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CHIEF CHARACTERS.

THE ISLAND



OF JUSTICE.

By Karta.

AUSTRALIAN EDITION.

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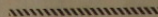
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PREFACE.



THE composition of this story aims, not at interesting any particular section of the Public, but alike rich and poor, youthful and aged, conformist and nonconformist, literate and the almost illiterate. There is an old saying about the "proof of the pudding," and THE ISLAND OF JUSTICE is an effort to provide a literary *gâteau* formed of absolutely wholesome ingredients, and to suit all tastes. The following is the recipe used:—

A number of sensational and pathetic incidents, placed in a wonderful Island and allowed to simmer and boil intermittently, while surrounded by novel and advanced customs. Love and sentiment of the best quality added to sweeten.

May THE ISLAND OF JUSTICE interest every reader, soften a few hearts that are hard, and strengthen some good intentions that are wavering, is the sincere wish of

THE AUTHOR.

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Chapter I.—Desperate Plans.

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NOT a league from one of the world's most populous cities is a coastal spot, so weird and deserted that it might be mistaken for portion of a previously undiscovered country. Barren of vegetation far inland, and beachless at the ocean's edge, a place more uninviting could hardly be imagined. For a few yards at one part only does the line of bleak, perpendicular cliff vary; here it is replaced by a sloping, rocky path leading down to a long, snake-like strip of rock, known as Serpent Reef, which extends far out into the turbulent seething waters.

The exceedingly exposed position of the coast and the swirling current around it cause an ever-disturbed sea in this locality, so that the Reef is never considered safe to venture out upon when a strong wind blows or the tide runs high.

This particular afternoon a gale was blowing, yet the sun shone out between the rifts in the mass of fleeting clouds as if determined, by a final effort, to dispel the gloom before sinking below the liquid horizon. The tide was already coming in and waves were dashing

themselves against the Reef at short intervals, making the rock-formed reptile of the sea appear as if emitting smoke and steam from every joint along its crooked spine.

Far out at the extreme point great billows struck below the monster's head, and ever and anon hid it completely from view as they rose and fell in a fountain of foam, made brilliant by the setting sun.

There, in the midst of this turmoil, a human figure calmly stood, like a statue of stone, defying the elements.

Yet it was no inanimate object thus braving the storm on Serpent Head, but a determined, desperate man, who neither seemed to fear, nor even heed, the power of winds and seas around him.

After a while another man appeared in frantic haste upon the cliffs above the shore, and shading his eyes, gazed seaward as if seeking someone. No sooner did he observe the figure on the reef than he rushed wildly down the narrow track, dislodging many of the smaller stones which raced ahead of him in his decent. Arriving below he hesitated but a second, then threw off his mantle and buttoned his coat tightly under his chin. Bravely he fought his way over the slippery rocks, against the steady blowing wind, dodging some of the waves, or clinging to the rocks on hands and knees while others dashed over him. At last he was within speaking distance of the man before him, who, standing still erect, was now often exerting his utmost strength to retain his foothold.

"Fairfield! For Heaven's sake come back! Fairfield! I——" A wave prevented the sentence being completed, for it broke across the rocks where the speaker stood and almost tore him from the narrow way.

When he recovered his footing he made another appeal, but the only answer was a hand extended towards the descending sun.

The would-be rescuer again struggled ahead, and at last he stood on Serpent Head and grasped the other by the shoulder.

"Fairfield! Are you mad? Why are you courting death like this?" he asked in horrified accents.

The man thus addressed turned his face, and

his friend saw his look was sadly changed; all sentiments of contentment and hope were dead, and so to him the world had lost all attraction.

"Weldron, leave me to fate," said the determined and yet despondent man. "I will return when the sun sets yonder—if I can. I have been robbed of all that makes life worth living, the last blow has fallen, so now I am here to see if it is God's will to deprive me even of my very life!"

A great breaker that spent half its force against the rock-edge, nevertheless dashed violently over them just as Fairfield finished speaking, yet shoulder to shoulder the foe was met, and when it had passed they still held their dangerous ground.

But it was apparent that the incoming tide would, in a few minutes, further raise the waves that no human being could stand or cling to-Serpent Reef.

Weldron tried hard to change his comrade's wild intention, for he knew that full half an hour would elapse before the actual sunset. At last he said bitterly:—

"Fairfield, if you persist, remember my death will be at your hands, for I will not leave you," then with a sudden thought he added—"It is sin to waste our lives like this. Come! let us escape from here and I offer, I promise you, we shall stand together facing as great a danger before a month goes by, a danger risked for the cause of Science, that if we die we may be honored instead of despised!"

It is difficult to surmise what would have been Fairfield's answer had not an unforeseen incident occurred. A great wave, more powerful than its predecessors, struck the two men with terrific force, felling Weldron on the spot, and he would have been washed off into the swirling eddy had not Fairfield thrown himself down on his hands and knees and seized his comrade as he lay.

When Weldron rose his left arm was seen to have been broken.

"Will you leave now Fairfield?" asked the injured man pointing to the shore with his right hand while the other hung helplessly by his side.

"Yes! Weldron, I accept your offer, we will not waste our lives while there is duty to be done."

The retreat thus sounded, back along the Reef the men soon began to fight their way.

That journey was indeed a terrible experience, no one could ever have accomplished it alone, for time after time these men saved each other from being carried off the rocks.

Eventually they reached the base of the track up the cliff, but in so bruised and exhausted a condition that the ascent proved a further severe ordeal to them.

When they arrived at the top, they walked a few hundred yards inland to where Weldron had left a cab in waiting.

The discreet driver asked no questions, but followed the instructions briefly given him to drive quickly to the lodgings Weldron had taken since his return here to his native city, a week previously.

At their destination the cab was dismissed, and Fairfield brought in a neighboring surgeon to set his friend's broken limb.

Later the two heroes of the afternoon's adventure being left to themselves, Weldron explained how he had traced and followed his friend, having a presentiment of evil concerning him that day.

"Ah! and you can't tell how thankful I was when I found you Fairfield," he said in conclusion, "and how madly I rushed down—but there, you know the rest."

"Yes, I know that I have one friend alone who has proved true devotion to me, one friend who was not purchased by my wealth," replied Fairfield gratefully, as he rested his hand affectionately upon the back of the arm chair in which the other was reclining.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Weldron, "you've true friends galore, and I know at least one of the fair sex who would follow you to the world's end." Then he added jokingly: "Though I can't locate that exact spot, unless it be Serpent Reef."

"Ah! Weldron, I know who you mean. Yes, and it is on her account that I am ready to die. Her father, God knows I don't blame him, hinted only this eventful afternoon that the greater distance I should place between his daughter and myself the better—as I am now a pauper!"

"Pauper! You need not be that, now I have returned to the city, and as for Major Devoué, he will nigh made himself your murderer! Confound him, I'd like to tell him so," said Weldron angrily.

"No, No! the old man is right in wishing me away, and if there was a war on now I'd welcome it for its chance of death, but as there is none, I went out to fight the elements; now you know what my feelings were. Weldron, for God's sake admit my love is unselfish?"

"You are thoroughly unselfish but horribly morbid, and confoundedly wasteful," answered the other in good humoured rebuke. "I promised you we will risk our lives together for Science, and if we die it will be in trying to enlighten the world. I am disgusted as you are with the laws and morals of the times in which we live, and like you am ready to quit this mundane sphere if Providence wills it! I owe no thanks to the community that I am not ruined like you Fairfield; had I my rights I should be famous and rich, as you know I was the true inventor of what is called the New Process for the treatment of ore. Instead my invention was stolen from me before I had time to secure it to myself, and the thief has not only been permitted to retain his booty, but a Government subsidy has aided him to a great extent in working the product of my brains!"

"A great injustice! But look at my case, you told me you read of my misfortunes while you were away? You knew, before our re-union a week ago, the heartless manner in which I had been ruined? The man who so gradually, systematically, and so completely robbed me till I found my estate bankrupt is now in a common gaol but that does not benefit me! Not a fraction of my property has been restored, our law has provided revenge, but what I need is restitution."

"Yes, I read of your troubles in the daily papers posted me during my absence. I began the case with feelings of sorrow for my old schoolfellow, I ended it with intense anger against the scoundrel who so contemptibly took advantage of your confidence. I felt as if I would have given ten years of my life for as many minutes alone with him!"

Thus the two men talked for some time. Sufferers

alike by the villainy of their fellow men they felt acutely for each other. They knew that it was an everyday occurrence for men and women to suffer the burden of wrongs done them without any attempt at redress by the law of the land, and it made them bear their own troubles none the less easily. But Fairfield and Weldron were mentally and physically strong men, they were built to do or die not to sit repining, and their conversation soon changed to arranging ways and means of future action.

After the clock upon the mantelpiece chimed the midnight hour, the two friends still planned on, their minds too strong and active to revert to their bruised and tired bodies that sadly needed rest after the strain of a few hours previously.

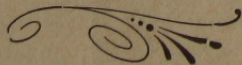
At last when the pale morning light was stealing into the room, gradually smothering the yellow lamplight in possession, they rose.

"Then, Fairfield, that is decided? In less than an hour hence all will be in readiness. We shall ascend in spite of everything until at a sufficient height to make the test. If we live long enough to complete our experiments it means a discovery to bring us fortune as well as honour, I feel convinced. If on the other hand we do not live—"

"Well, we can die," added Fairfield simply.

And both men shook hands cordially and smiled.

Perhaps the smile was assisted by the too palpable truth of the last remark.



Chapter II.—Unchosen Perils.

WHAT an experience! The scene had changed! Fairfield and Weldron were again together, but this time in a balloon, and being driven along in a wildly furious gale; hundreds of feet above the sea. The two friends had undertaken their balloon adventure for the purpose of a scientific experiment, at an altitude never before attempted. They had unfortunately started (the result of impatience, natural to Weldron) on a day that the most uninitiated in weather movements might have deemed unpropitious. The higher they ascended the stronger they found the wind, till at a certain distance they could ascend no further, but were driven along at the mercy of the gale.

An incident of the Franco-Prussian war vividly recalled itself to the minds of the two men. The story was as follows:—Two of the balloons that left beleagured Paris, to deliver despatches to the Provinces, were carried out to sea, the most dreaded of all aeronauts' perils; one balloon was never seen again, and the occupants of the other feared that nothing could prevent their being drowned in mid ocean. However, at the eleventh hour, chance came to their aid, for they were being carried at a fairly quick rate straight towards the tiny island called "Belle Isle." As they were passing over it, they decided to risk the danger of a hurried descent in preference to the terrors of the deep, and without loss of time they tore open the valves, letting the gas escape.

The car fell fast, but none too soon for they struck the ground close to the far side of the coast. Both escapees were seriously injured in their fall, though eventually they recovered.

The case of Fairfield and Weldron had at the start resembled that of the Paris aeronauts, and they inwardly prayed it might end as happily.

Luckily when starting they provided themselves with water and provisions, as all day, throughout the night, and also the next day their balloon had continued its forced journey over an apparently endless expanse of water.

Not until about three o'clock in the afternoon did anything occur to break the monotony, when Fairfield roused his companion and pointed ahead.

"Weldron, do you see! There is an island ahead! Look!"

For a moment Fairfield's companion took no heed, he was sullenly resigned to fate; at last he replied: "Yes, I see it, but what use is it to us?"

"Belle Isle saved the Paris aëronauts, Weldron; you remember the story?" he enquired anxiously, referring to the one just recounted.

"Yes, but they were in an ordinary gale, not a hurricane!" he answered as he sat down in the car again and toyed carelessly with a rope end, for he felt their case was desperate.

The day was drawing to a close, but in spite of the height at which the balloon was flying through space the form of the distant island was discernable. Unlike Belle Isle it was a large one, but this fact was of little advantage, for if they passed over any portion it would only be the narrow extremity; they could tell this by the course they were making. There was no time to waste, a few minutes, and they would be above the land.

The two men had spoken little for some time, for it was exceedingly difficult to make themselves heard above the whistling or the wind in the ropes, and the noise caused by the flapping of some broken cordage.

It was useless for them to deplore their condition, and as brave men they had both quietly resigned themselves to the inevitable, but now Fairfield bestirred himself, he deemed it was time for action. Catching Weldron's arm and leaning over him he spoke loudly, close to his ear:

"A few minutes more and we will be again above land, doubtless for the last time. Already our balloon threatens a collapse before another half-hour has passed! We have one more chance to save our lives. Shall we descend?"

Weldron regarded his companion with a look of pity. He thought him demented. Fairfield on his part believed he understood Weldron's thoughts. He knew his old schoolfellow's ways and rough sterling qualities so well. He was the only one in the world who appeared to care for Weldron, whose parents were dead, and who had never met one of the opposite sex he could really love, or who seemed to love him. His peculiar temperament made him generally unpopular, if not disliked. There was one girl, nevertheless, who did love him somewhat, but he was ignorant of the fact, so it was no consolation to him, poor fellow. She was a cousin of Agnes Devoué.

So Fairfield came to the conclusion Weldron's look indicated sorrowful apathy, regret that death was nigh, and yet willingness to leave himself in the hands of fate. He therefore decided he must save his comrade's life; he cared little for his own.

"Come, Weldron! For Heaven's sake speak!" he cried.

"Fairfield, my good fellow, it is useless!" Weldron answered with compassion.

The tone undeceived Fairfield, he now saw he was being pitied as a lunatic! It was a painful discovery for a man who was exerting his wits to their utmost.

Weldron, however, was the first to speak again: "You say descend," and he laughed bitterly. "It's a mild word to use in such a storm as this. Why on reaching the ground we should be dashed down and along like a stone rebounding from a catapult!"

"But on the land you have a bare chance," argued Fairfield. "I know the risk is great, but for Heaven's sake consider, we might be thrown on a favorable spot, while in the sea drowning is a certainty!"

"Then be it as you wish," quietly came the answer, and Weldron stood up ready and willing to risk his life as the other should decide, though it was against his own judgement.

Fairfield saw the position in a new light, and asked himself what right had he to choose the chance of life or death for another?

"No, Weldron, if you wish us to go on we will

have it so!"

"It shall not be so; you shall have *your* way. I will let the gas escape myself!" cried Weldron, seizing a hatchet from the bottom of the car.

Fairfield caught him by the arm—he was, if anything, the stronger of the two—but no struggle occurred. Both men looked at each other determinedly, but anger was absent. It was a strange tableau enacted while the balloon flew through space.

Suddenly an inspiration seemed to come to Weldron, he threw down the hatchet and asked:

"Have you still that keepsake in your pocket?"

"Yes, but what of it?" asked the other in astonishment, for it was his turn to think Weldron demented.

"Then let it decide!"

Fairfield understood; still holding the ropes with one hand to steady himself, he brought from his vest pocket with the other a small silver coin that Agnes Devoué had given him a year before. He did not look at it himself, but held it before his comrade's eyes.

"Read it's decision, Weldron; tails we go on, heads we stop!"

"What does it say?" he demanded anxiously.

"Heads! so we stop! It must be quickly; see the island is close at hand!"

In another moment he again picked up the hatchet, and leaning backward over the edge of the car, hurled it aloft through the silk. There was a tearing sound and the balloon rushed downward on a slanting track. The jerk caused Weldron to lose his balance, and he would have fallen out into eternity had not Fairfield seized him.

With an extreme effort, that strained every muscle in his body, Weldron raised himself, assisted by Fairfield's tugging, at last grasped the ropes. Then the two men fell back into the car exhausted.

"Fairfield, you've saved my life!" gasped Weldron.

"We—we cannot tell yet, I know that you wished to go on, but now my action may bring you to your death."

"No, no! if we are dashed to pieces on the rocks below the fault is not yours. We have done as Fate alone decided!"

The little coin that was causing the aeronauts to end their journey so soon had been given by Agnes to Fairfield once when he had doubted her love. Never would she have thought it was eventually to decide life or death to him.

There had been a lover's quarrel. They had just forgiven each other, and were as a result happier than before. Truly mortals could never appreciate sunshine but for the shade. They were walking hand-in-hand along a quiet country lane and nature seemed to echo the feeling in the human hearts, the birds twittering joyously as the sun broke through the clouds after a summer shower just ceased.

But the sun did more, it shone on a little silver coin that lay in the path, and causing it to glisten, Agnes' attention was attracted to it.

"Why, Fred, it's a George the Third shilling!" she cried, pleased at her find. "I'm sure that is a lucky omen."

A quarter of an hour later when they parted at the gate of her father's mansion, she placed the little coin in Fairfield's hand; a sweet smile lit up her beautiful face, while her eyes glistened with emotion as she said:

"Dearest, take this as a keepsake from me. See, upon it are four crowns; if ever you doubt me again look on this little token, and believe me that not for four kingdoms nay, even to possess the riches of the whole world—would I turn from you!"

And now Fairfield, as he stood up in the car with utmost difficulty, wondered if he should ever meet her more, now that death seemed nigh he was not content to part from her for ever.

Out on Serpent Reef he had steeled himself to forget her, but his heart had softened again since then.

