

Stories of the Sanctuary Club.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE. TOLD BY PAUL CATO.

II.—A VISIBLE SOUND.

IN the second year of the existence of the Club I received a letter from a gentleman in the county of Kent. He signed himself Walter Royal, and lived in a large place which went by the name of Court Royal. He was anxious to be admitted as one of our members, and further expressed a desire that his niece, a girl of about two-and-twenty, who lived with him, should also become a member of the Sanctuary Club. He inclosed a cheque for the entrance-fees for himself and his niece, and begged to know how soon the ceremony of his election might take place.

I wrote to him immediately, asking a few questions, and finally said that at the next meeting of the committee he and his niece would be duly elected. To this he replied by a somewhat longer letter.

"Your news has given me relief, Dr. Cato," he wrote; "I am an old man, and one never knows what may happen. I have heard a great deal of your Club from people who have derived benefit from your peculiar mode of treatment, and it is quite possible that in the future the institution which you have been good enough to inaugurate may be of use to my niece Primrose. In the present case it will undoubtedly be of service to me. I do not think that I shall last much longer, but while I am in the world I wish to keep as well as possible, and as I am suffering from various phases of a nervous disorder, I should like to put myself into your care as soon as possible. I shall probably be with you early next week. Before coming, however, it is as well for you to know that I am the victim of a very extraordinary malady, which is both overpowering and overmastering, and has such a curious effect on my nerves that I am obliged to yield to certain inclinations, knowing all the time that mischief will occur from my doing so. I will tell you more about this when I have the pleasure of meeting you."

In reply to this letter I wrote to Mr. Royal to say that the following Wednesday would suit Dr. Chetwynd and myself for his reception, and he replied to the effect that he and his niece would be with us on that date.

It was early in the spring of the year 1892 when he arrived, accompanied by his niece. He was a very tall and thin old man, with white hair hanging down over his shoulders, piercing, deeply-set black eyes, and aquiline features. There was an eagerness in his gaze which I have not often seen in anyone so advanced in life, and which I put down partly to the complaint from which he undoubtedly suffered.

His niece to a certain extent resembled him. She had the same bright, alert look, but her features were small, her figure graceful, and she had the rounded limbs and soft complexion of early youth. She had a gentle, affectionate manner, and I saw at once that she was a particularly amiable girl. I noticed, however, from the first that she was very anxious about the old man. At the first possible opportunity she hastened to tell me the cause of this anxiety.

"My uncle has not the slightest idea, Dr. Cato," she said, "that he is suffering from what almost amounts to mania; but, nevertheless, I who have known him all my life am certain that such is the case."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, in the first place, he will not consult his family physician. He has absolutely refused to see Dr. Winstanley for the last two years, and it is since then that the curious phase of nervous disorder to which I allude has become so manifest. I cannot tell you how relieved I was when he declared his intention of becoming a member of the Sanctuary Club, and of putting himself under your treatment."

"Pray describe the symptoms which give you uneasiness," I interrupted.

She paused for a moment, then said, slowly, "You do not know perhaps that my uncle, Mr. Royal, is one of the greatest authorities on archæology and Roman relics in England. About three months ago he sent some magnificent Roman pottery to the British Museum. This he had himself excavated in the neighbourhood of Court Royal out of a Roman villa, which he discovered within three miles of his estate. I trace the growth of his disorder almost from the day when he first discovered this villa. Since then he has scarcely lived for anything else, employing workmen in the

task of excavation, and wet or fine, early and late, has spent his time at the villa. During the long winter evenings he has been hunting up the records of the place, and he told me not long ago that he believed the ruins in question had belonged to one of the Quæstors of Customs in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, when Britain was a Roman colony. He has searched through many old county records, and found that an old chronicler made mention of this very place, and said that it contained buried treasure of great value. Since reading this account my uncle's excitement has become greater and greater, and the one object of his life now is to discover the treasure which he believes to be hidden away in the old villa. I bitterly regret for his sake that he ever knew anything of its existence. He has certainly lost both health and sleep since that date."

"What has brought things to a crisis?" I asked.

"I will tell you," she answered. "Two months ago he returned home in a state of breathless and painful excitement. It was just about Christmas time, and the weather was bitterly cold. I think he had got a chill in body, but his excitement of mind almost passed all bounds. He brought with him an old bronze disc, which he had found deeply embedded in the clay. There was some Latin writing on it, and night after night he shut himself up with his old disc trying to make out the inscription round the edge. Whether he has ever done so or not is more than I can tell you; but a few days ago, just after you had consented to admit him here, I found him in a state of unconsciousness in his study. The bronze was lying on a table near, and he had evidently fainted while struggling to possess himself of its secret. I locked the bronze disc up in one of the cupboards in the study, and took immediate steps to bring my uncle here. I am most anxious about him."

"He certainly looks extremely ill," I replied, "but

I trust the treatment and the great quiet of the place will go far to restore him. Has he shown any other eccentricities, Miss Seafield?"

She hesitated, then said, slowly, "There is one other craze which has manifested itself to an extraordinary degree. For nearly a year he has been hiding things of value in all sorts of unexpected places. Not long ago we could not find the old jewelled hunting watch which he always wore in his waistcoat-pocket. He himself seemed to have forgotten where he put it, and was in a terrible state about it. We eventually recovered it in an unused well in the garden. Some jewels left to me by my mother were also put by him into other as unlikely places, and of late I have been obliged to have a special attendant to follow him about in order to prevent his hiding things in daily use."

