bent upon me, had a far-away look in them; and she spoke as a person in a trance might speak.

Altogether there was something about her that at once aroused my curiosity and interest.

“That is a somewhat strange wish, Miss Artois,” I answered. “I am here in your



· SHE ROSE FROM THE TABLE. ·

interest; and surely you cannot be indifferent to the grave charge that is hanging over you."

"I am not indifferent," she murmured, with a deep sigh.

"Then let me urge you to confide in your solicitors," I said, "and withhold nothing from them that may enable them to prepare your defence."

"I shall confide in no one," she replied in the same indifferent, same sweetly pathetic tone.

"But think of the consequences," I urged.

"I have thought of everything."

"Remember also, Miss Artois, your silence and refusal to give information will be tantamount to a tacit confession of guilt."

For a moment her dreamy eyes seemed to lose their dreaminess and to be expressive of an infinite pain, as she answered with quite a fiery energy—

"I am *not* guilty!" She laid peculiar emphasis on the word "not."

"Then," said I, quickly, "do all you possibly can to prove your guiltlessness"—and in order that there should be no ambiguity in my meaning, I added—"if you are the victim of anyone, for Heaven's sake let it be known. For the sake of your lover conceal not the truth."

"For the sake of my lover and the love I bear him I will die," she murmured, with the dreaminess which seemed peculiar to her.

"Then withhold nothing from your solicitors," I repeated.

"Go!" she said, peremptorily, as she sank into her seat again, and resumed her reading.

"Have you no message to send to Mr. Kingsley?" I asked.

"Go!" she repeated, without looking at me.

"Let me take some comforting word from you to Mr. Kingsley," I entreated.

She made no reply, but apparently was deeply absorbed in the book. Feeling that it would be useless to remain any longer, I withdrew, and as I did so she did not even look up from the book, nor did she make any response when I bade her adieu.

I had promised to call upon Mr. Kingsley and acquaint him with the result of my interview with Miss Artois; and I carried out this promise with a sense of distress that I could hardly describe, because I was quite unable to give him the assurance he so much wanted that his *fiancée* was guiltless. Guiltless she was, in one sense, I was sure; but I was conscious of the fact that I was confronted with as complicated a human

problem as I had ever been called upon to find a solution of.

I put the best face I could on matters while talking to young Kingsley; and on leaving him I felt convinced that my first surmise with reference to the coachman being a party to the robbery was a correct one. I had not been slow to determine that Miss Artois' temperament was one of those deeply sympathetic and poetic ones which are peculiarly subject to the influence of stronger wills.

In short, I came to the conclusion that the coachman was the really guilty person, and Miss Artois was his victim. He—in my opinion—had exercised some strange mesmeric influence over her, and she had been entirely under his sway. I was confirmed in this view when I learnt that the great Spieglemann had gathered up a mass of circumstantial evidence which tended to prove that Miss Artois had been in the habit for a long time of visiting some of the leading tradesmen in all quarters of London, and that these tradesmen had been robbed of property which in the aggregate represented many thousands of pounds.

It was altogether a peculiar case, as it presented two startling phases of human nature; and if Miss Artois had sinned, she had sinned not because her inclinations tended that way, but because her non-resisting, sympathetic nature had been made an instrument for the profit and gain of a debased and wicked man who did not scruple to use this beautiful girl as a means to an end.

My next step was to hurry off to the Lindens at Thames Ditton, in order that I might get full particulars from Mr. Tamworth of his coachman, before having the man arrested. The Lindens was a large house, standing in its own grounds, and everything about the place was suggestive of wealth and comfort. I was ushered into an elegantly furnished drawing-room, and a few minutes later the door opened, and a little, podgy, bald-headed man, wearing gold eye-glasses, and dressed in a large patterned dressing gown and Turkish slippers, entered, and eyed me with a pair of strangely keen and hawk-like eyes. It was Mr. Tamworth, and in many respects he was a striking and remarkable man, for his face was strongly marked, his eyes of unusual, almost unnatural brilliancy, the mouth firm, the square jaw indicative of an iron will. He was perfectly clean shaved, so that every feature, every line and angle were thrown into stronger prominence.

I had not sent my name up to him, but simply an urgent message that a gentleman wished to see him on very pressing and important business.