The two men clung to the ropes with might and main as they flew through the air with increased velocity descending the while, and when half across the peninsula they had but fallen to half their previous altitude. The gas had nearly all escaped, but the wind in its violence carried the balloon onward while it fell.

Still down, down, down they went, yet on and on! Yes, on far too quickly, for the land was now passed

and they were out over the deep and cruel waters of the ocean after all! Down! Down! Down closer still to a watery grave!

They caught a glimpse of a vessel near the coast, but had passed too far beyond for it to be of any service to them.

Down still faster now, for to leeward of the island and its mountains the strength of the gale was less powerful. At last the crisis had come! A sudden fall! A vision of the distant vessel, a dash of spray, a cold plunge, and the car with its living freight was dragged along beneath the waves!

* * * *

When Fairfield regained consciousness and Weldron his strength, for both had been rendered *hors de combat* by their journey under the surging billows, they found themselves in a luxurious cabin, pleasantly illumined. The light, though powerful, was of a color and quality actually soothing to the eyes. Weldron had changed his soaked clothes for dry ones, and Fairfield was reclining, partly dressed, while a gentleman who proved to be a doctor stood close by, having restored him to life. Two others in naval dress were also near, and Fairfield looked at these strangers with wonder, then with great joy he observed his old chum Weldron who took his hand giving it a grateful pressure. The two friends each thanked the Almighty that the other lived.

The doctor appeared a very kind but business-like person; he explained that his patient was now out of danger, and added a cheery assertion that he was "worth an army of drowned men," then after a word or two of professional advice he left the cabin.

Fairfield soon learnt from the captain and chief officer of the "Vitæ" how the rescue had been accomplished.

The vessel was a Government cruiser on her patrol journey round the coast. When to leeward of the island Captain Bloxfor had observed, by telescopic observation, the existence of the balloon, which appeared a mere speck in the distance.

He noted the object appeared to be falling and set the "Vitæ" to cross its track if possible; the waves caused little impediment, for the vessel was propelled by massive engines driven by multo-electricity, the most wonderful motor power yet invented. The electricity known to Fairfield and Weldron was to man's use as a primitive wooden limb might be, compared to one of powerful bone and muscle. The life-boats were specially constructed ones, similarly propelled by smaller engines, and the captain was prepared to lower one at a minute's notice. He ordered his engineer to exert utmost speed, and the "Vitæ" cut through the waves at a furious rate.

It was an exciting race down the coast to meet the balloon, which was taking a short cut across the land, and the captain found he was unable to win as he desired, for it passed in front of the "Vitæ" and fell half-a-mile beyond.

The car was just about to sink when a pursuing boat launched quickly by the "Vitæ" approached, the chief officer adroitly wielded his boathook and brought the car alongside. Fairfield was inanimate and Weldron was trying to raise him from what was so nearly their basket coffin. They were no sooner lifted out than a gust of wind caught the shattered balloon and acting as a sail it scudded off with the lightened car slightly immersed. Away like a gigantic sea-bird it careered over the waves, as if its dripping legs and wing-tips were touching the spray.

The life-boat soon ploughed its way through the turbulent waters back to the vessel's side, and efforts were made which eventually restored Fairfield to life.

This explanation ended, the aeronauts recounted their own story, then heartfelt thanks were returned the gallant rescuers, but it was soon noticeable that the rescued were all impatience to learn their whereabouts.

"Captain Bloxforz," continued Fairfield, for such he learned was the captain's name, "You and your worthy officer have our sincere gratitude, our lives were cleverly and nobly saved."

"Yes, indeed," said Weldron, "and now, captain, pray tell us what locality we are in? I won't ask are

we on the Equator or at the North Pole, for the temperature indicates neither," he added good humoredly.

The captain appeared strangely disconcerted by the question, and avoided a direct answer.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "as regards your rescue we simply did our duty as man to man."

"And did it well," added Fairfield gratefully. "I suppose we are hundreds of miles from home?"

Though the comrades had briefly told their own story, the captain evidently had no wish to tell his.

Weldon, noticing his embarrassment, looked him straight in the face as he remarked:—"Ha! captain, I am quite as anxious as my friend Fairfield to learn what part of the world we are in, you have not yet informed us."

The skipper walked towards the cabin window, then he turned abruptly, deciding he could no longer escape the question.

"My chief officer has already explained that you are on board the 'Vitæ,' and I may further state that the land we cruise around is 'The Island of Justice.'"

"The Island of Justice! where does it lie, captain?" exclaimed Fairfield.

"I never heard of it, and I used to pride myself on my geographical knowledge!" said his comrade dubiously.

The captain's attention became engrossed with a peculiar chart on the wall while he handled his watch-chain disconcertedly.

His chief officer, however, not noticing his superior's reserve, began confidentially:—"Well! your lack of information with regard to this island is quite excusable, considering that it is not —"

"Stop!" interrupted the captain, turning quickly in evident annoyance. "Be good enough to leave all explanations to me, I have my reasons!"

The officer bowed assent, and the captain continued, addressing the visitors—

"The fact is, gentlemen, you now belong to a country which is under government very different and much superior to any other in the world. Further explanations

just now are likely to be inopportune; you both require food and rest, and we have matters on deck needing immediate attention, for the 'Vitæ' is due in port to-morrow."

The captain's words seemed to remind his officer of duty, so excusing himself to the strangers, and after a few moments conversation in an undertone, at the door, with his superior, he made his exit.

Weldron turned to the captain before he had time to speak again.

"Captain Bloxforz, we would be more at ease if you simply stated our whereabouts," he expostulated.

The skipper gave a gesture of impatience as he replied:—"In the morning, then, I shall be happy to enlighten you as to—well—your position, in all senses of the term," and he emphasised the latter words. "Now, be good enough to come this way."

As he moved away the two friends saw no choice but to follow. They were ushered into a very beautiful, yet small saloon. The captain stated that the "Vitæ" was not built to carry a number of passengers, but they would find every convenience. He pointed to a centre table, on which a snowy-white cloth was laid, and an elegant dinner service.

"There, as my guests, you will be able presently to satisfy the inner man. If you touch the indicator according to what you require it will immediately be brought. Here," stepping to a door and throwing it open, "you will find a sleeping apartment for two, and wearing apparel for your use, similar to that worn by the islanders. When you have donned it you will feel quite acclimatized," and he smiled pleasantly, endeavoring to make his visitors feel at home in their new quarters.

They in their admiration forgot for the time the captain's previous strange behaviour, and thanked him for placing such comfort at their disposal.

"Now, gentlemen, before leaving you to yourselves, I must obtain your words of honor in two matters," he remarked in tones of one accustomed to be obeyed, "I desire no better bond."

"We are at your command, Captain Bloxforz," replied Fairfield.

"Firstly, then, neither of you will quit this saloon, and cabin until I grant you permission on the morrow; secondly, neither will speak to anyone on board till then. Have I your promises?"

The two men addressed looked at each other, Fairfield was about to acquiesce, but his companion quickly replied with some warmth—

"Captain, your reticence and now your demands are surely quite out of place. We are honest men, and this action on your part is both unaccountable and distasteful to us, for it is certainly undeserved."

Firmly, but quietly the captain replied:—"I require only what I deem necessary for your ultimate benefit."

"Then give your reasons, we are as well able to judge what is to our benefit as you are!"

This statement seemed indisputable, and the captain became annoyed at being so cornered, he cut matters short.

"Sir! I shall not argue with you. My whole treatment of you and your friend warrants your compliance with my request, if you persist in thinking otherwise I must warn you that I have power to enforce all my orders on board this vessel."

"Captain!" cried Fairfield stepping forward, for he thought it high time to act the part of peace-maker, "We have no wish to be hasty or unreasonable."

Then turning to the irascible Weldron he endeavored to calm him, but his intractable friend continued—

"But we have done no wrong, we have committed no crime, and are at war with no-one! Why should we be treated as prisoners?" he asked, undaunted.

"Because you *are* prisoners, and I demand your obedience, as you do not offer it!" angrily replied the captain.

Having spoken thus, the commander of the "Vita" turned haughtily and ascended the stair-way without even one look to see the effect of his words.

Fairfield almost staggered as if a blow had been struck him, then he noticed that Weldron with increased

rage was about to follow. Quickly he sprang to his side and held him back.

"Weldron! stop! Let us do nothing rash. Come! we must consider before we act!"

"Let me go! I shall demand the reason of this ruffianly treatment. Whether we have fallen among pirates or madmen, I'll know the truth!"

"But hear me, at least we can wait till to-morrow."

"Why should we wait? Let us know the worst at once!"

"What difference can waiting a few hours make to us?"

"The difference of a tedious suspense at any rate," remarked Weldron a little more calmly, nevertheless.

"Well" said Fairfield, letting go his friend's arm, "the captain told us truly enough we owe his wishes some consideration. Let us show our gratitude for his saving our lives by exercising a little patience."

"Oh! hang it. I hate suspense—however, I suppose you'd better have your own way, Fairfield."

The door of the cabin stood ajar and the impetuous prisoner banged it open with his fist and walked in. Fairfield followed and laughingly chided his friend for his fiery nature. He could discern that his old schoolfellow was unconvinced of any benefit to be derived by waiting, and that he thought it unmanly to quietly submit to interference with his right of freedom, nevertheless he gave in to Fairfield's wishes. So Fairfield saw in him the material of which bold heroes are made; he could be turned by a friend, but an enemy could not move him at the point of the bayonet. Yet both men at times would have profited to have learned that heroism becomes foolhardiness when courage is wasted in actions that promise no likelihood of good result. So an armistice was agreed upon, but Weldron made a final stipulation.

"Then to-morrow I rely on your backing me up, Fairfield; I'll not submit to be longer treated in this mysterious manner."

"Allright, if the captain does not keep his word we'll—well, I really fail to see *what* we can do, but—we will do it, like men!"

Weldron had to laugh at this very obtuse proposal, he evidently also began to see the futility of opposition. "Of course" he said "we are in the power of these people but we can bring about a crisis. As for the Island of Justice, who the deuce ever heard of it? I believe the whole thing is pure fabrication and we'll be dumped down in some pirate's nest where we won't find much justice knocking about."

Fairfield could not help smiling at Weldron's annoyance, he could not help thinking his friend was never moulded for a martyr.

"Come Weldron!" at last he said briskly, "We must make the best of it. Let us change these clothes for the Justician rig out, and then for a sumptuous repast! I'm confoundedly hungry and so must you be."

Having dressed themselves, the two friends again entered the saloon and were struck with the elegance and solidity of the surroundings. Highly polished and carved wood of beautiful grain, tiny granite pillars, and exquisite mirrors with bevelled and embossed edges. Lounges of burnished metal and upholstered with the softest blue velvet, carpeting of handsome design, in which one's boots sank deeply.

Fairfield seated himself in front of a novel bill-of-fare to which the captain had alluded, it was a solid silver epergne in the form of a chrysanthemum plant with golden flowers, the round centres of these were electric discs, with the names of various dishes and wines printed upon them.

He took the precaution that Weldron should not have the control of these buttons, for knowing his irritability, he feared, if annoyed, he might ring up the whole list at once, out of pure devilment. So he called over the chief items and then "brought pressure to bear" on his own and Weldron's demands.

A few minutes later a steward supplied their wants, and they started the meal with the avidity of hungry men. During their repast it is painful to have to record that Messrs. Fairfield and Weldron did not exercise the moderation that they doubtless would have under ordinary circumstances. It would be far easier to enumer-

ate the dishes and wines they did not "ring up" and consume, than those they did. The variety of the liquids, indiscreetly mixed, somewhat affected their heads, until they hardly knew their whereabouts, even to the limited degree permitted them by the skipper of the "Vitæ." At last they threw themselves on the luxurious couches and smoked a fragrant herb they found in a china jar upon the sideboard, and then they conversed somewhat erratically, and dozed at intervals for several hours.

The captain passing through at midnight regarded them with a look of undisguised reproach that reminded them the saloon was not a sleeping apartment, and then only they retired to their cabin. It was cosy indeed, at night being supplied with artificial warmth; a tap and thermometer arrangement enabled the temperature to be regulated at will. The appearance of the cabin was very beautiful; the walls were covered at intervals with painted panels of embossed material on which raised flowers and leaves of delicate tints, absolutely life-like and soft to the touch, appeared almost as if growing. Such vulgar resting places as bunks were unknown on board the "Vitæ;" on each side wall of the cabin swung from handsome projecting hooks of silver, a kind of hammock, its novelty consisted of being made of polished, colored bamboo strips, crossed like basket ware, this had a firm edging which assisted also in preventing the sides of the hammock from pressing upon the occupier by his own weight. The bedding was of silk and wool material, light and warm, and never before had the travellers enjoyed such wholesome comfort for sleeping.

So throughout the night Fairfield and Weldron were experiencing the benefit of healthy repose while the "Vitæ" sped on her way, whither they knew not, but the morrow promised them an end at least to the burden of their present suspense.



Chapter III.—Lost to the World.

THE prisoners in luxury rose late in the morning, and having finished their toilet proceeded to seek their breakfast in the saloon. As Fairfield was leaving the cabin he noticed that Weldron, before following him picked some shining object off a high shelf and transferred it to his inside breast-pocket.

They entered the saloon and found on a silver salver upon the table a note addressed to—"Messrs. Fairfield and Weldron, Passengers, Government Patrol Boat, 'Vita.'"

The word "passenger" certainly had a conciliatory effect, and Fairfield tore open the envelope hopefully, and read aloud the contents:—

"Captain Bloxforz desires to state he will be pleased to talk matters over with Messrs. F. and W. directly they have breakfasted. They are requested to ring for the steward."

"Ha!" ejaculated Weldron with the air of a conqueror, "Good thing I let the noble captain see we were not going to be fooled about at his pleasure, eh?"

"I don't know," said his peace-loving companion, dubiously, "The captain strikes me as honest and kind at heart. I may be wrong, but even should I be right in judging this man's true character, I wonder you did not turn him against us."

"Oh! come now! A man 'honest and kind at heart' shouldn't be so easily made vicious," replied Weldron, warding off the rebuke. "However, I know you're always for conciliation, so don't be alarmed, Fairfield, you can do the talking, and I'll keep out of it—if I can."

Thus the two men managed each other's idiosyncracies. And after all is not such forbearance often the secret of true friendship?

Weldron began to resume his usual cheerfulness; again permitting his good nature to predominate over his

ill-humour. He intended to gratify Fairfield's wishes by silence, for he felt he could not trust himself to speak to the captain and please his friend.

While enjoying their breakfast the voyagers speculated considerably on what they had to learn. The steward evidently had his instructions, for he was perfectly mute, and according to orders was not questioned.

The captain did not keep the two friends long waiting, for in about ten minutes after the breakfast was over his stalwart form was seen descending the companion-way. His manner had lost much of the imperiousness displayed the previous evening, and his greetings were most kindly offered.

Weldron was actually encouraged to reply in a little apologetic speech:—"Your reasoning words are much appreciated by us both, captain," he said, "and I must own to being rather impetuous last evening. I hope I have your good-will, nevertheless."

"You have, indeed!" replied Captain Bloxforz, earnestly.

"Then," added Weldron, "as regards your promised explanations, I will endeavor to remain simply a listener while you talk matters over with my philosophical friend, Fairfield."

A smile passed round, and with a slight bow to the captain, Weldron forthwith walked across the room and stretched himself upon the couch, ears free to listen, but a newly-lighted cigarette between his lips to aid him keep them closed. The others sat up to the table, and facing each other, leaned carelessly against it.

Fairfield could not help wondering if this was to be a successful council of peace, or end in wordy war.

The captain began:—"First of all, Mr. Fairfield, as to the form of the island we guard: it resembles two islands. One part is called North Island and the other South Island, the two portions are joined by a narrow isthmus. The capitals of the north and south are called respectively North Veritas and South Veritas. This map will show you the general outlines."

Here the captain spread upon the table a clearly defined map of the island, made of celluloid or similar

composition; the mountains were raised and the rivers and lakes depressed upon its surface.

"Will you examine the map with us, Mr. Weldron?"

"No, thank you, captain; I'm listening intently."

"Very well, I shall proceed. The capitals are the only two cities in the Isle of Justice, but hundreds of villages, with their surrounding farms and country residences, are dispersed evenly over the whole island. You will learn the reason of this later on; at present I will confine myself to facts that require your most immediate attention. Let me tell you that the Justicians, being situated in a remote 'corner' of the earth, if I may use the expression, have only been intruded upon once or twice since the founders of the State took possession. They by chance first discovered the island, and it has not had many discoverers since; you and your friend are the latest."

"Excuse my again interrupting you, Captain Bloxforz, but if those who have come to your shores were pleased with the island and its customs, why have they not induced followers until the place became known throughout the world?"

