



BY F. STARTIN PILLEAU.

IAM, as I think all who know me will readily admit, a peaceful man, and not one given to poking his nose into other people's business. I do not take any pride to myself for this, but at once admit that other people's affairs do not interest me, for, no matter how spicy a scandal may be, unless it be directly connected with sport of some kind or other, I turn a deaf ear to it. All mysteries and secrets I abominate, except secrets of the turf, and few even of these have sufficient hold on my memory to last over a good night's rest. Why, then, I ask, should I, of all people in the world, be the unwilling recipient of one of the strangest and most horrible mysteries it has ever been the lot of man to conceive?

True, I share the burden of the secret with one other man, my old friend Tom Farquharson; and it is, I fully admit, a considerable comfort to feel that he bears, equally with myself, the responsibility of the silence we have hitherto maintained respecting the extraordinary occurrence that I am about to relate, for, in consequence of what happened last week, we have, after considerable discussion, determined to lay the facts of the case before the public, taking care, of course, to suppress the real names of the people concerned.

Without further preamble, then, I will at once set forth, in as few and simple words as

possible, the strange events to which I have referred.

It was on the 11th August last year that I travelled up to Scotland, in fulfilment of a long-standing engagement, to shoot grouse at Farquharson's ancestral place in Sutherlandshire; and when I add that I had been travelling, almost without stopping, ever since I left the Austrian Tyrol, in order to arrive at Tom's in time for the 12th, you will readily believe me when I say, upon my weary journey at last ending, I arrived at Inverstrathy Castle more dead than alive.

It was shortly after 8 o'clock p.m. when I got there, and the house party had just sat down to dinner; Tom, however, came out to greet me, and urged me to hurry up and join them as soon as possible. But I pleaded that I was dead-beat, and much too done-up to put in an appearance that night, so he considerably gave way to my solicitations; then, promising to send me up something to eat to my own room, he hurried back to his guests.

Inverstrathy Castle is a fine specimen of one of those grand old Scottish strongholds one reads of in Sir Walter Scott's novels, and, tired as I was, I greatly admired the magnificent collection of armour and trophies of antique weapons, grouped round the fine old hall, and up the sides of the broad, black oak staircase, the balusters and newels of which were carved with a boldness one seldom comes across in modern times.

My accommodation, I found, consisted of two rooms : a large, but rather gloomy, bedroom, hung from floor to ceiling with rare old tapestry and furnished throughout with old oak, the ancient four-post bedstead, carved with quaint designs, being almost hidden in a deep recess ; and a dressing-room opening out of it, in which, I was glad to see, a modern bath had been fitted up, of which I determined to immediately avail myself.

Having done so, and donned an old, and consequently comfortable, shooting suit, I sat down to a tempting repast, which one of the footmen had spread while I was enjoying my tub.

Since I have made up my mind to take the public into my confidence, I will not keep back anything, however unimportant it may seem, and I therefore at once confess that I partook freely of that cosy meal, and made short work of the bottle of Heidsieck the man had been thoughtful enough to provide. Then, having lighted a cigar, I drew a comfortable chair up to the fire and proceeded to finish a racy novel I had purchased on my journey.

Let me recapitulate : I was tired out by my journey ; I had had a comfortable warm bath ; I had eaten a substantial meal and swallowed a bottle of champagne ; and I had then sat down in a luxurious chair in front of a cheerful fire. Is it remarkable that I fell asleep ? I think not ; I believe ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have done the same. Anyhow, I fully admit, I did fall asleep and that my sleep was long, and sound, and undisturbed by dreams, as an honest, tired man's sleep should be.

How long I slept I cannot say, but suddenly I awoke with a start, in consequence, as I thought, of somebody bringing a dazzling light into the room, and before I could collect my scattered senses, the tapestry at the further end of the room was pushed aside and a lovely girl, in evening costume, with a most beautiful but terror-stricken face, rushed frantically in and fell on her knees on the hearth-rug just in front of me : and as she fell, I noticed that a curious, antique jewel, shaped like a heart pierced by an arrow, becoming unfastened, slipped, without her knowing it, from off her neck to the floor.