"Whom have I the pleasure to address?" he inquired as he bowed stiffly.

"My name is Dick Donovan," I answered. "I am ——"

He interrupted me by exclaiming:—

"Oh, yes, I have heard of you. You are a detective." I bowed. "Presumably," he continued, "you have come here in connection with the case of my dear niece?" He seemed to be overcome by emotion, and turning towards the window he applied a large bandana handkerchief to his eyes.

"I am not indifferent to the fact," I answered, "that the subject is necessarily a delicate and painful one. But from an interview I had with your niece I am forced to the conclusion that she is only guilty in degree."

"How do you mean?" he asked, turning quickly towards me, with an expression of mental suffering on his face.

"I mean that she is a victim to the machinations of a villain."

"A victim," he echoed, hoarsely. "A victim to whom?"

"To your coachman."

He almost reeled at this announcement, and passed his hand over his bald head in a confused, distressed way; and then, with something like a wail he exclaimed:—

"My God, this is an awful revelation."

He rushed towards the bell and was about to ring it when I stopped him by saying:—

"What are you going to do?"

"Send for Tupper, the coachman."

"Wait a bit," I said. "I should like to have some particulars of Tupper. What is his Christian name?"

"John."

"Has he been with you long?"

"Just twelve months, I think."

"Have you ever had occasion to suspect his honesty?"

"Never for a single instant."

"Is he married?"

"I cannot tell you. I absolutely know nothing about his family affairs."

"Well now, I have a suggestion to make, Mr. Tamworth. I should like you to send for Tupper, and question him closely about what happened on the day that the pendant

was stolen. And particularly I would like you to put this question to him, after you have skilfully led up to it: 'Is it possible, Tupper, that my unhappy and misguided niece handed you the pendant, and you know what has become of it?'"

"I will do so," answered Mr. Tamworth, as he went towards the bell.

"Stop a minute, sir," I said. "There is one other important point. It is desirable that Tupper should not see me. Can you conceal me behind that screen in the corner, and in such a position that I can see without being seen? And you must not forget to place Tupper in such a way that I can get a full view of his face."

"I don't think there will be any difficulty in that," Mr. Tamworth answered, and he requested me to follow him behind the screen. I did so, and taking out his penknife he bored a hole in one leaf of the screen, so that anyone looking through the hole commanded a full view of the room.

"There," he said, "I think that will answer your

purpose. And now we will have the old villain here."

He rang the bell, and a very respectable-looking man-servant appeared.

"Robert," said Mr. Tamworth, peremptorily, "send the coachman here."

"Tupper's away, sir."

"Away!"

"Yes. He went out last night and didn't come back."



"MR. TAMWORTH."



"Where has he gone to?" roared Mr. Tamworth, in his excitement.

"I haven't the remotest idea, sir," answered Robert.

"The double-dyed villain," hissed Mr. Tamworth between his clenched teeth. "The double-dyed villain," he repeated. "But by Heaven he shall be brought back, even if it takes all my fortune to effect his capture. That will do, Robert. You may go."

As the man took his departure and closed the door, I stepped from behind the screen. Mr. Tamworth seemed terribly distressed.

"This is an awful bit of business," he exclaimed; "you see the arch villain has anticipated this discovery and bolted. What is to be done now?"

"We must arrest him in his flight," was my answer. "And to facilitate that you must furnish me with a full description of him."

"Unless the rascal has removed it," said Mr. Tamworth, "his likeness hangs over the mantelpiece, in his room above the stable. I will go and get it. You will excuse me."

He hurried from the room, and was absent nearly a quarter of an hour. Then he returned bearing a framed photograph in his hand. It was the likeness of a short, thick-set man in coachman's garb. He had grey whiskers and moustache, and grey hair; and rather a scowling expression of face. I asked Mr. Tamworth if it was a good likeness of John Tupper, and he assured me it was a most excellent likeness.

Promising Mr. Tamworth to do all I could to effect Tupper's arrest, I left Linden House, taking the photograph with me. As soon as I got back to London I hailed a hansom and drove to Whitney, Blake, and Montague's.

"My surmise about the coachman is correct," I said, as I showed them the likeness, and told them that the man had fled. They acknowledged that the likeness was a very striking one, and as I intended to have it reproduced and sent broadcast all over the country, I was hopeful that I should be able to speedily bring about Tupper's arrest.