"The reason is that our government takes certain precautions against the importation of strangers. We are bound to protect ourselves even in this advanced century against the world's still crude civilisation—I mean want of a basis of humanitarianism. From time to time we send out trusted men to secretly study the world's way and secure the latest books. By the latest reports of these men on returning here the government still decides that to admit the most civilised races would render us liable to the introduction of many customs of cruelty and oppression—evils unknown in the Island of Justice."

The captain had warmed to his subject, but unfortunately his guests, or prisoners, did not feel in quite a position to admire his patriotism.

"Then you want no strangers in your Island, captain?" asked Fairfield, somewhat bitterly. "What, then, do you propose to do with us when you arrive in port?"

"I intend handing you over to my friend, Bon Doreng, who will take you in hand."

"Bon is the gentleman's Christian name, I conclude? A peculiar one."

"No," replied the captain, smiling, "it is simply a word, prefixed by the islanders as a title, the only special title we use, and alone permitted to those whose nobleness of character has been well proved. The English words 'Sir' and 'Mr.,' however, are used generally for ordinary individuals."

"I understand. And who may this gentleman be?"

"He is an Inspector of Guards—doubtless of what you might call detectives or police."

"But, captain, this is an indignity surely unnecessary to bring upon us?" Fairfield exclaimed, knowing that if he remained silent Weldron would speak.

"I assure you I intend to put you in charge of this Inspector because he will study my wishes, and conduct you kindly and quickly to the Comptroller of Passes. Your case will then be dealt with at once. Otherwise you would be detained until the comptroller was on pass duty."

Fairfield's uneasiness increased as he glanced at Weldron; however, he did his best to appear calm while he remarked:—

"Evidently, then, we have to thank you again for your kind consideration. I suppose our story must be told to the Comptroller direct, before we can obtain our freedom?"

"The explanations must, as you say, be personally given," answered the captain tersely, then he added, "I may state I intend preventing publicity of your case, that you and your friend, now dressed in the conventional garb, may avoid any annoyance the sensation caused by your arrival as strangers would cause you."

Weldron could contain himself no longer, he sat up and addressed the captain:—

"Good heavens! Why should we hide our identity, as if we were criminals? What are the the Justicians that you should advise this secrecy? Would this model people behave towards us like savages?"

"No, they would not," quietly answered the captain, "and if you will be good enough to keep calm I will explain."

Weldron, thus rebuked, threw himself back again, and smoked furiously.

The skipper turned to Fairfield and continued:—

"In launching you among the islanders incognito, I do my duty to you as fellow men, giving you a free hand to do as you yourselves think fit, after due consideration. If, later on, you decide to endure the harrassing of press reporters, and a thousand other people desirous of interviewing you, it rests with yourselves."

Fairfield, glancing at Weldron, quickly replied:—

"Well, captain, I admit we must be on the right side in any case, in profiting by the option you give us; it is always desirable to look before one leaps."

"Yes, Captain," said Weldron, who went across to the table and took a seat, "I see you are right in arranging for us to have time to think. But is there no fear of your sailors spreading our story?"

"None whatever, my men are specially trained to secrecy. My officers and myself act as water detectives to the government, and it would never do if our men had loose tongues."

"Quite so," remarked Fairfield, pleasantly, "and what else is there we should know without delay?"

"Only one thing, I think. You will be landed in South Island, and if you desire not to be banished to the North Island care must be exercised in the indulgence of intoxicating liquors. This will help my explanation," and he handed over a thick round disc of leather which he took from his pocket.

Weldron, after examining it, passed it on to his friend, remarking, jocularly—"A leather medal, take it, Fairfield, you deserve it."

"I hope you may also some day," retorted Fairfield, laughing. "And what is it for, captain?"

"It is my passport; every person over the age of eighteen has one issued to him or her."

"Then you'll get one, Weldron, after all, my venerable friend," said Fairfield.

After a few more jokes, in which even the captain joined, he continued:—

"The embossing on the pass cannot be imitated, and when once damaged cannot be mended without the flaw being noticable. The design represents the Justician coat of arms."

"A beautiful piece of work, really," remarked Weldron, glad to make amends for his ridicule, as he examined it with the air of a connoisseur.

"Now, what I wish to explain is that if a person is thrice found inebriated (in three different weeks) during the period of one year the pass is punctured each time, and at the third puncture the owner is banished to the North Island, which is the total abstinence portion of the State. This is the rule; there is no favoritism."

Weldron and Fairfield gave low whistles of astonishment. Both thought seriously of their over-indulgence the previous evening.

"Banished for how long?" asked Fairfield.

"Ten years," answered the captain, replacing his pass in his pocket.

"It seems to me unjust to banish a person to a lonely island for such a trivial cause," remarked Weldron.

"You make a mistake in thinking North Island less attractive than South; there is little to choose between the two."

"But, captain," continued Fairfield, "I must agree with my friend, Weldron, that it seems unfair to banish a man for making just three mistakes in over-reckoning his liquor-carrying powers. I have known most worthy and clever men who had this failing."

"Doubtless; but have you considered that even the worthy man who deprives himself of his senses with intoxicants is liable to commit any crime? We consider it just that all such men shall be led from temptation, while those who can drink in moderation shall be free to do so."

"You argue well, captain, but even if a man is banished to a land as good as his own, he must suffer by banishment."

"Very little, if any, for our government does all in its power to fairly compensate him. His family is carried

free, and so are all portable belongings. And if he sells off his business and desires to start afresh in the North, any difference in values is made good."

Weldron looked up. He evidently felt that he must have the final shot.

"So, captain, you consider it justice to interfere with the freedom of a subject who has committed no crime; to send to exile a man who, though thrice found intoxicated in a year, harms at least no one but himself?"

Fairfield regretted that his position as interrogator was becoming usurped, for in spite of Weldron's now apparent friendliness to the captain, he divined that he still had little confidence in him and the island's laws.

The answer came readily and decisively—

"Most certainly we are justified in preventing a drunkard from drinking. Cannot either of you quote statistics from other parts of the world that will bear me out in my assertion?"

Fairfield with praiseworthy honesty replied—

"I must admit reading not long ago that the United Kingdom death-rate through drink alone was 120,000 per annum, and that two of England's greatest judges reported that drunkenness is responsible for nine-tenths of England's criminals."

"Ah! that is even worse than I believed possible. Here, then, we have no deaths due to drink, and very little crime. Now, Mr. Weldron, do you not see our action is justifiable?"

"Well, I must say," said Weldron, laughing, "that in an argument two to one is great odds; what with your explanations and my learned friend's statistics, it is too severe on me altogether. And are your customs in general quite different from the world's customs, captain?"

"It would be more correct to say that we *practice* the world's customs differently. We have almost the same religion, trades, and amusements; but our manners and morals are all regulated by a truer sense of right and justice."

"Then we shall not be quite like fish out of water while we remain on the Island?" asked Fairfield.

"Not at all. I have studied the latest books brought here by the last secret expedition we sent out,

so perhaps I am fairly competent to form an opinion. If you expect to have arrived at a portion of the globe where everything appears a few hundred years advanced, you will be disappointed. Why, we have no flying machines, subterranean boats, and such like; but we have what is more conducive to a nation's happiness—the advancement of each individual. The Justicians, to a man, march forward on firm ground, while half the world progresses over a quagmire."

There was no doubt Captain Bloxforz had succeeded in interesting his listeners in spite of their prejudices. Fairfield and Weldron were led to recount their personal experiences in their own land, regarding the absence of redress to the wronged.

"Ah!" said the skipper, "you will find our courts carry out absolute, instead of mere nominal, justice."

Weldron, after a while, gave a move of impatience. He naturally admired true Justice, but his first thought was of Liberty. He tired of hearing the praise of a people who could treat him as a prisoner. It seemed a great inconsistency to his mind.

Fairfield guessed what was coming and quickly decided it better to bring the captain to the point himself.

"Captain Bloxforz, we feel gratified at the prospect of landing among so enlightened a people. Now, be good enough to tell us what restraint is to be placed on us. You have said we will be given passes of freedom in the island, but I fear you are keeping something back, and we desire to know everything. How soon will we be permitted to leave this island?"

"Exactly what I was going to ask!" exclaimed Weldron, striking the table with his hand, then he rose, and with folded arms stood attentively waiting for the captain's reply.

"You set me a painful duty, I fear, in answering you truly."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Fairfield, rising, "surely in this island of boasted Justice no unkind fate is in store for us?" he asked, becoming excited in spite of his efforts to control himself. He and his companion now stood before the skipper, who had also risen.

"Speak plainly, Captain Bloxforz," said Weldron, determinedly, "we want no more riddles to guess!"

The captain saw there was no escape. He drew himself together for the effort, deciding he would end their suspense.

"Mr. Fairfield, and you Mr. Weldron, both can rely on my friendship, and therefore, perhaps, it is best you should learn the whole truth from me as a friend than from strangers. Regard your fate philosophically, for the fact is you can never leave the Island of Justice!"

The blow had fallen. Lucky Weldron! Alone it affected his sentiment of Liberty; he had no bond of love to draw back his heart to a land where he was never to be permitted to return. In truth Weldron would be better off in this grand country than elsewhere.

Fairfield trembled with the agitation of his own sorrow, and glancing at his comrade saw that he, too, was trembling, but it was with intense anger. Sorrow, as a rule, makes a man a coward, or else a martyr; anger makes him a brute, or a hero. It depends much upon the man.

Fairfield was no coward, but he knew the odds were against them. He pushed himself before his enraged partner in exile and pleaded nobly.

"Captain, you're not in port yet; you can help us?"

"To escape? I dare not!"

"Think well before you refuse," growled Weldron.

"Gentlemen, rest assured the island is free to you, and it is preferable to any country in the world."

"You forget," said Fairfield, in tones of censure, "there are ties of love that to break them in life is worse than death itself. Think you I can blot them from my mind? That I can agree to cause one I love to suffer the misery of my absence?"

"My dear fellow, I grant you, true love is not found every day, but—" and the captain smiled, "the ladies of our island are—"

"Sir!" cried Fairfield, indignantly, clenching his fist, "Do not add insult to injury! If you have any compassion in your nature you will supply us with a

boat and—and leave us where you found us! We ask no more!"

Weldron approached the captain threateningly—

"Yes, a boat! Let us have it, quickly!"

"I cannot. My duty is to prevent, not aid, your escape."

"Hang your duty!" exclaimed Weldron.

"Captain, we are ready to vow to secrecy; we will solemnly promise never to mention the existence of this island if you only give us our freedom," said Fairfield, earnestly.

"It is useless. You are asking me to commit treason; one of the few crimes that bring capital punishment. I have saved your lives. You now wish me to sacrifice mine."

"I believe you lie!" cried the infuriated Weldron as his right hand flew to his breast pocket. "Get a boat launched for us! Give the order from where you stand, or you die now!"

He had levelled a revolver at the captain's head, and then Fairfield knew what the shining object was that he had seen his companion secure as they left their cabin. Was he to side against his comrade, and frustrate his efforts to bring the captain to submission? he asked himself.

Fearlessly the captain stood before the threatening muzzle, while calmly, yet firmly, he spoke.

"Come! Put down that weapon; you cannot intimidate me, for I would sooner die doing my duty than perish at the hands of my countrymen as a traitor!"

The demeanour of the man under fire decided Fairfield's course of action. He gently caught his comrade's arm and quickly lowered it. Weldron made no opposition, as he remarked—

"Captain, you have conquered! You may thank my friend that you live!" was all he added, as he placed the revolver on the table.



Chapter IV.—The Land of Wonders.

IN spite of previous doubts, the prisoners were at last convinced of the captain's good intentions towards them. His manly, kindly bearing had been apparent from the first, and his calmness and firmness under Weldron's severe test proved the noble character of the man. It would have been easy for him to have pretended to agree to their demands and then betrayed them, had he not scorned such an action.

Fairfield asked his forgiveness and entreated Weldron to offer an apology, not to lose an only friend in a strange land. Weldron needed little pressure, for he was anxious to make amends for his insult, and the captain showed he was the man to forgive one when it had been offered under mistaken ideas and exceptionally trying circumstances.

A few minutes later no one would have guessed the denouement that had taken place in the saloon, to see the actors lately concerned in it parading like old friends upon the deck of the "Vitæ," which was indeed a splendid vessel. Captain Bloxforz was showing the travellers over with just a sensation of pride that was pleasant to note. They were approaching an inlet, bounded on either side by massive eminences; from the summit of one to the other, and stretched across the water lying three hundred feet below, bands of steel glittered in the sunlight. The captain explained that along these lines of steel tons of powerful explosives could be run out in suspension from the recesses in the rocks from which the lines ran, and dropped with utmost precision upon any invading ships that might try to gain an entrance. Submarine defences were equally complete.

Straight beyond, at the extremity of the harbour, shone out in dazzling brilliancy many high towers of a magnificent city.

"Yes," said Captain Bloxforz, stretching his hand towards their goal, "That is South Veritas, one of the

twin capitals of the Island of Justice." Then he left them admiring the scene.

The "Vitæ" glided through the comparatively peaceful waters of the bay. Comfortable deck chairs were supplied, and Fairfield and Weldron set themselves to gaze upon the beauty of the panorama on either side. Mansions and villas surrounded by well-kept gardens running down to a wide esplanade and beach, here and there little boat houses, pavilions, and piers broke the regularity, and therefore added to the picturesque. Up the slopes of the hills that formed the back-ground farms were dotted about, and the colors of the fields with plants of various hues enlivened and beautified the scene. The travellers were cheered, by what they saw, and Weldron's spirits had risen even more than his companion's.

"I wonder when we will get in?" he remarked, just as if he were approaching his native city after a holiday excursion.

"In ten minutes more we shall be at the pier," said the captain, who had just approached again. "See, right ahead is the mouth of the river with the city on either side. The quays resemble two letters L back to back, the river between them, and the bay in front at their feet. As he spoke the outlines became more and more visible.

"Where do we land, Captain?" asked Fairfield.

"The Government boats always berth up the river. As soon as we arrive I will bring the Inspector and introduce him. We are now nearing port, so I must leave you again awhile."

The "Vitæ" was now passing among numerous crafts of all sizes—merchant vessels, fishing and pleasure boats. Music was in the air, flags were floating on the breeze. It was a gay scene, though the absence of sailing boats was missed by the voyagers—the pretty little yachts familiar to them were absent. All the different craft moved about noiselessly, and without their motive power being apparent. Soon the "Vitæ" slackened her pace, and entering the river approached a wide bridge that spanned it. Over this bridge vehicles of all sorts were rolling, and people walking, in one continuous

stream. A regiment of guards, headed by a band, was crossing just as the "Vitæ" came up. Another minute and she had passed under and was again on her way up the river. The quays were lined with vessels. Here and there a government boat like the "Vitæ" was easily picked out, for they all had a red line painted just above the water-mark, and numerous portholes for guns were noticeable. Other crowded bridges were passed under, but they were considerably smaller than the first—the bridge that joined the main halves of the city. Continuing her course but a little further the "Vitæ" gradually slackening her pace, and stopped at a vacant portion of the quay.

"I suppose we had better make up our minds to live contentedly in this island for a time?" remarked Weldron presently.

"There is no help for it," answered Fairfield, somewhat sadly, "but we should have asked the captain what we were to do without money; it is most unfortunate that we lost our belongings in the car of the balloon."

"Perhaps our money would be useless here if we had it?"

"Well, looking at it in another light," replied his friend smiling, "perhaps our coins would be valuable here as a curiosity," said Fairfield.

"Yes, we might dispose of that George III. shilling if the worst came to the worst," said Weldron with a sly glance at his comrade.

"Ah! it would indeed have to come to the worst before I would loose that! It saved our lives, did it not? God bless Agnes for giving it me!"

"Then you are satisfied to save your life and lose your liberty?"

"Come now," said Fairfield, good humoredly, "you know I am not, but one thing at a time. Having saved our lives we may gain our freedom later on."

Weldron leaned forward towards his companion and spoke anxiously in subdued tones:—"That is, you mean to eventually escape?"

"Yes, as you say, *eventually*; but no doubt we will first need means to secure a craft, bribe officials, or carry

out some such plans. You must understand that while we are penniless we will be powerless," explained Fairfield.

"We will not long be that," replied Weldron, confidentially, "for my invention, the New Process, should quickly bring us a fortune; it is not likely to be known here, and I may take precautions to secure my rights better than I did in our country."

"Yes, Weldron, some of your inventions will surely be new even in this land, and once give us the means and we shall show the Justicians their island is not strong enough a cage to hold us!"

Weldron happened to turn his head slightly and immediately a paleness spread over his features. His comrade looked, and there stood a man close beside them. He had his hand above his eyes to shade them from the powerful rays of the afternoon sun, and his attention seemed rivetted on some distant object ashore. He was of tall stature and his face wore a sinister expression, otherwise it might have been prepossessing, for his features were good. His appearance was rather Neapolitan, perhaps due to his hair worn rather long and his dark moustache, slightly drooping, waxed and pointed; the eyes, dark and piercing, were set too deeply in the head and too closely together to be pleasing.