Startled by her sudden and unaccountable appearance, I was on the point of rising to her assistance, when, to my further astonishment, from precisely the same spot as before, the tapestry was again pushed aside, and a tall, handsome man ran into the room with a

drawn dagger in his hand, which, before I had time to interfere, to my unspeakable horror, he plunged to the hilt into the heart of the poor girl.

With a yell of dismay I sprang from my chair to seize him by the throat, when, just as I got to him, to my amazement both he and his victim suddenly and mysteriously disappeared ; nor could I discover the slightest trace of the tragedy I had seen take place before my very eyes. Long I stood, completely bewildered and dumfounded, and then, persuading myself I must have been dreaming, I undressed and went to bed.

Next morning, the remembrance of what had taken place the previous night returned to me in full force, and the first thing I did was to carefully examine that part of the room from which both the actors of the tragedy had appeared ; but, though I found no difficulty in pushing aside the tapestry, I could not discover any trace of a door. I, however, found, somewhat to my surprise, that the wall was wainscoted to the height of about 7ft., not only at that end, but forming a high dado all round the room. I imagine therefore that Farquharson, or one of his predecessors, finding the room too dark and gloomy with so much black oak, hung the tapestry round the walls to brighten it up a bit.

While dressing, I debated with myself whether or not I should tell Farquharson what I had seen, but came to the conclusion that neither he nor anyone else would for a moment believe it could be anything more than a bad dream, engendered by my over-eating myself. Indeed, I was myself very much of the same opinion, and so dismissed the matter from my mind. Once, however, during the afternoon, when Farquharson and I happened to be alone together, I remarked how greatly I admired Inverstrathy Castle, and then casually inquired whether, by any chance, it were haunted.

" Haunted ! " he replied, " why, of course it is. Who ever heard of an old Scotch castle that wasn't ? "

But upon my pressing him further to tell me the history connected with it, he confessed he was unable to do so, and admitted that neither he, nor anyone else so far as he knew, had ever seen or heard anything of a supernatural nature. Here the conversation dropped as we resumed the business of the day.

We were a merry party that night at dinner, and it was close upon ten when, at last, Tom

suggested we should join the ladies in the drawing-room; but as I had by no means recovered from the fatigue of my journey, which had been, moreover, aggravated by my

courage to fumble for the matches on the table by my bedside, and, after one or two failures, at last succeeded in lighting a candle; but, though I got up and carefully



"THE SELF-SAME YOUNG LADY RUSHED INTO THE ROOM."

disturbed night and the long day on the moors, I once more got him to excuse me, went straight to bed, and in a quarter of an hour, or less, was sound asleep.

I was undisturbed for a couple of hours or so, when, again, I suddenly woke up with a strange feeling of terror, which was by no means diminished by finding the room brilliantly illuminated by some unseen light. I sat up, wondering where on earth the light could come from, when the tapestry at the further end of the room was again pushed aside, and, again, the self-same young lady rushed into the room, and fell on her hands and knees on the hearth-rug; again I noticed the jewel she wore slip from her neck to the floor; and again the tall, handsome villain followed her, and once more plunged the cruel dagger into her heart; and then, as my heart stood still with horror and fright, the light was suddenly extinguished, and all was utter darkness.

At first, I freely admit, I was much too terrified to move, but at length I screwed up sufficient

spot I had seen that ghastly murder committed, I fancied I could detect a slight difference of colour in the floor; but as it was of



"I FANCIED I COULD DETECT A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE OF COLOUR."

oak, polished by centuries of rubbing, and almost as black as ebony, I could not be certain, in the inadequate light, if such were really the case or not, and I therefore determined to return to bed and examine it more carefully in the morning.