"Well," I answered, "he could not do better than come here. I am glad you have spoken so frankly about him. My friend Chetwynd and I will do our utmost to promote his recovery, and in the meantime I hope you will enjoy yourself. You at least look well and strong."

"I am fairly well," she replied; "but what with one thing and another, I have gone



"I FOUND HIM IN A STATE OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS."

through many anxieties. Perhaps I ought to tell you that my uncle has had a very sad story. He had three children, the elder two being sons. The eldest son died when quite young, and he has quarrelled with the other so effectually that nothing will induce him to see him again. He has not only quarrelled with him, but he has also disinherited him. The son in question, James Royal, is a very bad man, and has led a most reckless and extravagant life. My uncle has paid his debts many times and given him very large sums of money, but within the last five years he has absolutely refused to allow him to come near Court Royal, and has assured me that he will not leave him a farthing. James Royal, who used to terrify me when I was a little child by coming to the house and making fearful disturbances, has taken his father at his word, and we neither of us now know where he is or whether he is in existence at all."

"And who will inherit the property?" I ventured to ask.

"I do not mind telling you," she answered, her eyes growing bright; "my uncle has often told me that he will leave Court Royal to me. I am not particularly anxious to be rich, but I hope, if I do find myself possessed of so fine a property, that I shall know how to do my duty. I am the daughter of his only sister, who was very much younger than himself. My mother died when I was a baby, and my father soon followed her. Since then I have lived at Court Royal, and my uncle has been both father and mother to me."

At that moment my conversation with Miss Seafield was interrupted, and I did not renew it again. I repeated to Chetwynd what the young lady had told me, and we soon came to the conclusion that Walter Royal's malady was hopeless, and that, in all

probability, the old man was not long for this world. He was a very gentle and agreeable person, and did not show the slightest sign of oddity when joining in general conversation, but his bodily weakness grew apace, and he was soon confined to his room.

Royal and his niece had been about a fortnight at the Sanctuary Club, when one day a visitor called. It was, I remember, early in the afternoon, and I was doing something in the hall. Miss Seafield was



"A VISITOR CALLED."

standing near helping me. Suddenly she almost dropped a valuable china plate which she was assisting me to move into a more prominent position, the colour fled from her face, and her hands trembled. A tall, eager-looking man of about thirty years of age was announced. Miss Seafield started forward, holding out both her hands.

"Jack!" she cried, "how did you know we were here?" Then she turned and intro-

duced him to me. "Mr. Kelvin—Dr. Cato," she said.

I bowed to the stranger. He had an uncommon face, and I found myself looking at him with great interest. There was a certain untamed fire in his eyes, joined to some indications of weakness round his lips, which seemed at a first glance to point him out as the victim of hereditary nervous weakness, but the breadth of his brow and the rare sweetness of his smile immediately dissipated this first impression. I felt certain that he was a man of remarkable genius, and had not led an ordinary career. It also needed but a glance at the face of the beautiful girl who now stood close to his side to show that the pair loved each other, and were in all probability engaged.

"I must let Uncle Walter know that you have come, Jack, and then I will come back to you," was Primrose's next eager remark.

"Shall I do that for you?" I interrupted; "I am going to visit Mr. Royal in about half an hour, when he awakens after his nap."

"Oh, will you?" she asked, her eyes full of smiles, and her cheeks glowing with happiness; "then in that case we can go into the grounds. I have a good deal to say to Mr. Kelvin, Dr. Cato, and I am very much obliged to you."

I went upstairs to the old man. In the course of conversation I delivered his niece's message.

"Ah!" he said, "so Jack has found us out. Has Primrose told you anything more?"

"No," I answered; "what do you mean?"

"She is engaged to Kelvin, and more or less against my will. He is a clever fellow, very clever, almost a genius; he has written some books of rare distinction, and is also a poet of no mean order; but he is poor and rash and extravagant, and my impression is that he got himself into a serious scrape early in his life."

"In your niece's case you ought to be very careful," I said. "You are a man of large property, and if you mean her to inherit it, she must not be a prey to fortune-hunters."

"Oh, Kelvin is nothing of that sort," he said, somewhat impatiently. "If anything, he is too unworldly; he loves my girl devotedly, and she fairly worships the ground he walks on. I am not surprised, and when you know him better, Cato, you will yourself yield to his many fascinations."

That evening Miss Seafield asked me if her uncle had said anything with regard to Kelvin.

"He told me that you and he are engaged," I said.

She looked steadily at me for a moment, and then her dark-grey eyes filled with tears.

"It is my great privilege to love him, and to be loved back in return," she said. "He is the most wonderful man I have ever met. He is very clever, more than clever; his writings are beautiful. He will make his mark in the world of letters if he goes on, but he has had a sad life, and has had much trouble. Dr. Cato, I don't mind telling you, he put himself some years ago into the power of my cousin, James Royal."

"How so?" I asked.