Fairfield rose from the seat upon which he was reclining, and with uncontrolled annoyance threw the butt of the cigar he had been smoking over the side of the vessel and prepared to light another.

The stranger removed his hand from his forehead and in a tone of surprise and with a slight bow addressed his disconcerted hearers—

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I had not noticed I was intruding!"

Then he pointed ashore. "See gentlemen! Is that not a fire breaking out yonder?"

There certainly was smoke of extra volume ascending at the point indicated, but even to the unpractised eye it might be distinguished as arising from the low built chimney of some works, for it arose in a narrow, regular column, instead of the thick, broken clouds of smoke that generally indicate a conflagration.

The two friends replied they thought his fears unfounded, and after the interchange of one or two commonplace remarks he left them.

"We were very indiscreet," remarked Fairfield, when the man was out of hearing.

"Yes; confound the fellow, he must have just come aboard. Do you think he heard what was said?"

"I fear he could not do otherwise, standing so near. It was most unfortunate."

"Misfortune for us, but it was design on his part, I'm convinced of that!"

"You think so?"

"Yes; his finding himself near us thus was mere acting; I'm not easily deceived. We've hampered our plans at the outset. I wonder who the fellow is?"

"Well," replied Fairfield, soothingly, "it cannot be helped; we must exercise more caution in the future, that's all. Ha! here comes the captain."

He came up accompanied by a rather elderly, military-looking official, whom he introduced as Inspector Doreng.

"Happy to meet you, gentlemen," said the Inspector in a cheery voice as he shook hands with the two friends. The captain, an old friend of mine, has briefly explained matters, and I hope to be of service to you."

After this homely preamble all reserve was unnecessary, and arrangements were made to accompany the Inspector without delay, as it was approaching the hour at which the government offices closed for the day.

Fairfield and Weldron shook hands warmly with the captain, who asked them not to forget him, and then they parted with an exchange of hearty good wishes.

"Do your best for them, Doreng!" were Captain Bloxforz's last words called from the deck of the "Vitæ."

"I will that," replied the Inspector, as he stepped on to the wharf, followed by his proteges. He led the way past the goods sheds that lined the river at this part, and hailed a passing car that was gliding along the centre of the broad street.

"You will find yourselves returning part of the direction you came," remarked the Inspector as soon as they were seated.

And so the travellers found, for the street ran parallel with the river, the cross streets continuing over the bridges under which the "Vitæ" had passed not long previously.

"A splendid city this is indeed!" said Fairfield, admiring the buildings.

"Yes. How does it happen that the new buildings are all of the same height, while the old vary?" asked Weldron.

"We are in the old part of the city now, and every new building erected has to conform to the intended future arrangement for the whole city. In a few minutes we will be in the portion all built of late years; then you will see what is intended."

"We have no money to pay our way, Bon Doreng" remarked Fairfield regretfully.

"That is all right," pleasantly replied the Inspector, giving three fares. "I suppose, however, you are much concerned about the future; how to make money and how to spend it. Ah, well, don't let that trouble either of you, for, until time and opportunity present to you more favourable circumstances, I shall be only too glad to place my home at your disposal. I told the captain this much myself. He would be disappointed if he found you refused my offer."

This hospitality earned the gratitude of the newcomers, who thanked him sincerely, and Weldron remarked bitterly: "But for your kindness we should have had to beg our bread. To think we have so nearly come to that!"

"If you are speaking literally," laughed the Inspector, "you are quite in error; for when you have obtained your passes, if you had called at the Free Food Store you could select your choice of all necessities for your immediate sustenance. Anyone in distress obtains provisions free on production of their pass, and on making a simple declaration of their need. Yet there is hardly any necessity for the Store now-a-days, as it is only in cases of sudden, unforeseen losses that any poverty is experienced for a while."

"Yours seems a happy land indeed," said Fairfield.

"Yes, the Government keeps down the prices of food necessities, so all ordinary items of food are always obtainable at low rates; you have to pay dearer in proportion for luxuries sufficient to balance matters."

Thus talking the time passed quickly and they entered where the city faced the bay, and near the mouth of the river spanned by the gigantic bridge first noted. The magnificent buildings were here all of the same height, except at the street corners where they developed towers of various architecture. On top of the buildings throngs of gaily dressed people could be seen promenading, for the roofs were flat to a certain width, forming a walk which continued through the towers and then over the streets in the form of wide foot-bridges. One or two turns of the car round several of the street corners, and at last, near the centre of the new part of the city, the three men alighted before a noble building that occupied a square by itself. It was the Citadel of Justice, and the visitors stood for a moment spell-bound before crossing over the street, as they gazed upon its solid, yet beautiful facade; not a stone of the granite walls measured less than six feet square, and the cornices were formed of solid blocks of colored glass. The domes were partly of the same beautiful material.

"Now, my friends, we must not delay longer. This way to the office of the Comptroller of Passes." So saying the Inspector led them across the street and to one of the doorways at the side of the main entrance—an imposing one, approached by a flight of marble steps. They went within and soon arrived at the Comptroller's department.

"I desire to speak to the Comptroller at once," said Inspector Doreng, and in a few moments the attendant to whom he had spoken returned and ushered them into a large private office. A gentleman sat checking some papers, and looked up as the three visitors entered.

"I wish the favor of your attention, sir," the Inspector began, "regarding the immediate issue of passes for these two gentlemen."

"But you should be aware pass-issue closes at 4 p.m., and it is now considerably later," remarked the Comptroller, somewhat in a tone of rebuke.

"I am aware sir, and for that reason I have taken the liberty of coming to you direct. This is a special case, so I trust you may make an exception to the rule, sir."

"Well, state the reasons for your request; I know you are an efficient officer, so I shall be pleased to grant you any reasonable concession."

"I thank you, sir; the fact is that these gentlemen have just been cast upon our shore, and I desire to take them to my house as my visitors. I need hardly remind you, sir, that the Pass Rules allow no one to harbour any persons over age who are without passes, and I desire to conform to the rules, sir; that is all."

"But if these persons lose their passes they must take the consequences. How do I know that the loss is purely accidental? They must, as far as I can see, put up with the indignity of detention until the matter can be sifted."

"Pardon me, I see I have not made myself understood. These men are strangers; they come from a far-off land. They are not Justicians!"

"You astonish me!" exclaimed the Comptroller, much surprised. "It is many years since our shores have been intruded upon!"

He rose from his chair and addressed Fairfield and Weldron—

"If this be so, your detention is imperative. You may be desirable colonists, or, on the other hand, most undesirable. It is difficult to decide, and therefore your case requires full consideration."

"We were respected in our own country, and deserve to be in this!" remarked Weldron, hotly,

"It is surely unfair to imprison us even for a night or a day?" queried Fairfield respectfully.

The Inspector advanced towards the comptroller and handed him a note, as he did so he remarked—

"Captain Bloxforz, of the 'Vitæ,' gave me that sir, with the understanding I was to deliver it to you if you were not satisfied to accept my guarantee for these gentlemen's re-appearance here to-morrow; as I feel now you would not be, I deliver it and renew my hopes, sir."

The Comptroller took the letter, and signing to his visitors to be seated, returned to his chair to read the communication. He carefully cut open the envelope with a small silver paper-knife, with which he abstractedly tapped the table while he considered the contents. He must have read them over and over again, for it was some time before he seemed to have made up his mind. At last he spoke to the inspector as follows—

“In allowing the parties before me to go free now I shall share with you a grave responsibility, which is increased by the secrecy Captain Bloxforz desires carried out. If these gentlemen desire to avoid prominence, however, it seems only just their wishes should be as far as possible acceded to. I will issue interim passes and hold you responsible for the re-appearance of these gentlemen here to-morrow.”

“I thank you, sir, that is all I desire,” answered the Inspector.

“Then kindly step into the offices and matters will be settled without delay.”

Having thus given the deputation of three their dismissal, the comptroller rang for his clerk as they left the room. About a quarter-of-an-hour later the inspector, accompanied by Fairfield and Weldron, was leaving the Pass Department.

The officer had signed himself responsible for the re-attendance of his protégés, and they had each been provided with small documents setting forth that “they were granted freedom in the Island of Justice from date until 3 o'clock on the” etc., etc.

As they entered the street a band upon the promenade* opposite was playing an enchanting air.

“What is the name of that song? I can almost fancy the words are spoken to us, so human-like are the tones,” exclaimed Fairfield.

“Is it not a waltz instead of a song?” asked Weldron, looking up on high.

The Inspector smiled as he replied—

*The promenade is a term used in describing the roof-walks distinct from the footpaths.

“You are both correct, for it is a waltz with verses to the principal refrain; it is called ‘Life’s Sunshine.’ You, Mr. Fairfield, made a happy guess when you said the words seem to appeal to us. We may consider it so, for just as we stepped forth from the Citadel of Justice the verse commenced, ‘Come out where the sun is shining.’ See, up on the promenade the last rays are casting their pleasing warmth upon the promenaders.”

And so it proved, but the musical invitation to join these was not accepted, it being decided to leave the city without delay and proceed to Inspector Doreng’s house, for he was anxious to get his charges home.

The busy and beautiful streets, the bright and merry people, the silent vehicles that glided along and in and out, some slowly and others at a brisk pace. All this the visitors could only glance at and wonder, there was no time for particularising.

After walking a few steps the three hailed a car for Capeville, which was the name of the village where the Inspector lived. They passed a fine railway station, to which crowds of people were hurrying on foot and in conveyances, and the visitors remarked upon the lively scene.

“Yes,” replied their guide, “it is wonderful to think that many people in business prefer to live far out in the country, instead of in a suburb, as I do. The crowds returning in the morning are just as great.”

“You never patronise the train to take you home, then?”

“The trains are all bound for the country; there are no near stations. The railways are run on the principle of opening up the country.”

“How so?” asked Fairfield.

“Because railway communication to and from the capitals where all trading and manufacturing is done, is made cheaper *pro rata* as the distance is increased.”

“The railways must be run at a great loss,” remarked Weldron.

“The government owns them and stands any apparent loss; but what proves to be the country’s gain can be no loss at all.”

The new-comers had to admit the truth of the Bon's logic, and many other explanations he tendered greatly interested his listeners.

The day closed quickly in, and before ten minutes had elapsed a sort of mist prevented the passengers from studying the scenery through the car windows. As they rode along in absolute comfort, due to the easy-running, excellent seating accommodation, and pleasant light supplied, the inspector related of his family and his dwelling to put his future guests at ease on their arrival. The family consisted of himself, Mrs. Doreng, his stepson Basca, and his daughter, Deris—he pronounced this name *Dear-is*, and it thus had a sweetly affectionate sound. Mrs. Doreng, he said, was fond of company, and in the quiet place where they lived would be delighted to have such visitors. As to his daughter and Basca he would guarantee their ably supporting their mother in a hearty welcome.

"Yes," finally added Bon Doreng (his title Bon meaning the good evidently well fitted him, and his new friends felt assured he had well earned it), "yes, you must both consider my house your home as long as you wish."

"But we must quickly find a way to earn our livelihood; we could not long remain content to burden you," said Fairfield, which sentiments were echoed by Wel-dron.

"I do not think of that for one moment. I have had great experience in my official capacity to judge men's characters, and am convinced neither you nor your friend are likely to exhibit indolence."

"I trust the ways of a new country may not be a serious obstacle to us," said Fairfield, dubiously.

"Not a new country such as this. Here everyone can work and enjoy life. You two have a distinct advantage, as you hold the unique position of possessing knowledge from almost another world, and all of that knowledge tending to good we wish to learn."

The comrades were cheered by the Bon's kind assurances, and they were now looking forward with pleasure at the introduction to the home of this hospit-

able man. It may be desirable that the reader shall possess a little insight to the character of the inspector's stepson, Basca, more particularly.

We often find most discerning people are greatly mistaken as to the true natures of those related to them, and as regards Basca, every member of the Doreng family, the discriminating inspector included, would describe him as a good, patient sufferer, whose sole aim was to pass his life quietly—unable to work and anxious to give others little trouble on his account. Considering, therefore, that those who should have known him best were deceived, it was no wonder that outsiders were equally so.

Basca, as a fact, from his early youth (he was now a little over thirty) had devoted his ability to planning villany in greater or lesser degree, and it will be seen shortly how far his schemes were perfected.

Deris Doreng, seven years his junior, was the flower of the family, as Basca was the thorn. Lives such as hers aid the world to go round evenly, honestly, kindly and happily; lives such as Basca lived bring wide misery and dissension, unattributed to the individual cause.

The car eventually arriving at the end of the street in which the inspector's house, just out of Capeville, was situated, he and his two friends walked briskly down it till they came to two massive iron-work gates. Upon the pillars Fairfield could read by the light over them the name "Deeringhurst," it being formed in silver letters. As the three men made their way up the wide gravelled pathway towards the house, spots of rain began to fall and gusts of wind began to whistle through the trees that formed an avenue on either side. They stepped forward briskly and the dwelling came in view, due to a row of electric lights along the fascia.

"It was a massive house of two stories, the pointed roof being similar in appearance to the "Arabic"-coated roofing in vogue in other countries, but here the whiteness of the material was artistically broken with a large scroll design in blue and red. The verandahs were supported by handsome granite pillars, and a glow of warmth

and color through the drawn window-blinds prophesied comfort within.

"Bon Doreng produced his latch-key, touched the bell twice in succession, and entered.

"I always ring," he explained, "it is just a little fad of mine; you see, an intruder might enter without ringing, but as I ring always he would *not* be mistaken for me."

They had only entered the hall a moment when Mrs. Doreng appeared.

"Ah, my dear, you had my message that we were coming. Well, these are our visitors, let me introduce you to Mr. Fairfield—and—Mr. Weldron."

Salutations over, Mrs. Doreng said, pleasantly—

"I am so delighted you have come; dinner will be ready immediately, so when my husband has shown you your rooms—the two spare ones on this floor dear, near Basca's"—this to her husband, "please come straight to the dining-room."

They found Mrs. Doreng alone awaiting them when they re-appeared as requested. She apologised for the absence of the young people. "Deris," she explained, "was away on a visit, but would be home in a day or two at most, while Basca would return later that evening; he had been at home until an hour ago, when his kind friend, Mr. Flintsen, called for him."

"But Basca had no right to go. Under the circumstances I think it most discourteous of him," remarked his step-father in tones of much displeasure.

"Now Bon Doreng," said Fairfield good humoredly, "we will feel ill at ease if any member of your family is to be put to the least inconvenience through us. Please don't worry on our account in the slightest."

"We will be quite charmed if we only have Mrs. Doreng's society, I am sure," added Weldron gallantly.

Fairfield was astonished at his old friend's pretty compliment. He never dreamed Weldron capable of such. Much joking and small talk followed, and the evening meal progressed with evident enjoyment to all concerned.

As they stood or sat before the fire of a cosy little sitting room later in the evening, Basca's absence was

again referred to. Mrs. Doreng, with a mother's infatuation, rambled on:—

"Ah, poor boy, he has suffered so to-day. I had not the heart to ask him to forego a little pleasure of the outing, and Mr. Flintsen so kind too. He drove up in a motor-car for Basca in such a terrible hurry I heard him say, 'You must come at once to arrange our plans: a few hours' grace is all we have left us.' Yes; I was close by in the passage, and how I did laugh to myself. I suppose they are arranging a picnic or something equally unimportant; yet one would think their very lives depended upon it."

Before the visitors retired for the night to their respective rooms, Mrs. Doreng handed them an album and showed them the portraits therein. Basca's appeared many times, and they judged that he was of small stature, unpleasing in facial expression, and by his attitudes they could see he was a cripple. They anxiously expected every page that was turned might show them Deris Doreng, but it was not so, and at last Weldron—yes, actually Weldron, the man who was never a ladies' man—enquired the reason of its absence.

"Ah! we never can get Deris to have her photo taken. She is such a strange girl; I believe she thinks it vanity—but, well really, I forgot about Mr. Flintsen's! I must show you his, for he is the wicked man that deprived us of Basca's company to-night!" and laughing, she took from the mantelpiece a photo in a neat gold frame, and handed it to Fairfield.

He took it carefully, but nevertheless it nearly slipped from his grasp when his eyes fell upon the likeness. Then he recovered his self-possession and handed it to Weldron. The photo was a true representation of the man who had overheard their words of treason on board the "Vita."



Chapter V.—Friendship and Treachery.

MIDNIGHT was close at hand, darkness reigned supreme. Darkness and silence within the walls of "Deeringhurst," darkness and uproar without. The elements were at war, a storm had gradually developed; perhaps its increasing by slow degrees was the reason that the inmates, one only excepted, still slept peacefully while the wind whistled round the corners and under the arches of their dwelling. Small green branches were snapped off the trees and carried over the fences; little birds that had indiscreetly chosen the cornices of the building as resting places for the night were tugged at and twisted round on their tiny feet, till finally they were dislodged and carried far out into the night. The high wind, still not possessing the strength of a hurricane, was unable to make sport of larger objects; but what power it had was used with seemingly cruel intent.