It was some time before I again got to sleep, which, under the circumstances, I think was scarcely surprising; nor is it to be wondered at that, when at last I did do so, I slept so heavily that it was an hour later than the time I had intended to rise when I again woke up. Jumping out of bed, I dressed as rapidly as I could, and then descended at once to the breakfast-room, forgetting, in my hurry, to pursue my investigations of the night before. Judge, then, of my amazement when the first person I saw, on entering the breakfast-room, was the young lady of my vision! I could not possibly be mistaken, for her beautiful face had indelibly photographed itself on my mind; besides, too, there, hanging on her neck, was the identical jewel I had noticed on the unfortunate girl I had twice seen murdered.

Of course I carefully scrutinized the rest of the company, fully expecting to discover, in one or other of them, the villain of the tragedy; but no one there in the least resembled him, and though many others entered the room afterwards, he was not among them. I came to the conclusion then that either he was not staying in the house, or else had already breakfasted and gone out.

After breakfast I took an early opportunity of telling Farquharson I wished to speak to him privately, and he at once led me to his own sanctum. I immediately asked him who the young lady was, and, after hearing my description, he informed me she was a Miss Craig, a distant cousin of his own.

"And I tell you what it is, my boy," he added, "if you're touched in that quarter you couldn't possibly do better, for not only does she come from a good old stock—in fact, her great-grandmother married my great-grandfather—but she is an heiress in her own right, for, though of course Inverstrathy Castle descended through heirs male to your humble servant, she is the sole survivor of the Craigs of Craigrathie, a place second to none in Scotland, about forty miles from here in Ross-shire."

I hastily disabused his mind of any such intent on my behalf, and then briefly related to him all I had seen the two previous nights.

Of course, as I fully expected, he pooh-poohed, at first, the whole story; but I

pointed out that it was very strange I should have immediately recognised Miss Craig, a lady I had never seen in my life before.

He admitted that was peculiar, to say the least of it, but, after a moment or two, added:—

"I tell you how it was, old fellow. You arrived here dead-beat, and evidently, while you were going to your room, you caught sight of Miss Craig—without, at the time, particularly noticing the fact. Nevertheless, her exceptional beauty made such an impression on your susceptible heart, that you dreamt about her. And now I come to think of it," he added, "I remember her being late on that occasion, for I recollect her coming into the dining-room just after I returned from seeing you."

"That may be," I replied; "but how is it I had the same dream, if dream it were, two nights running? Besides, too, I never saw Miss Craig at all yesterday, and surely I should have been much more likely to dream of one of the other ladies who were at dinner?"

"Perhaps so, but one can never account for dreams. You did not see Dora yesterday, because she kept her room the whole day with a violent attack of neuralgia. But if the coincidence of your recognising in her the victim of your tragedy tells in one way, surely the absence of your villain tells equally strongly in the other?"

"Well, perhaps you are right. At all events that is the rational, common-sense view to take of the matter; all the same, I wish you would make an opportunity to carefully examine my room with me."

"Why, certainly. Let's go at once."

We were crossing the hall to do so, when Miss Craig called out:—

"Oh, Tom, you're just the very man I want. Mrs. Fergusson is anxious to see the family ancestors, so do come with us and act cicerone, for I always jumble up the old people together, and Mrs. Morgan is so dreadfully prosy."

"Right you are," said Tom; "come along, Bob, you had better come too."

I was only too glad of the opportunity, for I am a bit of a connoisseur as regards pictures, and had often heard Tom expatiate on the treasures of his gallery, especially the Gainsboroughs and Sir Joshuas.

It is not necessary to go through all the gems of that magnificent collection; suffice it to say, they more than came up to my expectations, when, while I was lost in admiration of a splendid portrait of a Sir

Donald Campbell, by Vandyke, I heard Tom call to Miss Craig, from quite the end of the gallery :—

“Come here, Dora, for a moment, and pay your dutiful respects to our mutual ancestress, the Lady Betty Colquhoun. I don't wish to flatter you, my dear, but, methinks, I can trace a distinct likeness between you; allowing, of course, for the deterioration of the species.”