"I don't quite know myself, but it has cast a shadow over his life. It is in my cousin's power to ruin him, and why he has not done so long ago is a marvel; but Jack's hope now is that he will never push things to extremities. Ah, I have told you too much—pray forget what I have said, but always remember that I regard myself as one of the most fortunate women in the world to have won the love of so good, so great a man."

Within a week from that date old Mr. Royal passed quietly away in his sleep. His illness had been hopeless from the first—but none the less was the shock a severe one to Miss Seafield. The old man was taken back to Court Royal to sleep in the vault of his ancestors, and in the rush of other work I almost forgot Primrose Seafield and her story.

Nearly six months passed, when I received the following letter:—

"Court Royal, Wrenhurst, Kent.

"DEAR SIR,—My name I know will be familiar to you as the son of the late Mr. Walter Royal, who was a member of your Club, and died under your roof. As I am rather anxious about myself in view of my father's malady, and as I hope to be married within a week, and there is no time to spare, I shall be exceedingly glad if you will come down and see me at your earliest convenience.

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES ROYAL."

I read this letter with a good deal of astonishment. Had the reckless and wicked son who had more or less ruined his father's life turned up at Court Royal on hearing of the old man's death? Beyond doubt this had happened. But why was he staying there, when Primrose Seafield was the heiress? And whom was he going to marry immediately, and why had he requested me, of all persons under the sun, to diagnose his special symptoms?

Apprehending, I could not tell why, foul

play of some sort, I was about to reply to this letter, when by the very next post I received one from Miss Seafield herself.

"DEAR DR. CATO," it ran, "I have just heard that my cousin, James Royal, has written asking you to come down here, and I am writing now to beg of you as a personal friend of my own to grant his request if possible. The fact is, I want to see you myself, and it is impossible for me to visit you at the Club just at present. I am in great and terrible trouble, and I want to ask your advice. I believe you can help me if you will. When you meet my cousin, please do not mention to him that I have written, nor speak about anything special in his presence. In particular, I hope you will not allude to Mr. Kelvin. I will tell you all when we meet.—Yours sincerely,

"PRIMROSE SEAFIELD."

"I will go down by the earliest train to-morrow morning," I reflected, "and find out for myself how matters really stand."

Soon after eleven o'clock on the following day I reached Wrenhurst. A well-appointed carriage had been sent to meet me. I learned from the coachman that Court Royal was about three miles away, but the spirited chestnuts were not long in getting over the ground. I presently found myself in a fine avenue, which contained some magnificent timber, and a sharp corner in the avenue brought the old house into full view, with its quaint gable-ends and Norman turrets.

Just as the carriage drew up before the front entrance, Primrose Seafield hurried to meet me. She was in deep black, and her shady hat was slightly pushed away from her face.

"You have come—I thought you would," she said. "I cannot tell you how thankful I am. My cousin is out, but there is no time to say much to you; he may be back at any moment. Oh, Dr. Cato, I am in fearful trouble—I wonder my senses do not give way. I must take an oppor-

tunity of speaking to you, and in private. Will you come to my uncle's study after lunch?"

"Shall I find you there?" I asked.

"Yes; I have no chance of having a word alone with you before. My cousin will prevent it, but Mrs. Hall, my old governess, is staying with me, and she will bring you to the study if you ask her. After lunch my cousin, as a rule, goes away for a nap by himself. Ah, and here he is approaching."

She turned as she spoke and pointed in the direction of the shrubberies, through which I saw a tall, loosely-made man coming towards us. I scarcely glanced at him at first, however, so dismayed was I by the change in the girl's own bright face. She was now painfully thin, and her dark-grey eyes were almost too large for absolute beauty. There were heavy shadows under them, and her lips—beautiful and proud lips they used to be—were tremulous as though she had often indulged in heavy fits of crying. She looked sadly nervous, too, and as though her mental equilibrium had, in some curious way, got a severe shock.

"Come with me to meet my cousin," she said. She walked forward, and I followed her.

The man who had



“HOW DO YOU DO, DR. CATO?” HE SAID.”

now almost reached us was above the middle height; he was followed by a bulldog, and wore a Norfolk suit and carried a rook-rifle in his hand. In some particulars his features resembled those of his father, being aquiline and thin; but the colour on his cheeks was fixed, and his mouth was completely hidden by a heavy moustache. His eyes were sunken into his head, and were too bright. They had a watchful gleam in them, too, which I have often connected with nervous disorder. It needed scarcely a glance to tell me that the man indulged in too much alcohol.

"How do you do, Dr. Cato?" he said, as we came up. "I presume this is Dr. Cato, Primrose?" he added, glancing at his cousin.

She bowed, without speaking.

"Ah! so I guessed. Your train must have been punctual, Doctor. I am sorry I was not on the premises when you drove up. Will you come into the house now?"

He did not take any further notice of Primrose. She left us and went slowly in the direction of the shrubbery. We entered a large hall, and Royal, opening a door on the right, took me into the dining-room.

"Have something before lunch, won't you?" he said, opening a door in a massive oak sideboard, and taking out a bottle of brandy.

"No, thank you," I answered.

"You had better," he said.

I shook my head.

"I never take stimulants except with meals," I said.

"All the worse for you," was his retort. "Well, you don't mind if I help myself?" He poured out a stiff glass of brandy and drank it off.

"Shall we go to my late father's smoking-room for our talk?" he said.