Fairfield and Weldron's rooms were not far from each other on the leese of the house, and Basca, who had returned home before they retired, and was introduced, had his apartment also below stairs, but at the far end of the passage; while the host and hostess slept above.

As twelve o'clock chimed by the village clock, and the sounds were borne to Basca's ears, he sat up on his bed, where he had reclined fully dressed; then he rose, extinguished the light, and hobbled stealthily towards the door of his room. He grasped the handle and turned it slowly with utmost caution till the catch had freed itself without omitting a sound; then he opened the door softly and passed into the passage. For a moment he listened intently, and then limped along, guiding himself by the wall and noting each doorway he passed.

Basca was like the evil spirit of the storm, who having entered the abode of man, was wont to work some evil deed, while the more timid imps of the wind without

chased each other round the dwelling and whistled to their leader to join them and report upon his villainies.

He stopped at Weldron's door and seized its handle as he had done his own, but with less confidence. What if the door were locked? he thought. He twisted the handle. Would it open? He pushed gently, and as it gave way a look of satisfaction stole over his face. Well, indeed, that the darkness hid that smile, for it was more hideous than any sneer.

He closed the door after him as silently as he had opened it, then gently turned the lock. Next he drew from his pocket a little box, which when he pressed its side the lid flew back and a light burst forth. Basca was a self-trained actor; he had raised the curtain of darkness and was ready to play his part.

"Mr. Weldron!" he cried in a loud whisper, holding the light above his head.

The sleeper awoke with a slight start, and raised himself in bed upon his elbow.

"What is wrong? What has happened?" he asked anxiously.

"We want your help! There are liquor smugglers for North Island putting off down by the cliffs. Will you join us in raiding them?"

Weldron looked suspiciously at the cripple; for some undefined reason he felt a repugnance for the fellow.

"Who is making this raid?" he demanded.

"My father, your friend Mr. Fairfield, and two of the guards, are now on their way down! We must be quick if we are to join them!"

"Why was I not called sooner?" exclaimed Weldron, jumping out of bed excitedly.

"They left you and me to mind the house, I suppose; but there are the servants. I call it an insult. If I am a cripple I'm no coward, and neither are you, I know, Mr. Weldron!"

"I'm glad you called me," was Weldron's answer, as he dressed in great haste.

The cripple moved silently towards the window.

"Let us make no noise; there is no need to disturb the house, mother is so confoundedly timid. I'll be

getting this window open, for we can slip out that way."

So saying, the wily Basca let up the blind and undid the window fastenings. Then he looked round.

"I'm ready; you can open it!" cried the other, throwing on his coat.

Basca did so gently, and the curtains fluttered in with the breeze; through the position being sheltered, the full force of the storm was not experienced. Then the cripple advanced to Weldron, and offered him a flask he took from his coat pocket.

"Take a pull at that; I've just had one. You'll need something to brace your nerves and keep the cold out. Don't stint yourself, it's nearly full."

Weldron hesitated a moment and then did as his tempter requested and returned the flask. Basca next extinguished the light and they passed out of the window and hurried towards the gates.

Neither thought of the storm as they buffeted against it, and they had journeyed close upon a mile along the road when Weldron experienced a dizzy sensation, and his limbs began to feel as if they would give way beneath him.

But the cripple still forged ahead, so he followed determinedly, though each succeeding step became more uncertain than the last. He wondered what had come over him, but made no complaint, thinking it must be the effect of the trials his nerves had undergone during the last few days. He bravely cast aside all idea of giving in—no, a sturdy athlete would not allow himself to be beaten by this plucky lame man, who plodded on in defiance of everything. Such were his thoughts and his intentions, but all proved useless. The cripple was now fully twenty yards ahead.

Pah! If he could not walk, he would run to catch up! He made the effort: One pace, two paces, he stumbled; then he fell forward on his face, his arms extended across the pathway. One cry escaped his lips and he remained stretched upon the ground insensible!

Basca heard the cry, and turning, retraced his steps. "So soon," he muttered with an oath, "I thought he would have lasted out a longer race!"

Stooping and clutching the prostrate form he dragged it close against the fence, and leaving it there, again forged on ahead while the imps of the wind in a clump of thin-leaved trees close by seemed to send forth a shrill chorus in very exultation.

After five minutes further advance an open plain stretched before him towards East Cape, where the light of the lighthouse twinkled against the leaden sky.

The cripple halted at the end of the pathway, and placing his hands to his mouth gave forth a loud peculiar whistle, well worthy of the demon of the storm. Three times he repeated the sound, and at last an answer of the same intonation was born towards him upon the gale.

Soon a man approached across the common, and Basca met him.

"Well, Basca, and where's the quarry?" he asked. "Why, I believe you've failed!"

"Ha! ha! Flintsen, I *never* fail—don't you know why?"

"Can't exactly say I do," answered Flintsen dryly, for it was the spy of the "Vitæ" sure enough.

"Because I never tackle a task likely to be beyond me. That's the secret of success. But *he's* failed, and just a bit too soon, confound him. Where are the men? They will have the further to carry him, for he lies against the fence a quarter-of-a-mile back."

"Good! I told them to bring on the litter. I believe I hear them coming; let's go and hurry them up!"

So saying Mr. Flintsen, whom Mrs. Doreng had described as "the kind and amiable friend" of the poor, harmless, suffering Basca, turned to go.

"Stop!" cried the cripple, "I'm going no further. I think I've done my share of this night's work, so you can finish it. I'm off home."

"Home? Oh well I'm satisfied, if you're off to keep an eye on your respected step-father. We don't want him or his men on our tracks at any price."

"Oh! he's harmless; I know all his movements. Only for me he'd have been down on you years ago, Flintsen."

"And only for his blind faith in a stepson he would have been down on you, my friend. By jove! it shows that an Inspector of Guards should have faith in no one."

"You're about right," chuckled the cripple, "but I'm off and you'd better hurry the men up."

So saying Basca turned upon his heel—the heel of his best foot, it may be mentioned—and started limping back the way he had come.

Flintsen also retraced his steps, and so the two parted without further parley.

In a few minutes the cripple approached the spot where he had left the inert body of the man he had so cruelly deceived. Would he pass it by sorrowfully or administer a parting kick with the one foot that Dame Nature had left him perfect? He did neither, but stopped considerably, and stooping over the recumbent form felt if Weldron's heart still beat.

Yes, Basca was considerate, but the consideration he evinced was only for himself; he gladly noted the potion had not proved fatal, as he drew the line at murder for *his own life's sake*.

Yes, Weldron lived. The drug was an exceedingly powerful one, yet unlikely to kill any person of sound physique, and with a chuckle of satisfaction Basca, now with the storm at his back, soon covered the ground between Weldron and Deeringhurst, and when the village clock struck two he was in bed enjoying the repose that the more deserving would be deprived of by his actions. He had left no trace of his peregrination, and slept contentedly, knowing that his villiany had been carried out with perfect attention to every detail.

When morning dawned and the sun rose from behind the big cliff that formed the southern extremity of the island, there were few signs of the night's storm remaining.

Fairfield rose late. In fact, when the breakfast gong sounded he was only half dressed. He quickly finished his toilet, and found the host and hostess awaiting him.

"Would you mind calling your friend. I mean *our* friend Mr. Weldron?" asked Mrs. Doreng affably as soon as the morning salutations were over. "I will also

go to see why Basca has not put in an appearance yet," she added, moving towards the door.

"I will do so with pleasure," answered Fairfield, and they made their way to the different rooms after he had politely opened the door for her to pass out.

Bon Doreng stood by the window and glanced through the morning paper till his wife returned, soon followed by Fairfield.

The explanation of Basca's absence was easily explained. "Poor fellow," said his fond mother, "he says he has passed another night of suffering, and wishes to rest awhile longer. You will excuse him, I know, Mr. Fairfield?"

The visitor gladly acquiesced, and in turn asked pardon for Weldron's absence, stating that he had found his window open and the room empty.

"Please don't wait longer for him; he has, doubtless, mistaken the breakfast hour, and will come in before we have finished."

Accordingly the meal was begun, and much to the general embarrassment, it ended without the missing man making his appearance.

Mrs. Doreng, with true motherly affection, buttered slices of toast and poured out a cup of coffee, which, placed upon a tray, she took to "poor" Basca's room.

When she left him he drew a bottle of spirits from under his bed and made the coffee more suitable to his palate. Basca, proud of his machinations, never felt better in his life!

As regards Fairfield and the Bon, it need hardly be stated that neither enjoyed their repast, and as soon as etiquette permitted, the former rose from the table, stating his intention of seeking his absent friend without delay.

After enquiries and thorough searching about the house and grounds, it soon became evident that Weldron was not on the premises or the estate, and Fairfield walked some distance up the road and down it; but eventually returned to the house, all his searching having been unsuccessful.

He found the Inspector ready waiting to leave for the city, where his duties first required him daily. He

was impatiently parading the wide marble-paved verandah when his visitor approached him and reported his failure to find Weldron.

It was a painful matter. If Weldron had absconded, as appearances certainly suggested, he had acted not only dishonorably, but also ungratefully, for the Inspector, in trusting him, had severely compromised himself.

The two men walked towards the gate, and the more Fairfield thought matters over, the more he became incensed against his old comrade, though it cost him some effort to believe Weldron capable of such a breach of faith; yet there was no other construction to be put.

Fairfield expected to suffer to some extent the penalty of his friend's conduct, but he found his host, though exceedingly irritated, was willing to accept as truth his avowal of perplexity at Weldron's behaviour. The Bon spoke decisively.

"I shall put on one of my best men at once to track the fugitive, and will require you to wait here till, say, 2 p.m. Ring up to my office if your friend returns, but if he does not by that time, leave here and meet me at the Comptroller's office yourself. I can still trust you, I should hope?"

"As if my life depended on it!" replied Fairfield, with great earnestness.

"I have utmost confidence in you, and I may now tell you that I would never have trusted your friend but for his being with you."

The Inspector hereupon handed Fairfield a bank note, explaining, as he begged him to accept it, that it was necessary to possess some money for current expenses. When the Inspector departed Fairfield wended his way back to the house, disconsolately. There was nothing for it but to wait and hope. The morning passed slowly and tediously, although Basca, who at last put in an appearance, seemed to do his best to amuse and entertain the visitor.

Fairfield began to appreciate the cripple's efforts, and had it not been for anxious expectation every moment of hearing Weldron's approach, he might have made himself more companionable, as it was perhaps, he was dull

company, for immediately after lunch was over, the cripple excused himself and disappeared for the rest of the afternoon.

Mrs. Doreng, however, came forward and chatted pleasantly with the visitor for some time, and then handed him the daily paper, at the same time requesting that he should "amuse himself in any way he pleased, and make himself thoroughly at home. Basca had no doubt gone out to spend an hour or two with the lighthouse keepers at East Cape; he was so romantic—loving to chat with the coastmen and watch the rolling ocean."

After this fond, but considerably erroneous, dissertation on Basca's traits, his devoted mother left to attend to her household duties, and Fairfield went to the front of the house, and reclining upon a comfortable lounge, perused the *Justician*, which was the name of one of the daily papers.

It consisted of eight sheets, and was a model of journalism. On the first page was a complete and boldly printed index to all the paper contained. Fairfield glanced down the column and was enabled to quickly pick out and turn to any item likely to be most interesting to him. The front page also contained the births, issue of passes, marriages, and departures, the latter term applied to deaths. A couple of leading articles occupied most of the remaining space. The ordinary business advertisements were on sheets separate from the reading matter, so that they could be removed if desired. The classification of the contents of the paper was such that there was no jumbling of news with anecdote and advertisement, state and court notices, facetiæ, and many other writings that excellently arranged tended to make the *Justician* the most readable and complete daily that Fairfield had ever set eyes on.

The second of the leading articles, happened to be very well timed for the new-comer's enlightenment, as it supplied him with some insight to the administration of the rules of government (the word "law" seemed unused) in the Island. It ran as follows:—"To-day is the seventh anniversary of the conferring of title and the ascension of

Judge-President Bon Lenore to the Dais of the Citadel of Justice of South Island. Fifteen years ago the honored head of our government was simply Mr. Verité Lenore, but just at that time, by feats of daring and noble actions he performed during the great flood of the river Seaforth, he was awarded his title of Bon. A vacancy occurring later for the office of Judge, the heroic Bon Lenore, having passed the rules examinations, was voted to the position. There he fulfilled his duties with such discretion, firmness, and clemency that seven years ago to-day he was, by an overwhelming majority of the votes of every man and woman in South Isle, elected to the exalted position we find him now occupying, that of our Judge-President! And why does he still retain it? Because he has been more daring in his administration than any previous Judge-President since the enactment of the Constitution, while at the same time he has dared on the side of True Justice. Thrice on the bi-ennial election the People have returned him unopposed. A Judge-President, we all know, alone has the power of awarding imprisonment to the guilty; it is his duty to punish for the heartlessness of a crime, and Judge-President Lenore is the one who introduced the system of encouraging the guards to lay affidavits even against persons guilty of heartless conduct that in other parts of the world would be considered no crime whatever. The more time advances the more we can proudly boast that we are quickly becoming a race totally unblemished by selfishness—the germ from which spring the cruellest crimes of man. Our Judge-Presidents have made us what we are to-day, and Judge-President Lenore helps us on by strides along the path of Justice fearlessly, nobly and well. Long may he live, and long may he preside over us! For Justice!”

As Fairfield concluded, Mrs. Doreng came to the door and asked him if he were not getting dull? She was so sorry Basca had gone out.

“Please do not trouble yourself about me, Mrs. Doreng; I am delighted with this paper. What a grand man the Judge-President must be. He is the head of the Government, I understand, or rather,” added

Fairfield laughing, “I should say I guess, for what I understand is not worth mentioning.”

“Oh! don’t say that, Mr. Fairfield. As for me, I am a poor one at Government Rules. The Judge-President is, as you say, head of the State, but still the President of our House of Villages is almost as great a man, for he is the head of the practical arrangements of the community. What would be called Parliament by you is called the House of Villages, because every village has a representative there. Yet every ‘Rule Suggested’ of trade, manufacture and such like, when passed by a majority in the House of Villages, has to obtain the sanction of the Judge-President before it becomes a ‘Rule Decided.’ I fear I do not make it very clear. My husband is the one to explain these matters.”

“You explain them admirably, Mrs. Doreng. I see now that the Judge-President governs the morality of the State.”

“That is it. The Rules passed by the House of Villages go before him simply that he may see there is no selfishness or heartlessness embodied in them. He interferes only if such is found, and if his interference is not accepted by the House of Villages, then the People decide the issue.”

Fairfield did not like to ply further questions to the hostess of Deeringhurst, so they talked for a while on other subjects more interesting to the feminine mind.

Later on the visitor, when left to himself again, tried to resume his reading, but restlessness obtained the mastery over him. He walked to the gate and looked up and down the road, thinking that he might see Wel-dron returning. But such hopes were doomed to disappointment.

Lunch over and the hour of two p.m. arriving, he started alone for the city. In the road-car he handed the conductor the bank-note and received a handful of change that puzzled him considerably. When a chance occurred he took one of the coins at a time from his pocket and examined it minutely. He found that the money, though of three different metals, was all similar in shape and design, and not knowing the values, he had

been obliged to accept it as correct change, whether it might prove so or not. By applying a certain pressure to the centre of one of the coins he found that it dropped out and he had two pieces instead of one. He understood at once that this was an invention to supply change without trouble, and he learned later on that the coins were called respectively, the "gold," the "half-gold;" the "silver," the "half-silver;" the "bronze," and the "half-bronze." Each silver coin was ten times the value of the bronze; each gold, ten times the value of the silver; and the ring coins in every instance were double the value of the centre coins.

At five minutes to the hour at which Fairfield's interim-pass expired he entered the offices of the Comptroller of Passes, and before that hour chimed by the great clock in the dome of the Citadel of Justice, the Inspector had met him. Fairfield was taken into a private apartment, and an official subjected him to a most exact measuring, the results being entered in a book along with various notes as to his personal appearance; also his age, name and place of abode were added, and lastly, his signature, attesting to the correctness of the entries. His photograph was then taken, and this completed the proceedings as far as Fairfield was personally concerned. The Inspector requested his waiting until his pass was handed over to him, advising him as soon as he received it to return at once to Deeringhurst and await the remote chance of Weldron's re-appearance there. Fairfield humbly agreed, and the Bon departed hurriedly, saying he would have to appear before the Comptroller at once. How dejected the newly fledged Justician felt at that moment can hardly be imagined; he saw how much his kind protector in this strange country was suffering, and still more likely to suffer, through Weldron's absconding. He felt enraged against his old comrade, and utterly miserable at his own helplessness to improve matters; accordingly, when he received his pass and signed for it he left the building and entered the busy and beautiful streets in a frame of mind that utterly incapacitated him for admiration of any kind. On the journey back he managed to scrape together sufficient interest to

examine his pass and note its number, which by a peculiar coincidence ended in the figures of the date of his birth. He also glanced through a printed form given him. It contained various rules, of which the chief was that the holder must notify the Comptroller whenever he changed his abode, or if he was temporarily away from it for seven days or over. He also noted somewhat indignantly—another time he would have smiled—that if the holder of the pass was under sentence of the court for a misdemeanour he must report himself by registered letter or personally each week, or if changing his abode temporarily or otherwise, he must report such change within forty-eight hours. This plan gave the authorities complete control over wrong-doers, and often enabled the judges of the courts to easily follow out a plan of justice to the aggrieved as well as the aggressor. (See Chapter VIII.)