“Deterioration yourself, sir,” she laughingly replied. “I am sure it is much more marked in the male than in the female line. Is it not, Mrs. Fergusson?”

Roused from my reverie, I joined the group, and found them looking at the full-length portrait of a young lady dressed in the fashion of the sixteenth century. That the portrait was a speaking likeness of Miss



“A SPEAKING LIKENESS.”

Craig there could not be two opinions; but what immediately struck me was, that the Lady Betty Colquhoun wore around her neck

the identical jewel which Miss Craig was then wearing, and which I had also seen on the neck of the lady of my vision. Although I instantly spotted it I might have easily overlooked it, as it was partially hidden beneath a lace collar the lady was wearing, but the jewel had made such an impression on my mind that I recognised it in a moment, nor could I refrain from calling the fact to the attention of the others; upon which Miss Craig said :—

“Why, what sharp eyes you must have! I have gazed at Lady Betty hundreds of times, and yet never noticed it before. Evidently this is the identical jewel, for it is an heirloom in the family.”

“Indeed!” I said, “and is there any legend connected with it?”

“Oh, dear, yes!” she replied. “It is supposed that no harm can ever come to the owner so long as she is wearing it, and so, as I am very superstitious, I always keep it round my neck, even when I go to bed.”

I then asked whether there were any particular history connected with Lady Betty, but both Tom and Miss Craig declared that, so far as they knew, there was not, but that, if there were, Mrs. Morgan would be sure to know it, as she was far better up in the traditions of the family than either of them; Miss Craig adding :—

“You had better be careful to get the right side of Mrs. Morgan, if you want her to divulge state secrets, as she is a difficult woman to humour, and not always willing to impart the information she undoubtedly possesses.”

Shortly after, we separated to pursue the ordinary avocations affected by people staying in a country house; but I, still thinking of Miss Craig, Lady Betty Colquhoun, and the antique jewel, sought out Mrs. Morgan, and, after a little judicious flattery and Machiavelian diplomacy, for which I have ever been noted, turned our conversation to the picture gallery.

Long were the anecdotes she told me of pretty well every member of the family except the one I wished to hear about, till at

last I had to ask her the direct question, whether there were any story or legend connected with the Lady Betty Colquhoun.

At first she was very reticent and tried to put me off, but when she found I pertinaciously returned to the subject, she admitted that her mother had once told her a strange tale with regard to that lady, but whether there were any truth in it or not she could not say. After a little more diplomatic handling, I at length got the story out of her, which, divested of her circumlocutions and embellishments, was shortly this:—

In the latter part of the sixteenth century the then Lord of Inverstrathy—one Ronald Farquharson—married the Lady Betty Colquhoun, although it was whispered she had already given her affections to the Laird of Carosphairn. Be that as it may, Ronald Farquharson seems to have had a highly jealous, passionate disposition, and they had been married but a few months, when it became a matter of common notoriety that scarcely a day passed without some desperate quarrel between them. Matters, however, were kept within the bounds of respectability for three years, during which time the Laird of Carosphairn seems to have been abroad; but upon his return, the relations between the Lord and Lady of Inverstrathy became still more strained. Although, some nine or ten months afterwards, a son and heir was born (whom their friends hoped might prove a bond between them, and be the means of a reconciliation), matters grew worse instead of better, and Ronald Farquharson was, more than once, overheard making the most disgraceful insinuations to the unfortunate Lady Betty.

At that time the castle was considerably smaller in extent than at present, the whole of the east wing, and part of the west, having been added in the early part of the seventeenth century, and Ronald and Lady Farquharson, it seems, occupied the identical room I was sleeping in.