Without waiting for me to reply he led the way, crossing a large conservatory as he did so. We soon found ourselves in a small, comfortably furnished room; the French windows were open, and the soft summer air was coming gently in. Royal drew a chair forward for me, and sank himself into another nearly opposite.

"Well," he said, "to plunge into the matter without further delay, I am about to be married. You may think it rather soon after my father's death, but the wedding will be a very quiet one, and there are reasons that make it inexpedient to allow any further delay. This day week, I hope to see myself united to as good a girl as ever breathed.

You guess, of course, that I allude to my cousin, Primrose Seafield."

"You astonish me very much," I said; "you engaged to Miss Seafield?"

"And why not?" he answered, his brow darkening, and an angry scowl passing across his features.

I was silent. Angry as I felt, I knew that the matter was scarcely my affair. He gazed at me steadily for a moment; then his eyes fell, he shuffled uneasily on his seat, and I saw his large hands tremble.

"It is these beastly nerves," he said. "Certainly, this age has its drawbacks, and the way we poor mortals are troubled by all kinds of out-of-the-way feelings is past a joke. Now, I don't pretend that I have led the most immaculate life in the world, and what with one thing and another, things are telling on me. I have heard much of you and your wonderful cures, Dr. Cato, and it has occurred to me that by-and-by I cannot do better than become a member of your Club, and put myself completely under your treatment."

"I shall be pleased to enter your name on my roll of members," I answered. "I will send you a form to fill up, and——"

He waved his hand to interrupt me.

"Presently, presently," he said; "those matters are for the future. I have sent for you now to consult you as an ordinary physician. I want to ask you a plain question. Is—in your opinion—my father's insanity (for he doubtless was insane in the latter years of his life) hereditary?"

"Your father was insane for the last six months of his life; certainly not longer," I answered. "My friend Dr. Chetwynd and I studied his case most carefully. He had a peculiar mania, but it was not of long duration, and was itself of quite an innocent character."

"Ah," he said; "well, I don't agree with you. I have known the old man intimately for some time, and can prove that he was very queer for several years; but now for my question. My father died at the age of eighty—I am a man of five-and-fifty: am I likely to be similarly affected?"

"No," I replied, boldly; "if your father was insane, it by no means follows that his insanity was hereditary. But tell me what you complain of."

"I am oppressed at times by an overpowering sense of fear, and since I came into this fine property I have in a most remarkable way lost every interest in life. I have gone through ups and downs in my rough-and-tumble existence, and I assure you there have

been moments in my miserable life when I have scarcely known how to provide for my next meal. You will scarcely credit this, seeing that I am the son of one of the richest men in the county; but he was peculiar, my dear sir, peculiar from the very first. Now, indeed, things have righted themselves, and in an extraordinary and providential manner. You see before you a rich man, Dr. Cato. I have many thousands at my credit in the bank, and, as you see for yourself, am the owner of a large estate and a fine house. I am also about to be married to a very pretty girl, and one I have long been fond of. It seems unaccountable, does it not, that with all these advantages, these showers of blessings, so to speak, I am still thoroughly wretched? I sleep badly, and am troubled by dreams and nightmares of a terrifying description. Knowing what I do about my father, I have been getting quite fidgety of late, and thought I had best consult you at once. Naturally, before marriage, a man thinks of these things. Can you relieve my mind?"

"Your symptoms are not quite pleasant ones," I said, "but at the same time there is nothing to be seriously alarmed about. Granted that your father did suffer from mania, it behoves you to be more careful than ordinary men, and a quiet, open-air life is what will suit you best. Avoid all excitement, and, what is far more important, excess of every kind."

"Well, I do that," he said, with a laugh; "there is devilish little excitement here, and plenty of open air, so that's all right."

"Do you take much alcohol?" I asked.

"Oh, a nip now and then, and wine with meals."

"Have your wine with meals, by all means," I answered, "but I should stop the nips. A man who gets drunk once a month, and takes nothing in the interval, will live longer than a man who is never the worse for liquor but is constantly tipping; but pray

remember, the man who does neither will outlive them both."

"I have no doubt that is so," he answered, "but I could not exist without wine, and I never drink to excess. I am much obliged to you for your opinion, Dr. Cato. You can assure me there is no present cause for alarm?"

"None, if you will be moderate," was my reply.

"I will tell Primrose what you say; she will be relieved, poor girl. I think I quite frightened her a couple of evenings ago. I was in a somewhat mirthful state, and she did not think I showed sufficient respect for my late father's memory. After all, Dr. Cato, I have nothing to thank him for. I should not be the owner of this property had he not over-reached himself and died intestate. But for that little fact Primrose would have been the heiress, and I should have been nowhere. Now matters are reversed, and I think I am



"DO YOU TAKE MUCH ALCOHOL?" I ASKED.

behaving extremely well to the girl by marrying her."

"But what does she say herself?" I asked.

"Say? What can she say? She is naturally delighted—who would not be? It is not every girl who has the chance of being

mistress of a fine property like this. The fact is, the whole thing is a most lucky escape for her. Had my father made a will, she would have inherited Court Royal and thrown herself away upon a fellow in town, of the name of Kelvin, an imbecile sort of chap. He poses as a maker of poetry, and writes a lot of silly stuff; you must know the sort of fellow for yourself. Primrose thought herself in love with him, and would have married him, had I not stepped in to interfere. Our wedding-bells will ring in a week; and, now that you have quite relieved my mind, I can do what is left of my courtship with a light heart."