Having arrived at and passed through Capeville, Fairfield left the car, preferring to have a fairly lengthy walk, hoping that the time and exercise would enable him to regain his cheerfulness. Certainly, he found that the quiet country roads had no more depressing influence upon him than the streets of the city peopled by gay thousands of strangers. He had a strong desire not to return to Deeringhurst, for he seemed but likely to bring more misery to those who had befriended him; sooner would he have crossed the bridge that separated the two halves of the Southern City, and there, if he could escape no further, he might strive for existence absolutely unknown and unaided. He stopped suddenly in the quiet street—a new idea had entered his mind. Had he not been told that a person found three times in a state of intoxication would be banished to North Island? He laughed at the ingenuity of the plan that occurred to him; he would get one official puncture awarded his pass that very night! Then he remembered the drunkenness must be in three separate weeks. Why, the work would be too disgraceful and protracted. He placed his hands in his pockets, and hanging his head, started thinking again erratically, when the coins obtained in exchange for the Inspector's note came in contact with his fingers. Why, this money would pay his way to the

utmost limit of the Island; what a fool he was! Then a voice seemed to whisper—"That money was given to you by one who has faith in you; remember you promised him to return to Deeringhurst; it is your duty to keep faith and not be a coward."

It was enough. Fairfield soon entered the gates and approached the house with a firm step. He would do his best to make up for Weldron's misdeed. While he was wanted he would not be found wanting.

Mrs. Doreng met her visitor with a homely greeting, and he found he was not the miserable intruder he had imagined himself. He could see she was much concerned in the events of the day, but her welcome to him was sincere. Basca was quite vivacious; he laughed and joked, teased his mother for her low spirits and aided Fairfield to arouse her to her accustomed cheerfulness.

Basca had worked his ends, and now he desired that the trouble he had caused should subside quickly. He knew it would be safer for himself and his confederates.

The evening passed with forced pleasure, and as the hour for retiring arrived and the Bon had not returned, Fairfield obtained Mrs. Doreng's permission to take her place in waiting up for him.

It was a somewhat bleak evening, and when left alone Fairfield drew his chair close to the fire and watched the glowing coals while he sat thinking of his far off home and of Agnes.

At last the Inspector's customary two rings were heard, followed by the insertion of his latch-key in the lock, and the opening and shutting of the door. Fairfield went out to meet him in the passage and noted the pallor of his face.

"Bon Doreng," he said, sadly, "I anxiously hope you will forgive me for the trouble my friend has caused you, is it—is it a very serious matter?"

The Inspector warmly grasped his questioner's hand, but made no answer then. He removed his hat and cloak and hung them on the stand behind the door; when he turned he spoke kindly, yet without a smile.

"Get to bed my good fellow, the fault is not yours. If that man is not found soon I shall be degraded from the position I have held with honor for so many years."

"But if you acted for the best and for kindness and goodwill, is it right, is it just, in this Island of Justice that you should suffer?" exclaimed Fairfield, with great animation.

"I neither ask for, nor would I accept, undue favor from my country. If I have failed in my duty, it is *my* duty to resign."

So saying the Inspector walked slowly up the stairway, and Fairfield, now utterly dejected, made his way to his own room.



Chapter V.—Love's Duplicate.

BASCA knocked at Fairfield's door, for breakfast had commenced.

"Come in!" answered the awakened sleeper.

"Didn't you hear the gong? Aren't you hungry this morning?" queried the cripple, looking round the corner and grinning like an image of deception.

"Not the least, thanks. I've been awake all night and most of the morning. The last hour or so I must have slept extra soundly to make up for it," said Fairfield with a prodigious yawn.

"Sorry you had a bad night, I'm sure," remarked the apparently sympathetic Basca.

Fairfield begged the cripple to tender his apologies to the host and hostess and say he desired no breakfast, preferring, if they would excuse him, to rest awhile longer instead.

Basca promised to do as Fairfield wished, and advised his remaining in bed till lunch time. He then left.

The visitor had no intention of taking such a liberty, but being thoroughly wearied by the sleepless night of mental torture he had experienced, he found the morning far advanced when he awoke again. He quickly completed his toilet, and then throwing open the window, stepped outside to see what a stroll round the garden would do towards invigorating him. It was a perfect morning and a delightfully situated spot, yet nothing seemed to have any charm for Fairfield. He was too discontented in his mind to be able to appreciate the beauties of nature. He was not one of those persons content to live idly upon others' generosity as long as they would accommodate. Fairfield must give a *quid pro quo* to satisfy his own independent spirit. When he and his companion came to Deeringhurst he thought their anecdotes of the world, and their company generally, might for the little while be some recompense for the kindness extended them until they obtained remunerative

employment. Now all was altered, for they had brought unhappiness upon the Doreng family instead.

Around the stately house nature seemed to have made every effort to please. The garden was radiant with flowers, the avenues delightful bowers of varied foliage, the paddocks undulating stretches of unbroken verdure decked with wild flowers swaying gently upon their slender graceful stalks. The birds singing joyously in the hedges or flitting from tree to tree, and the cattle browsing peacefully in the fields gave animation to the scenes.

Fairfield walked hither and thither, but though he saw nature's bounties around him, and heard the songbirds' joyous notes, he might as well have been blind and deaf. He felt that happiness was denied him and those who associated with him. He told himself that he was after all alone; yes, alone and helpless! Helpless? he asked himself. The query brought him to his bearings. A man of physical strength, helpless? Then where was his moral courage? The thought of cowardice made him rebel; he turned and walked briskly towards the house. Back in his room he obtained note paper, an envelope, and an ink-pencil. He then went out again, taking them to one of the summer-houses in the garden. There were two such retreats at either extremity of a long strip of lawn, and he sat down on a form in the one he entered, and placed his writing materials on the rustic table before him. He meant to write and leave a grateful letter for the Inspector, returning the money given him, and then set out from "Deeringhurst" at once. He was now a free man as far as the island was concerned, and in his letter he would promise the Inspector to send his new address as soon as he settled anywhere. He was going to strike out for himself and did not desire to be tempted to burden the Inspector or his family, that was his only reason for not personally saying good-bye.

These items of the intended letter duly arranged mentally, Fairfield opened out the paper, and pencil in hand began:—"Bon Doreng, my kind friend." The start was easy to make, but the continuation proved just the reverse. Fairfield waited for inspiration, but it was not forthcoming. At last, with an impatient gesture, he leaned back

against the lattice and gazed out across the lawn. The scene was unchanged in its beauty, and it irritated him. Had a storm arisen it might have better suited his unhappy mood. It seemed nothing could soothe his discontented feelings, until gradually he became aware of the low, sweet humming of a plaintive air. The voice, he felt sure, was near, and yet it had a far-distant sound.

The listener, though pleased at the whispered melody, which was evidently the one he had heard when he and Weldron first entered the city of Veritas, tried hard not to listen. He was about to again start his letter writing, when from the soft gentle humming a clear melodious song developed, and the morning air resounded with the sweet waltz refrain:—

Come love!

Out where the sunlight is shining,
Through life we'll not lurk in the shade;
Happy, no fears of repining,
Together let's pass from the glade!

A merry silvery laugh rang out as if someone had pleasantly interrupted the singer. Fairfield had now risen. He placed the writing materials in his pocket, and stepping across to the open window, listened intently. In the opposite summer-house, some thirty yards away, he could hear the same voice now talking caressingly, and divined that from there came all the music—for speech and song alike were as music to his ears.

His interest and curiosity being thoroughly aroused, it was impossible to continue his writing, and he wondered what course he should pursue.

He was beginning to feel somewhat benumbed with cold in his retreat, and noted the singer had shown more discretion than he when she chose the resort which, unlike the one he occupied, caught the uninterrupted rays of the cheering winter sunshine.

Again the song began. The words of the second verse differed slightly:—

Come love!

Out where the sunlight is shining,
On hillside, the world far below;
My arm, around you entwining,
By love and right it shall be so!

The line ended in a sustained trill that filled Fairfield's heart with charmed admiration. So powerful, distinct, and inspiring, yet of tones silvery and mellow as a rippling brook.

The listener waited in hopes the song would be repeated. Thoughts of the girl he was banished from had been recalled by its words, and he made a vow he would escape and return to her if such were a possibility. Oft had he thought of Agnes since his arrival in the Island, but it took this love-song to stir the depths of his feelings.

Tired of waiting in the cold, and hearing no further music, he walked towards the summer-house from whence it had come. When he approached to within a few feet of the entrance he stopped and listened.

"Now, Pixie, I must be going, so come along."

Pixie was the name of a pretty little grey kitten belonging to Mrs. Doreng. Surely, thought Fairfield, the singer could not be that lady herself? Not wishing to startle the occupant of the summer-house, whoever she might be, he softly whistled the air now so familiar to him and approached the door. As he did so, a tall and beautiful girl came out. She turned her gaze upon Fairfield in wonder, and he sprang forward with hands extended to grasp hers, while in a tone half of doubt and half delight he cried—

"Agnes!"

Next moment he saw his error. This girl was not his fiancée after all! Not Agnes Devoué, though, assuredly, in form and feature, she was her double. It was indeed a marvellous, yet withal, a pleasing whim of nature to have moulded two beings so alike and beautiful. But to Fairfield the discovery was so perplexing that he was ready to laugh in ecstasy or cry with disappointment. This familiar vision of loveliness, strangely enough, to his mind surpassed all other wonders of the Island. As soon as he recovered his speech he apologised greatly for his seeming presumption.

"Forgive me, I pray," he said, "but you are so—so like someone that I left far away."

"Ah, I am glad of that," she frankly replied, offering her hand in pity, "for you must indeed be lonely among

strangers. I believe you are Mr. Fairfield; am I right?"

"Perfectly; and have I the pleasure of meeting Miss Doreng?"

"I hope it may be a pleasure. Yes, Deris Doreng is my name. They told me you were not rising till lunch hour, and I thought Pixie and I were the only strollers in the garden," she added, picking up with her right hand the little kitten that was loudly purring at her feet. On her left arm she carried a basket of freshly culled flowers, the stalks of which she had been trimming in the summer-house.

Deris Doreng's manner was free from the slightest reserve, and equally free from boldness and self conceit. To meet such feminine perfection was a delightful experience to Fairfield, who had previously found woman-kind mostly of two types—the timid and the precocious. In Agnes he had chosen the most happily modified example of the first mentioned. And why were the women of the country he had left behind of such extreme types? The question is easily answered. It was because they were insufficiently protected from the heartless ones of their own sex more especially, and therefore, either their natures became hardened to a greater or less degree, or else they grew timorous and suspicious.

In the Island of Justice that especial tenderness and love, inherent in most feminine natures, was not stifled or banished, for women were compelled to be kind, sympathetic and honorable to each other. (See Chapter viii.) Thus men were seldom *tempted* to acts of cruelty or desertion, and the bonds of happiness remained unbroken.

Fairfield and his newly found friend strolled towards the house, but they did not enter at once, passing instead along one path and round another, admiring the flowers and the various items of interest that surrounded them, while they talked on many subjects and laughed as if life was but a fairy-tale after all.

Deris related how she returned soon after breakfast, and had learned from her step-mother about Fairfield and his absent friend, Weldron. Fairfield, however, soon guessed that Deris had not discovered the serious responsibility her father was under concerning Weldron.

He would like to have told her all, but could not bring himself to the task of perhaps turning her happiness to sorrow, her smiles to tears.

Soon they neared the marble steps that led to the hall door, which stood ajar, and as Deris ascended, the kitten she still carried, becoming frightened, climbed towards her shoulder. Deris laughed at the timidity of the little thing, and then, half way up, she turned to Fairfield.

"Do come in for a while; I know you want something to do. You shall help me arrange these flowers in the sitting-room; mother is there doing some fancy-work, so we can both keep her company at the same time—Oh! Pixie! You're pulling my hair, you cruel little mite!"

This last protestation was caused by the sportive kitten suddenly making an attempt to scramble on to Deris' head. She caught the little thing half way, but was unable to extricate it from her wavy locks.

Fairfield took the basket and then the wicked Pixie was detached. It was a pretty animated picture on the verandah steps of "Deeringhurst," the handsome man handing back the basket of flowers and smilingly admiring, while the charming girl laughingly held aloft and scolded the tiny representative of the feline race that a moment before had proved so dangerous. Yet the picture failed to charm, though it certainly attracted the interested attention of Basca's friend, Flintsen, who, looking through the ornamental ironwork of the front gates, thus viewed it from the distance, himself unseen.

When the parties concerned had entered the house and closed the door behind them he gave vent to his anger in words.

"So this is my reward for not trapping both cursed new-comers. Thanks to one of them, I am on the eve of making a name for myself at his expense—the name of a great inventor. This I strive for that I may win Deris, and now I am to be baulked perhaps, by the friend of the man I have in my power? If Basca had not been a coward he might have put both men into my hands that night!"

Flintsen, without further delay, flung open the heavy gate, passed in and banged it after him with a force engendered by his rage. He rang the door bell with more moderation, but it required an effort to so control himself. Having enquired for Mr. Basca, of the servant who opened the door, he was ushered into the drawing-room. As soon as he was alone he rose from his chair and walked impatiently up and down the room. Once he stopped at the door and listened, but as he could hear only the distant and indistinguishable sound of voices he continued his impatient perambulation till the attendant returned requested him to follow her to Mr. Basca's room.

Flintsen inwardly cursed Basca and his room, too. However, there was no option but to go where he was requested. He had hoped to join Fairfield and the others, that he might see how matters were progressing. The attendant left him at Basca's door, and the two conspirators met with protestations of good-fellowship; but it was evident this was not their first meeting since the night of Weldron's abduction, and, accordingly, they had no urgent need to discuss matters concerning him. Flintsen, instead, took the opportunity to indirectly refer to what was at present on his mind.

"Your sister"—he did not say step-sister—"I see, has returned, Basca. I only caught a glimpse of her as I entered the gate. Enjoyed herself well, I suppose?"

"Yes, oh yes, she is all right—I say, I want to show you something I have here." Thus Basca changed the subject. He evidently had no intention of admitting Flintsen to the family circle. It was cleverly done, for he turned round just as if the idea occurred quite undesignedly, and abstracting a matchbox from a drawer, handed it over for inspection with much secrecy. "That is my latest invention for killing a man; that is, if I would do such a thing. Of course, it's intended for perfectly legitimate use as well, but if one wanted to"—here he lowered his voice to a whisper—"to get rid of an enemy quietly, you know, it could be neatly done. You see, the lower part of the box is a minute receptacle holding a most virulent poison. When you press the box to

open it, a needle pricks the finger, then the deed is done; but the sensation is hardly noticeable."

The two men chuckled over the idea, and the clever mechanism of the box, which by this simple pressure of the unsuspecting match-taker's fingers would consign him to the next world; but Flintsen's laughter was forced. Basca's idea to craftily intimidate his cowardly friend had proved quite effective. So, perhaps, it was not strange that after a cursory examination of the box Mr. Flintsen, though himself of such an "inventive and scientific turn of mind," soon became disinterested in the exhibit before him. Perhaps Mr. Flintsen was after all not thoroughly appreciative of the man-killing powers it was said to possess? Perhaps his "moral character" prevented him seeing the value of the article in its proper light. Be that as it may, it was apparent even to Basca that Flintsen's praise of the box was given in an absent-minded way quite foreign to that gentlemen's usual manner.

The cripple, villain that he was, had one virtue—it was a moderate share of brotherly love towards his step-sister Deris. So having discerned that Flintsen aimed at obtaining her for his wife, Basca, to do him justice, had fully made up his mind that she was deserving of a more desirable husband than his friend, and gave him no pretext for escaping to share her company. At last the jealous lover gave up all hope of being included in the family party that afternoon, and had to content himself in the cripple's room to chat about certain business matters Basca desired to go into. Of the two men it was a noticeable fact that the one deformed and insignificant was undoubtedly master over the one physically erect and powerful.

In the sitting-room Fairfield had enjoyed the ladies' company for a considerable time, when he was at last disturbed by the attendant entering and stating that she had ushered into the drawing-room a gentleman who desired the favor of an interview with him.

Fairfield examined the card handed him, and read thereon:—"Bon R. Fargoe, Editor *The Justician*." He was much surprised at finding he had been sought out

in his seclusion by a newspaper proprietor and a Bon; but concluding that he had been sent by the Inspector, he excused himself to the ladies and went to meet his visitor.