One night, after the servants had gone to bed, the nurse, who was sitting up with the child on account of some infantine complaint, overheard her master and mistress having a more than usually serious altercation, and had just made up her mind to inquire what was the matter, when the noise quieted down, and she heard their voices no more. Next morning, however, her mistress had disappeared, and it was rumoured that, driven desperate by her husband's brutality, she had fled in the night to the Laird of Carosphairn, with whom she had eloped; at any rate, neither

she nor the laird were ever heard of afterwards, and it was supposed that, endeavouring to cross to the Orkneys in a fishing smack, they had been wrecked during a terrible gale that was raging all that night.

I asked her whether the gallery contained any portrait of Ronald Farquharson as well as Lady Betty, but she informed me that, though undoubtedly there had been one, as the records proved, it had, unfortunately, perished, along with several others, during a fire which destroyed a large portion of the castle in 1639, soon after which the whole place had been renovated and enlarged by Angus Farquharson, the grandson of Ronald; the central portion, in which were the old state rooms, only being left untouched.

This was all I could get out of Mrs. Morgan, except that, when I cross-questioned her on the subject of the castle being haunted, she reluctantly admitted to having heard some idle tale of a lady, in a white evening costume, being seen about the place at midnight, but had never seen anything of the apparition herself.

Armed with this further information, I sought out Farquharson, and we, there and then, made a thorough examination of my room, but though we found an undoubted stain of something or other on the floor, under the hearth-rug, that was all the success we had, and Farquharson was more than ever convinced that my vision was nothing but a bad nightmare.

"I'll tell you what it is, old chap," he said. "If you like, I'll come and sit up with you here to-night, and see if this precious vision of yours recurs."

"Done with you," I cried, and we then joined the ladies in the hall for afternoon tea.

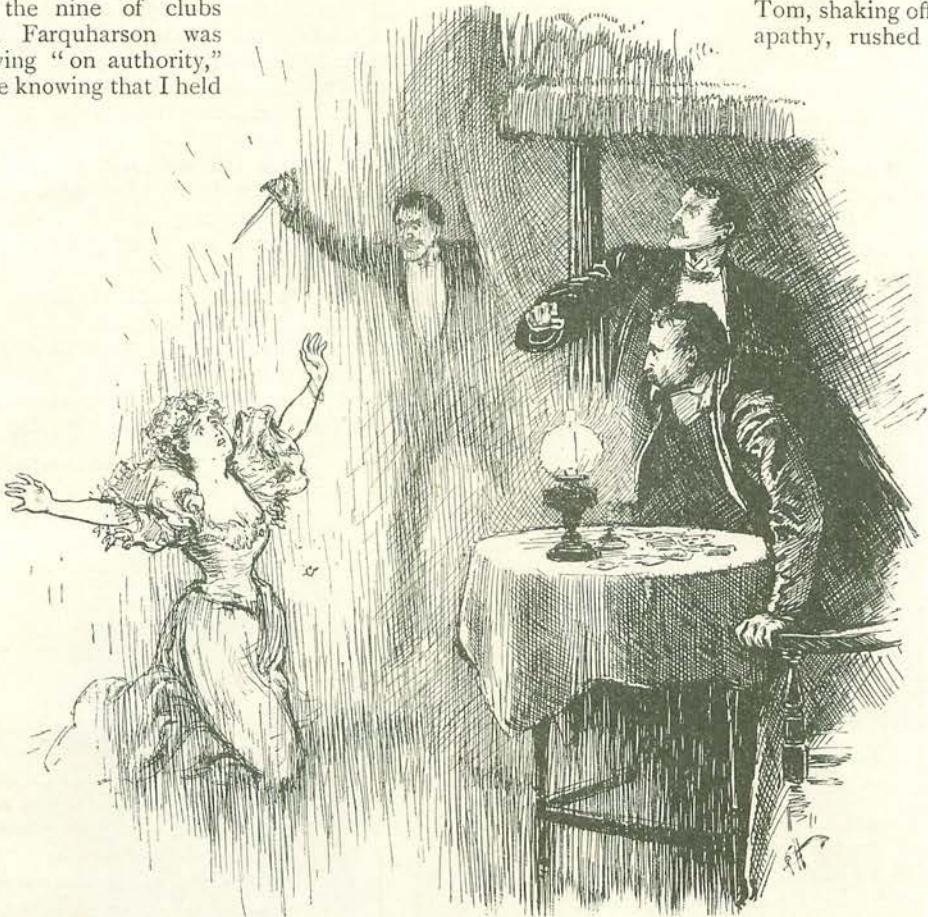
That night, after the ladies had retired to their rooms and we had played a few games of pool, Farquharson reminded us we were to make an early start the next morning to shoot over the outlying moors, and we all at once turned in, Farquharson going with me to my room, as agreed; then, producing a couple of packs of cards, he said:—