As he spoke he left the room. I sat, feeling almost stunned, by the open window. I had now got the secret of Primrose's trouble. But what hold had such a man over the poor girl? Why had she, even for a single moment, consented to marry him? Why was there no will? What did all this dark and inexplicable shadow mean?

Miss Seafield was not present at lunch; but the old lady, Mrs. Hall, whom she had already mentioned, took the head of the table. Royal was in high spirits, both eating and drinking freely. He made loud jokes, and did not seem to miss his cousin in the very least. As soon as the meal was over he rose abruptly.

"What train do you take back to town?" he said, looking at me.

"There is a good train, is there not, at 3.30?" was my reply.

"I should recommend the 4.30—that is an express. I am sure Mrs. Hall and my cousin Primrose will be glad to take you round the grounds. I will join you in an hour or so; I always have a nap after lunch—I acquired the habit when in the East. Good-bye for the present."

He left the room, waving his hand as he did so in the direction of Mrs. Hall.

"Look after him," he said to her.

The moment the door closed behind my host, the good lady turned to me.

"Will you come at once to Primrose Seafield?" she said. "We both knew that this would happen. He takes more wine than he can stand, and always goes away for his nap, as he expresses it. Dr. Cato, I know that you have been good to Primrose, and that she has in part confided her story to you. If you can help her, do, in the name of Heaven; no girl ever wanted someone to guide her more than she does at present. She is very unhappy and, unless matters can be quickly put right, will have a miserable life in the future."

As Mrs. Hall spoke, she led me from the dining-room down a long corridor, and a moment later we found ourselves in the late Mr. Royal's study. It was a beautiful room, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and was situated in the west wing of the building. Primrose Seafield was already there. She was standing in one of the deep windows, her hands clasped loosely behind her back. As soon as I appeared she started forward.

"Ah, thank you," she said. "Mrs. Hall, will you leave us?"

The old lady withdrew, closing the door softly behind her.

"There is not a moment to waste," said Miss Seafield, speaking eagerly. "Take a chair, Dr. Cato, and please do not lose a word of what I am going to tell you."

I sat down in the nearest chair.

"Won't you sit, too?" I said to her.

"No, I cannot; I am too restless to remain still for a moment. Please listen."

"I am all attention," I answered.

"Do you remember my telling you early in the spring about my dear uncle's great passion for Roman relics?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well, the wretched story which I am about to confide to you has something to do with that fact, but I must start from another point. You know how suddenly my uncle died; his funeral took place from the Sanctuary Club, and I came back here. The lawyers immediately searched for the will, but no will could be found. Knowing my uncle's peculiarity with regard to hiding things of value, the search was most thorough and complete: not a corner of the old house was left without a complete investigation; the gardens and grounds were searched from end to end, but nowhere up to the present has there been the smallest clue to any will. Two months after the death my cousin, James Royal, appeared. He brought a London lawyer with him, said that he had heard that his father had died intestate, and that he was going to take possession of everything. I need not go into particulars, nor tell you all that he said and that the lawyers on my side said, and the amount of angry words that passed between them. All that mattered little or nothing to me. I was stunned. I could not believe that my cousin was to be the owner of the property, and that I myself was penniless. It was not, as I have already told you, that I wanted money for its own sake; but, oh! Dr. Cato, you do not know him. He will drag this noble

property through the very mire—there will be nothing of it left in a year or two.”

She paused as she spoke; the light from outside fell all over her figure, and lit up her pale face, bringing out strong bronze lights in her rich hair. She looked almost ethereal, and very beautiful—the suffering on each feature but accentuated her loveliness. As I watched her I trembled for her health. Would she long endure the severe strain to which she was now exposed?

“Oh, money is of so little value,” she continued, “and yet what tragedies it causes; but I must go on—please listen. You know, of course, that when I was at the Sanctuary Club I was engaged, with the full sanction of my own heart, and with every prospect of happiness, to the man I love best on earth, Jack Kelvin. You remember my telling you that once, some years ago, he got himself into my cousin’s power—he had alluded to this once or twice, but I did not know any particulars. I was to learn them all too soon. Jack, as I have told you, has very strong literary tastes, and is already making a name for himself in London; but in his early days he had serious troubles, and was once in severe money difficulties. At that time he knew my cousin, James Royal, well, and there was even a sort of friendship between them. Jack, in order to meet his liabilities, had borrowed money at very heavy interest from different money-lenders.

“One evening he confided the state of affairs to my cousin. It was just then that he and I had first met. He had fallen in love with me, and had even mentioned the hope that some day we should be husband and wife. James Royal discovered his feelings with regard to me. I cannot quite tell whether Jack confided in him or not, but James had a strange power in those early days of drawing people out; he could be full of tact when he pleased. Anyhow, he appeared then to be a very angel of sympathy. He had some money at the time, and told Jack that for my sake he would pay off some of his heaviest debts. He did so, taking over the mortgages himself, although the security they represented, if realized, would not have covered half the debts.