He found him to be a gentleman approaching middle age, of very earnest business-like manner, and excellent address. If Fairfield had been astonished at receiving a visitor, he was doubly so at learning his object, which was to secure his services as a weekly correspondent.

"I wish to obtain from you one article a week, to consist of your experiences in the country you hail from, opinions of the World in general, and comparisons between it and this Island," remarked the editor after formalities were over.

"I really cannot see my way at present to entertain your offer, even though, as you have remarked, you are willing to remunerate me well."

There was a tone of regret in Fairfield's answer that the editor was quick to note, for he continued persuasively:—"Excuse my pressing you, my dear sir, but I am sure if you will favour me by stating your objections I can prove to you that they are quite unnecessary."

"Well," began the coveted correspondent, smiling at the stranger's persistency, "certain complications have arisen since I came to this house. I never desired publicity, and now such may be—well, may be undesired by my host. That is how matters stand; so at present my hands are tied, so to speak."

"Briefly, you think publicity on your part may call attention to the absconding of your friend Mr. Weldron, and thus you fear it may bring extra censure on Inspector Doreng?"

"That is exactly my reason, but I should much like to know how you became so well informed," replied Fairfield, a trifle annoyed to find his secret was out.

"Ah, my dear sir, it is the duty of an editor to be well informed, but still do not imagine my knowledge is far in advance of my brother editors. I have not the slightest doubt you will see in the evening paper, which will be selling in the streets in less than an hour from now, that there is a hue and cry after the missing man,

and that the Inspector's folly will be the talk of the whole Island."

Fairfield rose from his chair annoyed and distressed. "You pain me greatly by such statements, be good enough to consider this interview ended!" he said severely. Then he placed his hands to his brow and cried—"My God, what can I do to help Bon Doreng!"

Fairfield expected no answer from mortal being, but the editor spoke.

"I had no desire to distress you, far from it. The fact is you can help the Inspector by this writing for me."

"What do you mean?" asked Fairfield, eyeing his visitor doubtfully.

"You have a chance thus to put his case in the most favorable light. You can indirectly help him, as you never could directly. Your articles in my paper will carry weight, whereas on your oath, you standing alone, a stranger, might not be believed."

Fairfield wondered if the editor spoke truly, or in a sordidly interested manner. He looked him straight in the face, as if to read his very soul.

"You honestly believe I can best aid the Inspector this way? Tell me the truth—yes or no."

"Yes; and you can help yourself, too! Fifty golds an article! Will not that tempt you?"

"The power of the Press tempts me; the golds are quite a secondary matter. Bon Fargoe, I accept your offer!"



Chapter VII.—A Gilded Prison.

FAIRFIELD, in accepting the terms offered him as a correspondent of the *Justician*, had a chance to earn large sums of money, and he was also free to use the rest of his time, no doubt, profitably otherwise, if he desired. He might easily become wealthy by seeking to do so as the Bon had told him, and he began to realise it now. He was in the unique position of being valued as the one man with the latest knowledge of the world to sell to purchasers at his own price.

It must be stated, however, that in the Island of Justice the limit of riches permitted to any single person was twenty-five thousand golds, or to married people twice that amount. No millionaires were permitted, and if there were millionaires existing unknown, hoarding their wealth, woe betide them upon discovery. Due to the fact of wealth being limited and industry aided by the government, moderate means were attainable to all. Also, persons were allowed to settle amounts up to ten thousand golds on each of their children. As regards wealth accruing above the sums permitted, those to whom it accrued could devote it to any requirement for the general good of the people or the State, and in many cases where wealthy men did specially good service with the sums thus devoted, they were granted the title of Bon; others earned it by deeds of valor.

The Justicians, though morally far above the rest of mankind, were but human, therefore, though virtue was so well cultivated and vice so restrained, they were a gay people, fond of amusement and excitement to the fullest degree. The majority therefore read sensational news with avidity; and hence the Press provided such when it was obtainable.

It was late in the afternoon of the day last mentioned, and Flintsen, after his conversation with Basca in his room, had gone straight to the city in order to

obtain the first edition of the evening paper immediately it should be published. He was to be seen leaning on the balustrade of one of the high promenades in Veritas and near one of the corner towers, smoking a cigarette and watching the crowd below. These corner towers belonged to the promenades, though they served as architectural ornament to the building at the corner of every street. They all had wide entrances and exits, and were used somewhat as pavilions. The promenade was continued through the middle of them, seats were ranged at one side, and opposite there were two revolving stairways—one going down to the street, while the other was working its way up again. When a person desired to descend he stepped upon one of them and was carried slowly and gently round and down as if he were standing on the flange of an immense augur. When the part he occupied arrived at the street level he stepped off, and the augur continued its way into a deep well below the surface. Flintsen waited till the evening paper came out, and quickly obtaining one he glanced at a prominent heading on the first page. He did not delay further, but evidently much disconcerted hurried to the stairway and was carried below by it to the street. There he hired a vehicle to himself, and jumping in gave his orders to the driver, and then eagerly read the news. The bold heading appeared thus:—

“ADVENT OF ÆRONAUTS!

ONE OF THE NEW ARRIVALS DISAPPEARS.

A MENACE TO OUR ISLAND.

EXTRAORDINARY LENIENCY OF HIGH OFFICIALS!”

Though Flintsen had expected something of the kind, he studied the account with feverish anxiety. It told the whole outlines of Fairfield's and Weldron's coming to the Island and their treatment by the authorities, blaming the Comptroller of Passes and Inspector Doreng for their “most unaccountable leniency.” It stated that the Inspector had that afternoon made admission of culpable error, and tendered his resignation to the Commissioner of Guards. Then it tempered its censure by “regretting that Bon Doreng, such an old and

trusted officer should and could, with all his experience, have been the victim of a simple trick of confidence which induced him to relax his wonted vigilance." Lastly, in the fulness of its own wisdom, this sensation-loving journal went on to say that "these strangers should have at least been secretly watched by guards for months, if permitted their freedom at all, till they became resigned to their detention in the Island. Inspector Doreng, in failing to arrange this, had committed an error that might eventually involve the State in ruin, because there was not the slightest doubt of the escapee's desire to get away from the Island and report its existence to his own countrymen. It was of the utmost importance if strangers came to the Island that they should be kept under surveillance until they learned the ways and rules of the country, when no further espionage would be necessary, for they would become as loyal as if they were natives."

Flintsen concluded the news regarding Fairfield and Weldron, having at intervals cursed the journal, its proprietors, and the staff generally, for their respective share in stirring up popular excitement in a case that he would much have preferred to remain unheard of. Finally, he pocketed the newspaper and impatiently awaited his journey's end.

After some miles had been traversed, the car pulled up according to his instructions, and he alighted in front of the gates of a large country residence. The locality was about midway between Inspector Doreng's house and East Cape, not far from the actual spot where Weldron had succumbed to the influence of the drug administered by Basca.

As the driver turned his vehicle away he observed his late passenger walking up to the gates as if to enter. Flintsen, however, had no intention of so doing. It was simply a ruse on his part till the man was out of sight. Then he pulled up his coat collar and lowered the brim of his soft felt hat in order to avoid recognition should he, by a remote chance, meet any one. This done, he walked briskly forward along the dreary road to East Cape. The light of the light-house shone out ahead, and thither Flintsen journeyed in the semi-darkness.

When he reached the foot of the cliff he ascended a rocky pathway, and at last approached a small doorway in the high stone wall that encircled the quarter of an acre of ground wherein the lighthouse stood.

There was not a sound or sight of a human being anywhere upon the high and far spreading table-rock around him, nor could he discern any sounds within the enclosure; but he well knew that the place, though silent, was inhabited.

He banged loudly at the iron door with a stone he picked up from the pathway. Many were the marks of stones previously used in the same manner, but there were no indentations of the iron, so solid was it in formation.

Presently a voice within demanded who was there, and upon Flintsen answering by the peculiar whistle that the cripple had summoned him with on the night of the storm, the door was opened by that personage after sundry bolts and locks had been undone.

"Well Flint!" exclaimed Basca in a familiar tone, "any news?" he added as he carefully re-locked and barred the door.

"Yes, in to night's paper! Let's get inside and I'll show it you."

"Did you cail at Deeringhurst on your way here?"

"Not I. How long have you been here?"

"Since early in the evening, and now you're here I can get back. I mean to look over dad's papers to-night. When he gets home he leaves them on the table in his room; while he has supper I'll go through them; then we can check his plans. I've another good idea I mean to carry out, for things are getting too warm for my taste. I'm going to convince the guards of Weldron's death, that will stop the search for him."

"How the deuce can you manage it?"

"Easily enough. His hat and shreds of his clothing will be found washed up in the harbor. I'll fix it all up myself."

"Basca, you're a marvel!" exclaimed Flintsen, clapping the cripple on the back.

While talking thus they passed across the yard and then entered a low-ceiled room, with white-washed walls,

but comfort was noticeable, for in a wide, old-fashioned fireplace a big log fire burned, shedding its warmth around. The coarse, rough table in the middle of the room was covered with a woollen cloth, comfortable cushions were on the chairs, and large warm mats upon the floor.

Two men were just in the act of closing a trap-door in one corner of the room, and they looked up as Flintsen and Basca appeared, but the third, who stood before the fire, as if lost in meditation, never turned his face to see who had entered.

Basca jeeringly pointed to the two at the trap door. He put his hands to his sides and laughed immoderately.

"Look at 'em," he cried. "Ha! ha! ha! Look at 'em. Oh! my, didn't they get a fright."

"Didn't you know who was coming?" asked Flintsen of one of the men.

They closed the trap-door and threw a mat over it, and the one replied—

"Never knew you till we recognised your voice. Another moment and 'the luxuries' and him," pointing to the man who stood before the fire, "would have been down below out of sight."

Then all laughed more or less boisterously and seated themselves around the table; the cards which were upon it they left alone, but not so a bottle of spirits, which the four men emptied between them as an introduction to business, viz., scanning and commenting upon the evening paper which Flintsen spread before them.

The lighthouse keepers evidently had no desire to appear to the uninitiated as indulging in luxuries of any sort, as the man had partly explained in his answer to Flintsen, for all that was necessary to do to transform the place into a rough barn was to fling cushions, mats, table cloth and sundry other easily portable comforts into the cellar below them, and close the trap-door.

When the bottle had been emptied some few minutes, one of the men, who had imbibed heavily before Flintsen arrived, began to roll about in his chair. The others were taking little heed of him till suddenly

he grasped the empty bottle by its neck, flourished it in the air with a drunken cry of exultation, and finally hurled it from where he sat into the blazing fire. The deed was done with all the senseless bravado attributable to a certain stage of drunkenness.

The bottle, in its flight, just missed the man standing statue-like before the fire, but as it struck the fiery embers they flew outward in a shower upon him.

"Cowards!" he cried turning angrily towards the quartette at the table, "Which of you did that?"

He had thrown up his hands to save his face from the burning, and they were seen to be linked together. The man was none other than Weldron, whom the Guards of the Island were seeking throughout its length and breadth. This old battlement, now used ostensibly as a lighthouse was the place where he had been carried unconscious after being drugged and trapped by Basca. The light burning high in the tower was tended by the keepers, who were paid by the Government and allowed use of the premises free. The money they received for their duties was of no consideration to them, for they were exceedingly wealthy scoundrels—partners in iniquity with Flintsen and Basca the cripple. What they valued was the possession of this solitary impregnable position, and the fact that it was nominally under direct control of the Government, for their being Government servants, prevented suspicion falling upon them. Once or twice the place was visited by Inspector Doreng and his men, but due to a timely warning by Basca, who knew all his step-father's plans, nothing in the slightest degree of a compromising nature was discovered. Basca, in fact, was the prime mover in a powerful criminal scheme, under the very protection of the Government.

On that memorable night when Weldron had regained consciousness and learned how he had been tricked, he was much puzzled to know what could possibly be the object of entrapping one penniless as he was. For a time he believed it must be for the purpose of obtaining a reward for eventually restoring him to his newly made friends. It was not long before he learned the actual reason, however, for Flintsen told him how he had overheard him

state on board the "Vitæ" that he was an inventor, and he threatened Weldron that until the secret was transferred to himself he should remain a prisoner.

Weldron, with his usual brave and fiery spirit, defied his captors from the first, but they hoped to bring him at last to submission. He was handcuffed and hobbled—yes, the indignity as well as the cruelty of it—a lion hobbled like a wayward ox! So far Weldron had been subjected to no personal violence; in fact, his persecutors in securing his limbs had sought mostly their own security. The prisoner was allowed to roam about the enclosure as well as his bonds would permit him; they certainly prevented any chance he might otherwise have had of scaling the high walls, and the iron gate being kept securely fastened, offered him no exit that way to liberty.

"Which of you did that?" again demanded the prisoner, advancing towards the men fearlessly.

The cripple wriggled in his chair with joy. He was at the far end of the table, and therefore out of danger, and sadly wanted some "fun" before he should quit the "mine," as they called the place, for the night.

The wily Flintsen, however, began to consider it unlikely he could gain Weldron's secret by harshness, so he answered in order to conciliate him:—

"It was Cassan. Don't mind him; you can see he's drunk!"

The inebriated lighthouse-keeper rolled his head in ridiculous conceit, and banging the table with his fist, spluttered out his words loudly:—

"Yesh! I—hic—did it!"

"I see the man is not responsible for his actions; but you, the rest of you, set of cowards that you are, why do you encourage his devilish tricks? Answer me that!"

"Stop your abuse, Weldron," replied Flintsen, "we are bosses here, not you! All the same we want to treat you fairly, don't we, partners?" he asked of the others.

"Yes, of course we do," answered Mennick, the sober lighthouse-keeper.

Weldron was somewhat appeased, but Cassan now developed a fit of unfounded rage. He managed to rise

from his chair, and with clenched fist and bloodshot eyes staggered in a drunken fury towards the bound and defenceless man.

Those at the table were hardly intending to exert themselves, when suddenly they observed a knife glistening in the desperado's hand. Flintsen sprang up and seized the fellow, and then Mennick pinioned his arms behind him and took away the weapon. They tried next to run him out of the room, and eventually succeeded by a zig-zag course due to his drunken strength, while his yells and curses rent the air.

Basca followed down the passage; being the most cowardly of them all he feared to remain alone with Weldron, the man he had so cruelly deceived.

Cassan was taken to a room at the end of the building and locked in, but the sound of his imprecations followed the others back to their meeting-room, and they found it necessary to close the door that they might not hear him.

They found Weldron had seated himself in the ejected man's chair while they were away. Mennick and Basca took their seats again, but Flintsen first went to an old weather-beaten cupboard, evidently salvage from some wrecked ship, and brought out another bottle of liquor. They proposed to drink to "continued success of the 'mine,'" and Flintsen set a glass before Weldron and bade him join in the toast.

This was an unexpected strain upon the prisoner's new resolutions; new, indeed, for he had formed them during the men's short absence from the room, deciding to play a high-handed game no longer. He hoped, by acceding to some of the men's wishes, and joining in some of their pursuits, to obtain a chance to finally outwit them and make good his escape. But to agree to drink success to what was evidently a criminal's den was more than he bargained for.

Again they bade him drink and be merry, repeating the toast.

"I cannot drink to success of what I know nothing, and wish to know nothing."

"What? You won't?" sneered the cripple.

"Go on, drink your toast; I'll drink after!" said Weldron to the men, not heeding the exasperating manner of Basca.

Again Flintsen interceded, taking the prisoner's cue.

"Come then! Let us drink; it will help to keep the cold out, for we'll take the stranger down the cut and show him the reef. Then he won't be quite so ignorant!"

Holding their glasses aloft the three men chorused their toast and drank and laughed and joked and drank again. As they resumed their seats Weldron took his own portion quickly to avoid further complications. He thought further silence on his part might be taken for sullenness, so he asked:—

"I am pleased to learn that what you call the 'mine' is just an ordinary one. I conclude this is why you desire to know my New Process?"

The question brought forth a tremendous burst of merriment. At last Flintsen replied with a knowing smile of selfish satisfaction:—

"The contents of *our* 'mine' need no tampering with, as you shall see."

Then the fellow rose and obtained a lamp from the cupboard, suggesting a start being made on their journey below.

"Let me out at the gate if you're going fooling along there to-night," growled Basca, rising and forgetting the evening paper he had placed on his chair behind him. Mennick turned a screw on the side of the lamp, and it immediately shed a marvellously soft clear light, which could be easily concentrated to any portion of the room, or evenly diffused around. As a matter of fact the lamp and its adjustments were Mennick's own invention, for the man was a wonderfully clever electrician, and on this account had been appointed to attend the great electric beacon that shone from the tower above their heads. He led the way out of the room, and Flintsen followed to see Basca off the premises.

Directly Weldron was left alone he seized the paper, and spreading it on the table quickly glanced over the contents.