"Look here, my boy, as this is likely to prove a long job—for I don't suppose you'll be satisfied till two or three o'clock, unless anything happens in the meantime, which I'm quite sure won't be the case—we had better have a little *écarté*; so fill up your glass" (he had taken care to send the necessary materials to my room), "and cut for deal."

"All right," I replied. "A sovereign a game, as usual, I suppose?" and we at once commenced.

Now, both Farquharson and I, without being gamblers, were keen card-players, this being by no means the first time we had sat down to a bout of *écarté*. We had played a dozen games or so, the luck so far proving fairly even, and had become so absorbed in our occupation that the real reason for our sitting up together had quite vanished from our minds, when, in the midst of one of the most exciting hands of the evening (the score was three all, I'd turned up the nine of clubs and Farquharson was playing "on authority," little knowing that I held

terrified face, and fall on her knees on the hearth-rug. Once more the antique jewel slipped from off her neck to the floor; once more the evil-looking scoundrel followed her into the room; once more he raised the naked dagger in his hand; and then, for the third time, I witnessed that horrible murder, without being able to stir a step to interfere. In a quarter of a minute or less it was all over, and the light had resumed its normal brilliancy; then Tom, shaking off his apathy, rushed for-



"WE BOTH STARTED ROUND."

king, knave, eight of trumps, as well as the king and another spade), just as I was about to say "I hold the king," preparatory to marking it and then trump the king of hearts, which he had already led, the light in the room suddenly increased to quite three times its previous brilliancy!

We both started round just in time to see the tapestry once again pushed aside, and the beautiful girl, so like Miss Craig, yet also so like the Lady Betty, rush forward, with

ward to where the deed had been committed, calling to me to bring the lamp.

He hastily turned up the rug, exposing the same stain we had seen in the afternoon; but whether it was only our imagination or not I cannot say—it certainly appeared to us to be much fresher and redder than before.

"Well! What do you say to my vision now?" I asked. "Do you still persist in maintaining it was only a dream?"

"Don't be an ass," Tom replied. "Of course I believe in it. How can I doubt the evidence of my own senses? I am, however, determined to trace the mystery to its source. Depend upon it, the Lady Betty never eloped at all, and that the whole story was a foul slander, concocted by her brute of a husband, who had murdered her in a fit of passion. Come, let us once more examine the panelling behind the tapestry."

This we did, but for a long time without any success, when, in stooping to hold the lamp in a more favourable position for Tom to examine the skirting, I placed my left hand against one of the stiles of the wainscoting to steady myself; and, as I leant against it, I fancied I felt a slight current of air issuing between the stile and panel. I called Tom's attention to it, and he struck a match and held it to the spot, when there could be no doubt there was a distinct draught of air blowing the flame away from the woodwork.

This was enough for Tom. "Wait here," he said, "till I get a few tools"; and off he went, returning a few minutes later with a centre-bit, crowbar, a couple of chisels, and a screw-driver. This last he managed to insinuate into the small crack we had discovered, and endeavoured to force away the panel from the upright. At first he could make no impression on it, but after he had worked it up and down a bit, he must have accidentally touched a spring, for the whole panel suddenly swung away from him, nearly precipitating him headlong through the opening it had disclosed. We found then that the panel had formed a secret door, opening directly on a flight of steep, stone steps, built in the thickness of the wall, up which a cold, damp air was blowing, drawn up, no doubt, by the heat of my room.