I lost no time in putting the photo. in hand for reproduction, and in the meantime Miss Artois was again brought up before the magistrate, and in view of the facts the

solicitors were able to lay before him with reference to Tupper's flight, he no longer hesitated to admit the young lady to bail, her uncle being accepted for two thousand pounds. Two days after her release, young Kingsley called upon me again. He was terribly agitated, and throwing himself into a chair he rocked himself to and fro, and groaned with the anguish that tortured him. When he had somewhat calmed down, he exclaimed in a voice that was broken up with the passion of his grief:—



"JOHN TUPPER."

"Mr. Donovan, help me with your advice, or I think I shall go mad. And above all, do not betray the confidence I am going to repose in you." I assured him that he might trust me, and he proceeded.

"Miss Artois came to me yesterday, and acknowledged that she was an unconscious victim in this terrible business, and said that I must give her up. In spite of my entreaties, my prayers, my tears, she most resolutely declined to tell me whose victim she was, and with a great shudder she said her lips were sealed with a seal she dare not break. I urged her to fly with me. I told

her we would be married at once, and seek some corner of the earth where she would be safe, and her answer was that nowhere in the world would she be safe except in the grave."

"You did wrong in urging her to fly," I answered.

"I care not. Wrong, or no wrong, I will take her," he cried, passionately. "I tell you, Mr. Donovan, that there is some hideous mystery about this affair, and I will move heaven and earth to save Miss Artois from the machination that is destroying her body and soul."

"Your devotion, your chivalry do you infinite credit," I replied. "Miss Artois shall be saved if it is possible to save her, but, believe me, she cannot be saved by flight. She must remain here subject to the law. To defy the law will be a fatal mistake."

Although he did not seem to be quite convinced of the soundness of my advice, he promised to be entirely guided by me, and in a little while he took his departure, and then I sat down to reflect and ponder, and endeavour to unravel the threads of this tangled skein. One thing I resolved on was to go down to Thames Ditton early on the morrow, and have an interview with Miss Artois in the presence of her uncle. In a little while my servant entered the room and handed me a postal packet, which, on opening, I found was from the lithographers who were reproducing the photograph. It contained the original and a note to say that the reproductions would be ready for distribution the first thing in the morning.

Placing the photo. of Tupper on the table, I lit my pipe, and once more throwing myself in my favourite easy chair, I tried by the aid of smoke to solve the mystery surrounding Miss Artois. Presently I found myself almost unconsciously gazing on the photo. that lay on the table, in the full rays of the shaded lamp. Suddenly that face presented itself to me as one I had seen before; and I beat my brains, so to speak, to try and think where and when. "Whose face is it? Where have I seen it?" This was the question that, mentally, I repeated over and over again.

After much cogitation, I threw away the stump of my cigar, went to my desk, and taking out a powerful magnifying glass, I returned to the table, and examined the likeness of John Tupper by means of the glass, until suddenly, like an inspiration, it flashed upon me where and when I had seen

the face. It is not often I get excited, but I think I did on that occasion, for I felt certain that I had got hold of a clue to the mystery. I did not sleep much that night, and was up betimes in the morning, and hastened to call upon Mr. Kingsley, to assure him that I believed I was in a fair way to solve the mystery, and I hoped all would be well with Miss Artois.

A week later, on as dark and stormy a night in January as had been known during that winter, I was in an upper room in an old, untenanted house in the Borough. The owner of the house was Mr. Tamworth, of Thames Ditton. Stretched at full length on the dusty floor, with my eye glued to a hole that enabled me to command a view of the room beneath, I was witness of one of the most remarkable and dramatic scenes I had ever looked upon. Thirteen men were in the room, seated at a long deal table. Six sat on one side, six on the other. The thirteenth sat at the head, and was evidently the president. Every man's face was concealed by a hood that entirely covered up the head, two holes being pierced for the eyes. Before the president was a china bowl, and laid across the bowl was a naked dagger.