“This happened three years ago, but since then James Royal’s career has gone from bad to worse, and, as you know, my uncle often said that he would not leave him a penny. The existence of no will, however, completely changed the aspect of affairs, and he inherits all. He arrived at the Court, as I told you, and about two months

after his arrival came to me one day and explained the position. He said he had always thought it highly improbable that he would inherit the property. The fact of there being no will was an unforeseen contingency. There was, however, he said, always the possibility of a will being found, in which case he knew well that the estates would be mine.

“‘I always guessed you would be the heiress,’ he said, ‘and I meant when the time came to marry you.’

“I laughed in his face when he said the words, but he proceeded, looking me full in the eyes.

“‘I have got Kelvin in my power,’ he cried. ‘I can foreclose on those mortgages, and unless he pays up, which he cannot by any possibility do, some of his early speculations will be exposed—by no means to his credit—and he himself dragged through the Bankruptcy Court. Be sure of one thing—I shall have no mercy.’

“Oh, Dr. Cato, I knew his words were true—he looked the fiend he was as he spoke.

“‘I have waited years for this moment,’ he said, and he laughed. ‘When you marry me I will destroy the mortgages, but not an hour before. It is for you to choose whether I ruin Kelvin or not.’

“I was nearly wild with misery. That very morning I had heard that Jack expected to be offered the post of editor on a new and important paper, but his chance of this long-looked-for success would be over if my cousin did his worst.

“I went on my knees to my cousin; I did all I could to implore his mercy, but I might as well have spoken to a stone.”

Suddenly she turned and faced me.

“And I have yielded,” she said; “under the horrible pressure, I have yielded. I have told Jack the truth. He is nearly mad with misery, but I know it will be best for him in the long run. I cannot be the cause of his utter ruin.”

As she spoke she burst into painful sobs. I turned my head aside. After a moment or two she recovered herself.

“Your story is a most painful one,” I said, “and what I have already felt with regard to your cousin is abundantly confirmed by your words. Believe me, I think you are doing very wrong in yielding to the entreaties of a man like James Royal. He has lived a wicked and dissolute life, and is, I also fear, a confirmed drunkard.”

“I know it, I know it!” she said, clasping

and unclasping her hands. "But," she added, "Jack owes him £20,000. If he forces Jack to pay now, all his prospects are ruined. Oh, what a terrible power my cousin holds over him! If I could only get £20,000, I should be a free girl!"

"Then there is nothing whatever for it," I said, "but to find the will. When the will is found, and it is proved that you are the heiress, you can defy your cousin, for you can pay Kelvin's debts yourself."

"Ah, yes, yes; and now I am coming to the real point of this interview. Please listen with all your might. Do you remember my telling you about the curious bronze disc which my uncle had discovered?"

"I do," I replied; "but how can it possibly help you now?"

"In a position like mine one clutches even at straws," she said. "I want to show you the disc." She crossed the room, unlocked the cupboard, and drew out what looked like a large metal plate. "Have you ever seen anything like this before?" she asked.

I took the disc in my hand, turning it over with some interest.

"It looks like a very curious piece of old bronze of an early date," I said.

"I see you understand something of these things!" she exclaimed. "That is exactly what my uncle told me. I shall never forget the evening he found it. Look at the inscription round the edge. It is very early Latin—can you read it?"

I held the disc obliquely, and deciphered the following words with some difficulty:—

"HIC ORBIS CELAT THESAURUM OBRUITUM
RECOGNOSCE TRIA DIGITOS ARCUM SAULUM."

"If this is genuine it is interesting," I exclaimed; "do you know the translation?"

"I am not quite sure of some of the words," she said, "and my uncle never would read them to me. Can you translate that inscription, and, if so, will you, Dr. Cato?"

I looked again carefully at the old Latin, and then translated as follows:—

"*This Disc holds the Key to Buried Treasure. Remember three things: FINGERS—BOW—SAND.*"

"Is that the meaning?" said the girl, with great eagerness. "How wonderful! I knew my uncle had a reason for his excitement. I had partly, but only partly, deciphered this for myself. I had discovered about the buried treasure; but what—what does the latter part mean, Dr. Cato? What have Fingers—Bow—Sand to do with buried treasure?"

"I wish I knew," I replied.

"It seems to me," continued Miss Seafield, "that here may be the key to get me out of my difficulty. I dream of this disc day and night, and the words 'buried treasure' are ever ringing in my ears. Now, I have studied the laws of treasure-trove and discovered that the finder must hand over the treasure to the Crown, who pays him or her its intrinsic value. If this disc really contains the key to hidden treasure, and we can discover its meaning and get the treasure, I may be able to pay the debt



"I HELD THE DISC OBLIQUELY."

which Jack Kelvin owes my cousin, and so save him and release myself."

I never saw anything brighter than her eyes as she spoke—the colour had come into her cheeks and courage into her voice. She was leaning against the table, and her fingers

rested lightly on the disc. She looked down at it now with a glance of such hope, mingled with such despair, that all the enthusiasm within me rose up to try and help her.

"You are to be married in a week?" I said.

"Yes, this day week, unless—unless this can save me." Again she touched the disc. "Is there any hope, Dr. Cato?" she asked.