Excited by the success of our efforts, we at once determined to push our investigations further, so, snatching up the crowbar, Tom stooped through the doorway and began to cautiously descend the steps, while I followed after, lighting the way with the lamp. After descending thirty-three steps we reached the bottom, and found a passage stretching away in front of us. We followed this for 50ft. or 60ft., and then, to our disappointment, came to a dead stop; for

either the passage itself had come to its natural ending, or else it had been purposely walled up.

After a careful examination, we came to the conclusion the latter was the case, for although it had been built to look as much as possible like the side walls, we found there were no through stones in either angle, both being straight joints; and, upon holding the lamp well up, we could see that in one place there was a space of a couple of inches or so between the top stone and the ceiling.

Tom hastily ran back with the lamp, leaving me in the dark, a situation I did not altogether relish. However, he soon returned with a chair, mounting which, he worked away with his crowbar until he dislodged a large stone, which fell with a startling thud on the floor. After the first few stones were removed the rest was easy, and, between us, we had soon made an opening sufficiently large to scramble through, when we found ourselves in a small chamber about 8ft. square, evidently an old dungeon.

At first we thought it was empty, but upon Tom poking his crowbar into a heap of rubbish which lay in one of the corners, a portion of it fell away, exposing, to our



"A PORTION OF IT FELL AWAY."

horror, the hand and part of the fore-arm of a skeleton. We quickly set to work to remove the rubbish heap, and soon lay bare the entire skeleton, which, from its size, we concluded was that of a woman, and close to it, on the floor, we further discovered the hilt and a portion of the blade of what was evidently a dagger, the rest of the blade having been eaten away by rust. Solemnly we looked at one another, and then, without a word, made the best of our way back to my bedroom.

After we were once more safely in my room and had each mixed a stiff glass of whisky-and-water, Tom said:—

“You see, it is just as I thought. I haven't a doubt in my mind but that my worthy ancestor, Ronald Farquharson, murdered his unfortunate wife, whose skeleton we have just discovered; that he hid her in yonder dungeon, and himself walled up the passage to prevent his crime from being found out; and then set abroad the shameful story of her having eloped with the Laird of Carosphairn, to account for her absence. It is a terrible business; but, thank goodness, it can't have anything to do with poor Dora.”

“And yet,” I said, “the lady of the vision was undoubtedly like Miss Craig.”

“Not more like her than the Lady Betty,” he quickly returned.

“Perhaps not. Did you notice the face of the villain who murdered her?”

“No; from the position in which I was sitting, I could not see his face at all, but only his back; I am, however, perfectly convinced it must have been Ronald Farquharson. Don't you agree with me?”

“No, I certainly do not!”

“Good heavens! Why?”

“For a very obvious reason. Both the girl who was murdered and the ruffian who butchered her were in modern evening costume!”

“Great Scot!” exclaimed Tom, “so they were! How do you interpret that?”

“I cannot say. I don't know what to think. The whole thing is perfectly inexplicable to me.”

“But if the vision were not that of Ronald Farquharson murdering the Lady Betty, what was it?”

“Ah, indeed, what was it?”

“Besides, too: how can you account for our finding the secret stairway opening from exactly the spot from whence they came? And, still more, the significant fact of our discovery of the skeleton and dagger in the walled-up dungeon?”

“I tell you I can account for nothing.”

“Well! what's to be done?”

“Nothing, I suppose. I don't see what good we can do by spreading the tale abroad. I think it is a clear case where ‘masterly inactivity’ should be the order of the day. Let us keep the secret to ourselves, at all events for the present, and watch what happens.”

We discussed it some time longer in all its bearings, and then, Tom agreeing with me, we fastened up the secret door and separated.