A small lamp was suspended from the ceiling and threw a feeble light over the scene. In a few minutes one of the men arose and placed a bull's-eye lantern on a shelf in a corner of the room, and in such a position that its rays fell full upon the doorway. That done the president rapped on the table with a wooden mallet. Then the door opened and three men appeared. Two were hooded like the rest. The third was not hooded, and was placed at the end of the table opposite the president, and so that the light of the bull's-eye fell full upon his face. It was a cruel, cunning, almost fierce face. The man was without coat or waistcoat, and his shirt was opened and turned down, exposing his breast, while round his neck was a rope with the free end hanging behind. In a few minutes the president rose, and addressing the bareheaded man, said:—

"Your name is Henry Beechworth?"

"It is."

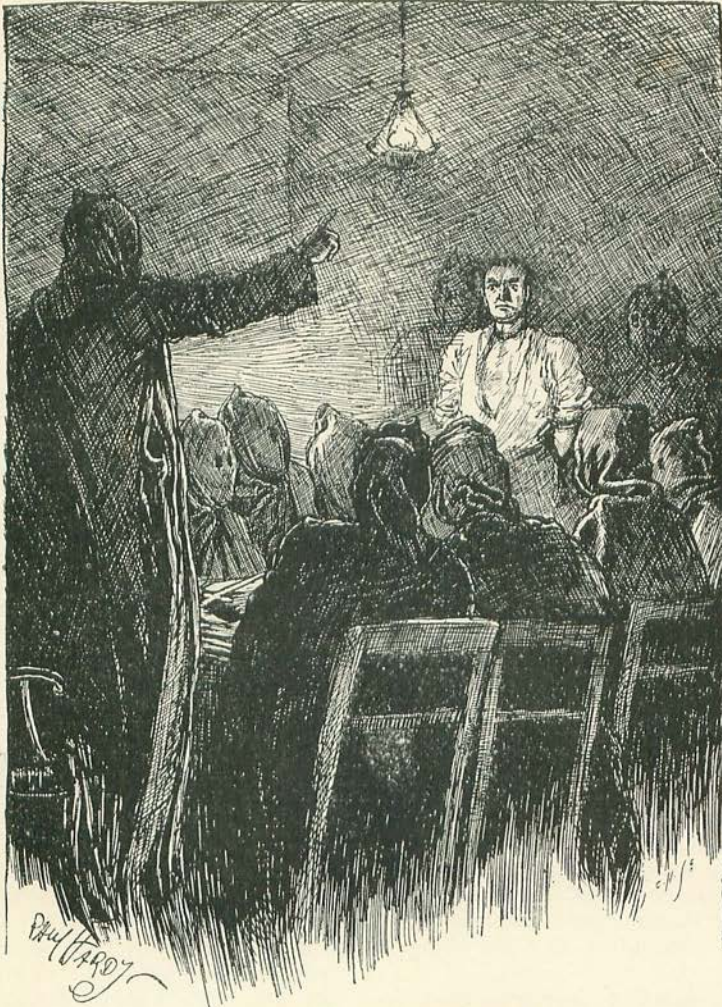
"Are you willing, Henry Beechworth, to join the Black Brotherhood?"

"I am."

"And you are willing to take the oath that will bind you to us?"

"I am."

"Then listen, and I will read the oath to you." Here the president unrolled a little



"YOUR NAME IS HENRY BEECHWORTH?"

scroll of paper he had held in his hand, and read out as follows:—

"I, Henry Beechworth, hereby of my own free will join the Black Brotherhood, and I vow solemnly by heaven and earth to be true to them, and never utter a single word or give a sign that would be likely to betray any individual of the Brotherhood, or the Brotherhood collectively. And that at any time, should I be arrested, I will give no information against the Brothers, even though my life is at stake. Everything I obtain I will add to the common treasury, and I will at all times be subject to the ruling of the president, whoever he may be. These things I swear to do; and should at any time I break my oath, I hope that I shall go blind. I am aware that the rope I now have round my

neck is a symbol that in the event of my betraying the Brotherhood their vengeance will pursue me to the ends of the earth, and that my life will be forfeited."

"You have heard what I have read?" asked the president.

"I have," answered Beechworth.

"And you will subscribe your name to it?"

"I will."