"Of a visionary character," I could not help saying. "In the first place, we must find out the meaning of this inscription. In the next, if there is treasure hidden anywhere in the old villa it may not be of large amount; but I tell you what I'll do—I'll go and see the Roman villa myself on my way back to the station. Does your cousin know about this disc?"

"He examined it, as he did everything else in the house, but evidently placed no value on it, and I took care not to acquaint him with its history."

"Then I will take possession of the disc—may I?" I said.

"Why?" she asked, reluctance in her tone.

"I should like Dr. Chetwynd to see it. He has all kinds of curious knowledge, and is, I fancy, an authority on this sort of thing."

"You will not keep me long in suspense?" she asked.

"No, you shall hear from me at the first possible moment, but do not build your hopes too much on this old thing. Continue to search for the will. If it is found, believe me you are saved."

Soon afterwards Royal joined us both in the grounds.

"By the way," I said to him, "I have just heard from Miss Seafield of a curious old Roman villa which has been excavated near here. I should like much to see it. Can I do so on my way back to town?"

He gave me a careless glance.

"If you really wish to see the old villa, there is no objection," he said; "but there is nothing for you to look at, except a lot of ruins and the holes

my father dug. I will tell the coachman to point it out to you on your way to the station."

"Thank you," I answered. The carriage came up at that moment. I bade Royal good-bye, wrung Primrose's hand, and started back to London.

After about twenty minutes' drive the coachman drew up at a gate on the left-hand side of the road, from which a path led up a steep embankment covered with short grass.

"That is the place where the old master got his death, it seems to me, sir," said the man. "He was always poking round there, and I never could see that he gained much by it. The Roman villa is at the other side of the embankment."

Telling him to wait for me, I began to scramble up the mound. When I reached the top I saw at once the site of the Roman villa by the extensive excavations all round it, and hurried up to view it more closely. A rusty pick-axe and some other tools were left on the grass, and I was surprised to find that there was far more to see than I had anticipated. Of course, nothing approaching to a structure existed, but the extent of the ground-plan was well defined, and the tiled pavement of the atrium, laid in curious mosaic patterns, was still in a state of preser-



"I BEGAN TO SCRAMBLE UP THE MOUND."

vation. I walked all round it, trying to rebuild it in my imagination from the scanty remains that the ravages of seventeen centuries had left. Time, however, was passing, and I was obliged to hurry back to catch the train.

As soon as I reached home I went in search of Chetwynd. I found him in his private laboratory. He looked up as I approached.

"I have nearly discovered what has puzzled me for some time," he said; "but what is the matter, Cato, you look worried?"

"So would you be if you had gone through the sort of day I have," was my answer. "I have something very important to tell you, Chetwynd. I have just come back from Court Royal."

"Well?" he asked.

I gave him a rapid outline of my experiences. He listened quietly.

"You must discover this cipher, Chetwynd," I said.

"Do you mean this moment?" he asked.

"Yes, now; can you not see for yourself there is not an hour to lose?"

"I will do my best," he answered; "leave the disc there."

I left him, and after a restless night I got up early, determined to see if Chetwynd were awake and to discover the result of his investigations. I went to his room and knocked several times, but as there was no reply I opened the door and went in. The room was empty—the bed had not been slept in. What could this mean? I hurried down to his study—it was likewise empty.

"I think Mr. Chetwynd is in his laboratory, sir," said one of the servants as I passed him.

"In his laboratory at this hour!" I exclaimed, in some wonder. In a moment I had reached the door and quietly opened it. Chetwynd was seated at the bench. Though it was broad daylight, the blinds were still down and the electric light burning. Upon the bench, fastened in an iron vice, was the disc; beside it lay Chetwynd's open violin-case and several books.

"My dear fellow," I cried, "what are you up to?"

"You must not do this again, Cato," he said, in a quiet voice, a twinkle coming into his bright eyes.

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Bring me your abominable enigmas to solve. You know I cannot leave a thing when I have once started it, but I have solved this, at any rate. Whether it will lead to

buried treasure or not is quite another question."

"You have?" I cried. "How? Tell me!"

"Did you not say that the pavement of the old Roman villa was in a state of preservation and in mosaic patterns?"

"Yes, certainly; but why do you ask?"

"Fingers—Bow—Sand," he replied. "If what I have discovered here is the key to the cipher, it will be something that will show the scientists of the present day that the old Romans knew more about the laws of acoustics than they give them credit for."

"But what do you mean?" I cried, impatiently.

"Why, Chladni's sand figures, of course—you know them, surely?"

"Chladni's sand figures!" I echoed, "of course, I have heard of them; but explain yourself, for God's sake."

"Well, see here. I struck the idea at about four o'clock this morning. You know when you sprinkle sand on a metal disc, and draw a violin bow down the edge of the disc, the sand forms itself into beautiful and symmetrical patterns, and when you place your fingers on the edge at places called Nodes, the pattern is of constant form. Well, here are the three things—Fingers, Bow, Sand."

"But whatever have they to do with treasure in a Roman villa?" I asked.

"Ah! that we have to find out. All I know is that I get this as a constant figure"—here he showed me a sheet of paper with a strange pattern drawn on it—"and if we find one of the mosaics corresponding to this," he continued, "I should say there might be a chance for us."

I gazed at him for a moment without speaking, as his extraordinary solution dawned upon me.