Next day Miss Craig left, and though Tom again sat up with me that night, nothing happened to disturb our *écarté*, and the day following I had myself to leave, having received an important telegram calling me back to London.

Nearly a whole year passed without anything occurring to remind me of my strange experience at Inverstrathy Castle. I had seen Tom frequently in the interval, and he had told me that, though he had more than once slept in the room I had occupied there, he had never again seen the vision. Again the 12th of August was approaching, when I was to join his party as before, when, one day, he called upon me to explain that, scarlet fever having unfortunately broken out in Inverstrathy Castle, he was compelled to put everyone off. That afternoon, I was walking down Regent Street, thinking how I could best re-arrange my plans, when, as I was crossing the Circus towards the Criterion, a gentleman overtook and passed me, and, as he did so, his walking-stick accidentally knocked against my arm. He turned round, politely apologized, and then hurried down Waterloo Place; but, slight as the glimpse was which I got of his face, I immediately recognised him as the villain of my vision.

At first I was so staggered I stood stock still, and was nearly run over by a passing cab;



“THE VILLAIN OF MY VISION.”

then, recovering my senses, I hastened after him, keeping him in sight till he turned up Pall Mall and went into the Megatherium Club, of which I am also a member. Entering after him, I saw him go into the smoking-room, and then I inquired of the hall-porter who he was. He informed me he was Sir Philip Clipstone, and that he had only recently returned from India. I immediately jumped into a hansom and drove to Tom's town house at Albert Gate, and, directly we were alone, I said:—

"Tom, I've just seen the villain of our vision!"

"Nonsense! I thought that had died a natural death."

"So I hoped, but this afternoon I undoubtedly met the identical man we saw murdering Miss Craig at Inverstrathy Castle."

"I wish you wouldn't persist in saying it was Dora. I'm more than ever convinced that it was a vision of Ronald Farquharson murdering the Lady Betty, and not Miss Craig at all."

"Possibly—though I don't think so myself. Anyhow, I saw the murderer, no matter who his victim was."

"Are you sure you weren't mistaken, or misled by some strong resemblance?"

"No; I tell you he was the very man. I could not possibly be mistaken. Remember, I saw the scoundrel three times, and his villainous face left far too great an impression on my memory ever to be effaced; and I tell you I saw him to-day while I was crossing Piccadilly Circus, and recognised him in a moment, although his face was naturally without that diabolical expression I saw on it at Inverstrathy Castle."

"What did you do?"

"Followed him, of course, and tracked him to the Megatherium Club, where I ascertained who he is."

"And who is he?"

"Sir Philip Clipstone."

"Good God! You don't say so?" said Tom, starting to his feet. "Why, although Dora never even heard of him till about two months ago, I received a letter from her barely an hour since, announcing their engagement! What's to be done?"

"What's to be done? Aye, there's the rub! Ought we, or ought we not, to inform Miss Craig, or Sir Philip, or both, of what we saw at Inverstrathy Castle?"

Long we argued the point; one of us, no matter which, thinking we certainly ought; the other equally convinced that we ought not. Neither could persuade the other to adopt his view of the case. Each was perfectly certain he only was right, and words grew high between us, even threatening to jeopardize the warm friendship that has existed since our school-days.

At last a happy thought struck Tom, that, changing of course the names of the parties concerned, and the *locale* of the tragedy, we should lay the simple facts of the case before the public, inviting expressions of opinion on this knotty point, from any who feel competent to give one.

I eagerly agreed to this suggestion, and I can therefore only request, gentle reader, that, after having carefully weighed the pros and cons, you will communicate your valuable opinion to the editor. But do not delay too long, for I hear Sir Philip, as is only natural, is pressing Miss Craig to name the happy (?) day. Should she or should she not, before doing so, be informed of the possible consequences of such an act? And if they do marry, will their conjugal life end in the horrible tragedy both Tom Farquharson and I saw enacted in my bedroom at Inverstrathy Castle?