Here the president made a sign, and one of the two hooded men at the head of the table approached, and receiving the bowl and the dagger, he returned to the novitiate, who, instructed by the president, bent forward. Then the man took up the dagger and with its sharp point made a wound in the fleshy part of the novitiate's breast. Beechworth then bent right over the bowl, so that the

blood dropped into it. And when a little had thus been caught, a new quill pen was dipped into it, and handed to Beechworth, who thereupon wrote his name with his own blood on the scroll. This senseless ceremony ended, the wound in the man's breast was sponged, a piece of plaster placed upon it, and he was told that he was now one of the Black Brotherhood, and that his interests were bound up with theirs, and that he must stand or fall with them.

"It only remains now for me to give you the sign," the president added, "by which you may always know a Brother. It is changed every month. For the current month it is the index finger of the left hand placed in the palm of the right hand, thus." Here he gave a practical illustration of how it was to be done. "Then we have a pass-word, also changed every month. The one in use at present is 'Creasus.' We meet here again in three weeks' time, when you will be expected to contribute to the common fund value or money to the extent of a hundred pounds."

The business being ended, all the members of this precious Brotherhood removed their hoods, and the hand of the new member was shaken by the others. Amongst them I recognised the fellow called Robert, who had acted the part of the servant at Linden House when I went there. In a little while the lights were extinguished and the Brotherhood commenced to leave the house, and as they reached the street, to their utter amazement and consternation they were arrested, for the house was surrounded by a cordon of policemen.

It will, of course, be asked how it was I managed to unearth the secrets of the strange society, whose members were banded together with the sole object of enriching themselves by plundering their fellow-men. The question is easily answered. On the night when it dawned upon me that I had seen the face represented by the photograph of John Tupper somewhere before, I was enabled to detect by aid of the magnifying glass that the whiskers were not natural. There were two or three places where the hair did not adhere to the face. I came to the conclusion at once that Tupper was none other than Tamworth, disguised by false whiskers and moustache, and a wig. The dark piercing eyes, too, I was perfectly convinced were Tamworth's eyes. It was naturally a very startling discovery, and I immediately took steps to prove it right or wrong. For several days I shadowed Mr. Tamworth, and at last followed him to the old house in the Borough.

Later on I obtained entrance to the house by means of a false key. In a drawer in a table I found a written circular summoning a meeting for a certain night; and I resolved not only to witness that meeting, but as there could not be a shadow of a doubt that the Black Brotherhood, as they chose to call themselves, met for an unlawful purpose, I took means to have every man jack of them arrested.

At first when the news leaked out people were inclined to think that the Brotherhood was a hoax, but the revelations that were gradually made of their doings caused intense excitement throughout the country. Not only were they bound together by oath, which each man signed with his blood, but they had a formal set of rules and regulations for their guidance. Tamworth was the president, and he, with two others, took charge of all the things that were stolen.

Periodically this property was conveyed to the Continent by some of the members, and there disposed of; the proceeds of the sales being equally divided. In the event of a man being arrested the Brotherhood secretly provided funds for his defence; and if it was a bailable case the bail was always forthcoming, but the accused invariably disappeared unless he felt pretty sure he would only get a light sentence.

The Brotherhood owed its origin and success entirely to the arch villain Tamworth, who had, by some strange mesmeric influence he possessed, been enabled to obtain entire control over the will of his unfortunate niece, Beryl Artois. In order to keep up this influence, he drove his own brougham disguised as a coachman, and whatever she obtained she handed to him immediately and he concealed it. Of course, nothing bulky was ever taken on such occasions. The plunder was either precious stones or jewellery.

In spite of their oath, three of the gang turned Queen's evidence, and the conviction of the rest was secured. Tamworth, as the ringleader, was sentenced for life, and the others were dealt with only a little less severely. Tamworth was one of the most accomplished and consummate villains I ever had to deal with; while his power of acting a part, and of concealing his true feelings, was simply marvellous, and would have enabled him to have made a fortune if he had gone upon the stage.

In the face of the exposure I was thus enabled to make, and which left not the slightest doubt that poor Miss Artois had



"THEY WERE ARRESTED."

been an unconscious victim of the strange power possessed by her uncle, she was, after being committed for trial and duly tried, acquitted, and her faithful lover, Kingsley, lost no time in making her his wife. And as

great sympathy was shown for him and her, a position was found for him abroad, whither he removed with his beautiful bride until time should have wiped the scandal out of the public memory.

---