"By Jove!" I cried, at last, "you have discovered the key. It would be a triumph if we found something of real value, and so saved poor Primrose Seafield."

"We will start off immediately after breakfast," he cried; "I am as keen about the affair as you are yourself. Now, look here, Cato, this is what the bow does."

Some fine sand lay sprinkled on the disc; he placed his fingers at certain points on its edge, marked by indications that I had overlooked; he then drew the bow smartly along the edge. The musical note rang out, and the sand, from being a shapeless heap, fell into a perfect symmetrical figure, traced as if by the pencil of some skilled but invisible

draughtsman, and corresponding exactly to the copy he had made on paper.

"It is marvellous," I said. "Yes, we will take this down with us. I will go and look up the trains; there is not a moment to lose."



"'IT IS MARVELLOUS,' I SAID."

I went into the hall, where the servant handed me my morning's post: there was a letter from Miss Seafield. I tore it open at once.

"DEAR DR. CATO," it ran. "Immediately after you left this afternoon my cousin questioned me about your desire to visit the old Roman villa—and an hour or so later discovered that the bronze disc was gone. He flew into a frightful rage, and said that you and I were plotting something against his interests, and that only sinister motives took you to the ruins. He finally declared that he would go to you to get back the disc by the earliest train in the morning. He is almost like a madman to-night—what is to be done?—Yours sincerely,

"PRIMROSE SEAFIELD."

"The brute," I could not help exclaiming. "Well, he won't find me here. I am glad he will be out of the way while we are overhauling the ruins."

Chetwynd and I reached Wrenhurst in good time. We had already decided to go first to Court Royal and bring Primrose with us to the scene of the excavations. When we got there she hurried to meet us.

"Have you discovered anything?" she cried. The colour left her face and then returned to it in a crimson flood.

"We have news for you, and want you to come with us immediately," I said.

"Have you met my cousin?" she asked. "He left by the eight o'clock train for London—meaning to go straight out to Hampstead."

"Then in that case he will soon be back," I answered; "and we have not a moment to lose. Dr. Chetwynd has discovered the key to the secret of the disc. Will you come with us at once to the old Roman villa?"

"We ought to take tools with us," said Chetwynd.

"I noticed some there yesterday," I replied, "left behind doubtless by the workmen. Come, Miss Seafield."

On our way to the ruins I told the excited girl something of what Chetwynd had explained to me. From the depths of despair she seemed suddenly to reach the very pinnacle of hope.

"Oh, I am certain now I shall be saved, I am certain of it," she said. She could scarcely sit still owing to the feverish excitement which was consuming her.

At last we reached the mound and hurried to the site of the old Roman villa. Without a word Chetwynd went forward, gazing eagerly to and fro with his eyes bent upon the mosaic of the pavement. Suddenly he stopped.

"Look at this, Cato," he said. He knelt down and pointed from the paper he held in his hand to one of the patterns on the pavement.

"Line for line the same," he said; "this is it beyond doubt. Now for one of those pick-axes—there is something more than mere coincidence here."

I quickly fetched one of the picks, and inserting the point beneath the edge of the tile levered it up, at once discovering a deep cavity. My heart sank at the ease with which it came up. It had evidently been quite recently disturbed.

"We have been forestalled," cried Chetwynd; "your uncle, Miss Seafield, must have found the pottery here." He lay down as he spoke, and thrust his arm into the hole.

"Yes, it is quite empty," he said; "but, no, there is something. It is no Roman treasure, however, nothing but a modern tin case."

He drew out a long, symmetrical case, and tearing off the top, exposed a roll of parchment. He had scarcely done so before the sound of horse's hoofs at full gallop were heard to our right, and the next moment James Royal had drawn up and sprung from his saddle.

"What are you doing here, you scoundrels?" he cried. "You have found something; hand it over to me—it is my property."

His face was literally aflame with passion and drink.

"Pardon me," replied Chetwynd, as he glanced through the parchment. "This belongs to your father's executors. It is a holograph will dated three years ago, and made before his illness. From its contents I see that he disinherits you, and bequeaths Court Royal and his whole real and personal estate to his niece, Primrose Seafield."

These words fell upon us all like a thunder-

bolt. The scene of the next few moments baffles description, and I need not mention the disgraceful exhibition of frenzied rage and bad language that Royal gave way to. Had I not been there, it is almost certain he would have overpowered Chetwynd and destroyed the will. We returned, however,

with it to Court Royal in triumph, and later in the day I explained my theory with regard to it to Primrose Seafield.

"Your uncle's craze for hiding things led him to put the will here," I said; "beyond doubt, his mind was not right when he did so. You had a narrow shave, Miss Seafield, of being the most unhappy woman in the world, but things are all right now."

"They are, they are," she cried, "and I owe it all to you. I shall never, as long as I live, be able to thank you enough. I have already wired to Mr.

Kelvin, and he is coming down here this evening."

"And your cousin?" I said.

"He left Court Royal half an hour ago. Whether he will come back or not remains to be proved."

"His game is up," I answered. "I do not think you will be troubled with him any more."

In this conjecture I was partly right. James Royal died within the year, a hopeless victim to the worst form of the drink mania.

Primrose, however, long before that event took place became the happy wife of the man she loved best in the world.



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, YOU SCOUNDRELS?" HE CRIED.