When the two men returned, after letting the cripple out, they found Weldron standing before the fire apparently as he stood earlier in the evening; but, in truth, he was more distressed in mind and sadder at heart, having learned he was undeservedly accused of base ingratitude. He turned and looked at his captors, but his intensified feelings of pain and anger were not discernible upon his features. Force of circumstance was teaching him the art of dissembling.

"Now," cried Flintsen, "we are ready to visit the lower regions. Be good enough to follow us."

He led the way, and they were about to enter the room opposite the one where Cassan was incarcerated, when Mennick suggested it would be as well to see if he was all right. Accordingly, they unlocked the door and looked in. The fellow was stretched on the floor of the empty room, breathing heavily and sleeping off the effects of his carouse.

"Best to leave his door open; then he'll never know we locked him in," directed Flintsen, and this was done.

Weldron had often observed that the four conspirators were in a manner subservient to each other. Evidently the one who alone showed any independence or superiority was the cripple. His real cowardice gave his associates no encouragement to treat him in an off-hand manner, for his recognised exceeding cunningness made them fear him more than any bravery he might have exhibited. Weldron followed the two men into another room, which had the appearance of being simply a place for lumber storage. Flintsen, as master of the present ceremonies, handed the light to Mennick while he approached the farthest wall. The four walls were lined with boards on end to a height of about five feet. He slipped a knife between two of them at a certain part and ran the blade downward. Then five of the boards comprising a secret door opened to-wards him by a spring action, and he entered the space beyond, followed by Weldron and Mennick. The latter closed the door after them, and they descended a gradual slope along a narrow cold passage formed in the sandstone, the floor being of wooden blocks traversed by small trolley rails.

After a walk of a few hundred feet they arrived at another door, but very differently formed to the first one. It was of solid steel, and its surrounding framework was set in large blocks of masonry. Two locks secured the door, and Weldron observed that Flintsen and Mennick each turned a lock with keys of their own; the door then opened automatically as soon as a lever was pressed down. The men entered a large square subterranean chamber, and locked the door again after them. Three walls uncovered were seen to be formed of steel plates rivetted together; the fourth wall was evidently similar, but what seemed to be the doors of a recess occupied its entire width and height. The electrician hung up the lamp in the centre of the room so that it threw its light around uniformly, and then Flintsen waved his hand majestically towards the six large doors before them and spoke in a severe tone:—

"In there is a sight when once beheld by a man who is not wealthy he is doomed! We can never permit him to pass out our gates alive!"

Weldron was a brave fellow. He felt defiant, and defiantly regarded his gaolers. He knew Flintsen was watching him to note the effect of his words. The other desperado stood by with arms folded. They had brought their victim to this torture chamber to frighten him into submission, but they had mistaken their man.

"You know well that instead of being wealthy I am absolutely poor?" he remarked interrogatively as simply as if it were a question about the weather or the time of day.

"I am fully aware of that," answered Flintsen, signing him to the centre one of three chairs opposite the recess.

"Then you mean to seal my fate without further delay?" Weldron remarked, taking the seat indicated.

Flintsen smiled. He had not yet decided to go to extreme measures, but his smile was not the slightest degree re-assuring, for like most hypocrites, when he smiled the sinister expression was doubly noticeable.

"That rests with you. There is no need for you to take the matter so seriously, because you can be worth 25,000 golds at any moment," said Flintsen persuasively.

Weldron was getting angry.

"If you want me to steal the amount, or make me the tool for you to steal it, you can save your vile explanation! I'm quite ready to die sooner than be forced to such infamy!"

"Pah!" exclaimed Flintsen, "money is no object to us, and as for the golds you will require there is no need for you to steal them. They will be given you—that is, under certain conditions."

"Yes, conditions to compromise my honour, no doubt; and if so, you need not state them!"

"You are mistaken. I will go into the matter," said Flintsen, and he and Mennick seated themselves on either side of the victim.

"I will not hear you unless you remove my fetters!" said Weldron determinedly.

After some haggling the hobbles were taken off the prisoner's feet, but they would not consent to free his hands.

Flintsen settled himself with easy comfort in his chair, which he had brought slightly forward, and turned towards Weldron. Mennick took a pipe from his pocket, lit it and began puffing away—a silent and apparently disinterested listener.

Flintsen, addressing his prisoner, began:—

"I am a rich man; you are not. You are an inventor; I am not. Now I have decided to make you rich if in return you will make me an inventor. Do you see the point?"

"Yes, I see it, and that is all I have to say. Go on."

"You have so far refused to tell me the secret of your chief invention, though you have been good enough to supply me with some up-to-date information about the manufacture of balloons and other things of minor importance."

"The latter items you are welcome to, the former I will not be forced to divulge."

"Just so. You have refused already to give me the secret I require; remember, I now wish to purchase. Of course you will sell?"

"Set me free first, for if you desire to act honorably you will treat with me outside the grounds of this accursed place!"

"I cannot free you first, but my offer is genuine; accept it and you will not regret. Name your own sum," said Flintsen.

"Unless you set me free first, I will not consider any terms."

"Impossible. Why, man, does not your common sense tell you that you cannot expect me to do what you ask? You know far too many of our secrets for that! 25,000 golds is the limit allowed any individual by our Government; yet our clients are millionaires: you shall have the 25,000 golds and your freedom in exchange for your secret. Money is no object to me, and I could not trust you unless I first of all made you rich."

"Save your words," cried Weldron, "and do your worst! I want freedom first or nothing!" He was about to rise, but Flintsen gently restrained him.

"Think well before you make a fatal decision. Hear me further! I will even tell you why I want your secret. You think I wish to make money out of it: nothing of the sort. My ambition is simply to make a name—the name of an inventor—and I must win it from you. My partners Basca, Cassan, and Mennick here will share any profits made, but they will permit me the sole honour as the inventor. Is that not so, Mennick?" he asked, turning to his confederate.

"Quite correct Flint, that's your concern; its purely a love concern, and ha! ha! none of us want to be in that!"

The annoyance plainly underlying Flintsen's conciliatory tones seemed much increased by Mennick's remark, for Flintsen had not intended to enlighten his prisoner quite so far; however, as the thing was done he thought best put a bold face on the matter.

"Then, as you have learned so much," he said, "you may as well know the rest of private affairs. I am anxious to marry a certain lady. My wealth has no attraction for her. In fact, it is rather a detriment, for I am unable to give satisfactory explanations as to how I came by it."

"A just punishment to you!" exclaimed Weldron, interrupting.

"Be that as it may, you are not my judge!" replied Flintsen, almost losing control of his temper. Then he

continued more calmly, "Be good enough to hear me out. This lady I desire to marry evidently looks to obtain a husband who has made a name for himself by superiority of intellect far above other men. I need say no more regarding her case and mine. You now doubtless see how matters stand between us, and that you can help me to attain my ends. The lady is totally unknown to you, so jealousy cannot prompt you to refuse my demand. Come now! are you ready to sell me your secret without further delay?"

Flintsen having thus delivered himself, rose from his chair and walked across the room. When he returned he stopped before Weldron for an answer, while Mennick lounged back watching the two men. "Well, have you decided?"

"I have decided long ago! I will only treat with you, as I said before, outside this building!"

"I warn you not to trifle with me much longer, and you must treat with me here."

"There is no such word as must for me," cried Weldron, rising and speaking quite undaunted by the threatening aspect of his gaoler.

"Fool! You still think the paltry wealth your invention may bring is what I am fighting for. Wealth? Curse wealth, it has no temptation for me!" he hissed. "I am already more wealthy than all your millionaires put together! Unbelieving dog that you are, you think I am lying! Don't you? Answer me!"

Though Flintsen's fist was ready to strike him in the face, the defenceless man flinched not an inch. He spoke now almost calmly:—"You *may* be lying. I do not know, nor do I care!"

Instead of striking him Flintsen half turned and threw up his hand in a gesture towards the cedar doors, while he called to his confederate, "Mennick! Open the show! Let him see our strength!"

The electrician rose and touched a button on the wall close by. There was a clanging as each door of the recess fell and disappeared into the ground. It was quickly done, but Weldron saw nothing except a blank wall in front of him—he had

risen and turned his back, and was now facing his persecutors.

"Look and learn! Curse you!" cried Flintsen.

"No!" cried Weldron defiantly, "I will do none of your bidding!"

Flintsen, now fairly mad with rage, sprang towards Weldron to grasp him by the shoulders and force him round, but the prisoner divined his purpose and was too quick for him. He stepped back to give himself room, and clenching his manacled hands together, lifted them high. Next moment, with a powerful swing he had brought them with his utmost force upon the side of his tormentor's head. It was a terrific blow, and Flintsen fell to the ground as if a thunderbolt had struck him.

Mennick, seeing his partner felled, drew forth the long keen knife taken earlier in the evening from Cassan, and rushed towards Weldron. Still, the latter's presence of mind did not forsake him, or he would have had little chance against such a weapon with his hands bound. He retreated behind the seat Flintsen had vacated, and when his adversary approached unsuspecting of his line of defence, he suddenly grasped the back of the massive chair with his united hands, raised it high above his shoulder and smote the fellow with it! The blow had its effect, the electrician was laid senseless beside his companion, while the knife he had brandished flew across the room and struck *something*. Weldron looked in the direction it had gone. In the excitement of the contest he had found no time to notice the sight before him. Now he saw it! The blade of the weapon had entered to the hilt between piles of golden coins within the recess. This stood wide open, and from floor to ceiling and wall to wall, in steel divisions about two feet square, solid gold met his eyes. Millions of coins, the edges only to view, were piled one on another. It was a veritable mine of minted golden metal!



Chapter VIII.—True Justice to All.

IT was several weeks after Fairfield had begun his first writing for the *Justician*, according to his agreement with the editor of that compact and complete daily journal. His first articles contained the story of his and Weldron's life in their own land, and also their arrival and first impressions of the Island of Justice.

He soon began to spend a few hours every day in the city of South Veritas, or Veritas, as it was commonly called, and compared the regulations and manners of the people to those of other nations. As he continued his work the more interesting it became, and the demand for the paper was so great that its circulation was about doubled. The correspondent worked hard to obtain knowledge. He wrote of little from what he read or heard, preferring to see and hear for himself. Accordingly, he often arrived late home, and this evening in particular he was depressed and worried.

The first condition was doubtless due to his still unabated sorrow at learning of Weldron's fate (for Basca's plans had proved quite successful in convincing everyone of his death); the worry was occasioned by love-in-perplexity.

While traversing the quiet country road that turned towards Deeringhurst, Fairfield intended to keep his mind upon the subject of his next *Justician* article, and strove hard to do so; but it was useless, for thoughts of two people usurped and retained the position. All day long he had fought against this in the desire to devote himself to study, but he had only been partially successful. Now walking alone at eventide he at last had to give in.

Fairfield had been in love long before, but now he was what might be described as doubly in love. The extraordinary facts of Fairfield's case were rare indeed.

Agnes Devoué, Deris Doreng; these two names kept repeating in his mind; first one, then the other, then

both conjointly, affirmatively, interrogatively, imploringly, rebukingly. In every conceivable manner they seemed to appeal to his love, his devotion. The man's brain felt as if it could hardly stand the strain. He argued with himself until he feared he might go mad. Why was he not like many other men he knew, heartlessly selfish? He well nigh could have cursed himself for not being so, for then how easily he might have escaped the distress that beset him. Fairfield was in a heart-felt dilemma, for he had found there existed in the world two women so alike in form and feature that to love one was to love the other. He had not sought to part from his fiancée for ever, yet such parting was effected by fate and love's duplicate supplied to him in his exile. He argued that surely there was no reason why he should not try to win Deris and forget his fiancée. Who could blame him for seeking her living double when to return to herself was an impossibility. Then conscience spoke—Where is your honour and your bravery that you do not cast yourself adrift from your Island prison and bid for liberty or death? Fairfield and conscience had as severe a fight as Weldron had in the "mine," though the latter fought against enemies and the former a mystic friend. Weldron had proved himself a hero, for he had bravely conquered the foe. Fairfield was equally a hero, for he let conscience conquer him, and as he entered the gates of Deeringhurst his mind was made up: Deris should be his dearest friend and no more.

He walked but a few steps up the garden path when he saw someone approaching in the dim light. It was Deris herself. Often she came to the door to welcome him on his return from the city; but this evening here she was coming to meet him just as if he were all the world to her. The lonely man felt a glow of pride to think he could so gain her sweet attentions, and his heart beat fast when she confidingly and consolingly held out her hand to lead the brain-weary exile to her father's home.

"Mr. Fairfield, you have made us so happy; I only wish I could frame my words to thank you as I should," she said as they sauntered towards the house, her voice trembling with emotion.

"Ah! Deris—you must let me call you Deris—I really do not know how I can have so earned your gratitude, yet if I have, why then I am repaid a thousand times! Come tell me what you mean?"

He had let go her hand and was walking by her side just—yes, just as a friend.

"You have worked so cleverly, so cautiously and to so kind a purpose, I—indeed, all of us—will never forget it as long as we live."

"So that means by remembering this wonderful thing I have done, you will remember poor me, eh! Deris?"

"I will indeed," she answered.

The reply was deeply and earnestly given, so devoid of all coquettishness the question might have called forth from other women, that Fairfield found strength to again conquer his feelings. Pulling himself up quickly as he remembered his resolutions of a few minutes previously, he asked almost carelessly:

"Well, Deris, what have I done so worthy of praise; what has happened?"

"Ah! Mr. Fairfield, you cannot deceive me," she said smiling; "I knew all along you were working daily for my father's welfare. In your *Justician* articles I could see your efforts to ward off from him the blame of your friend's escape. I blessed you for the indirect aid you were powerfully extending my father's cause. And now—well, just try and guess the result of your labours, do please?"

She looked at him so admiringly, while she joyfully set him this guessing task, that poor Fairfield had some trouble to revert his mind from the questioner, and the absent one she reminded him of so much, to the question.

"Perhaps the Bon has been presented with laudatory addresses from all his brother officers in the land? Perhaps he has been pardoned by the Government, though even if it were so I fail to see that I could claim the result as my doing," at last he replied, hardly knowing what he said.

"You could claim it were it only so, but it is even better; in fact, the one thing necessary has happened, considering that father is so proud-spirited. You know

he would not be under a compliment, or accept a pardon from the Government or anyone else. Now, listen, the Commissioner has actually written refusing to accept Inspector Doreng's resignation. That shows father is exonerated completely. Is it not splendid?"

"Excellent! But you must not give me credit for all this," said Fairfield frankly.

However it was useless trying to depreciate his work, Deris was determined to consider Fairfield the hero of the situation and it must be admitted that at heart he was only too pleased to be the recipient of her praise.

That evening at Deeringhurst was, in spite of his love perplexities, the happiest he had passed since his arrival in the Island of Justice. Happiness was again enthroned within the stately dwelling, and the Bon and his wife were not less grateful to Fairfield than was Deris herself; as for Basca he was delighted at the turn things had taken, for like Flintsen he wanted Weldron's absconding to be forgotten. He knew it would have been a serious danger to the "mine" had Inspector Doreng been superseded by some other official not under the complete surveillance of himself.

Fairfield, however, cared little for Basca's approval. He had begun to see this peculiar individual in the light of a lazy good-for-nothing fellow, instead of the kind, suffering being his relations took him to be.

The visitor had found that the more he stayed with the family during the day or night the more Basca stayed out, in fact he took every opportunity to absent himself, and though he explained when the necessity occurred, that he was going for a simple jaunt or to pass a few hours with some lonely lighthouse keepers, he never asked anyone to accompany him.

Fairfield often wondered where the fellow really went. It seemed to him a farce that this human oddity should limp off daily with extraordinary vigor, and while he did remain at home he was suffering to a degree that ever called forth all the sympathy of the household.

The evening passed by pleasantly and as the hours drew late Mrs. Doreng retired from the drawing-room,

following the example of her son. The Inspector, happy in his contentment calmly dozed at intervals in an easy chair, a handkerchief over his eyes to subdue the light, while Deris sang sweet and low, playing her own accompaniment upon the "Vibra," an instrument somewhat resembling a piano in appearance though of far sweeter and richer tone.

Fairfield stood by entranced, his soul imbued with love and admiration. He leaned carelessly with his arm upon the instrument as he had often similarly when turning over the leaves of the music for his beloved fiancée. But there were no leaves to turn for Deris for she played and sang from memory or improvised. Her listener stood there by her side, dreaming yet watching, entranced by the subtle mingling of melody and love.

The next morning, close upon nine o'clock, the special correspondent of *The Justice* took up a copy of the paper and glanced through it to map out for himself a hard day's "exploration." He was determined by constant study to keep Deris from his thoughts as much as possible. He decided after due consideration to pass most of the day in Courts of Justice. Next day, a Saturday, he intended to devote himself to studying the amusements of the people, for each Saturday was a holiday. Cessation from work lasting from Friday night till Monday morning with the exception of four hours on Saturday evenings when the shops being open some people were necessarily at their duties in the main streets of the city. These workers for the convenience of the general holiday folks, &c., took their off time in the middle of the week to balance the total weekly hours permitted. Some of the busy manufactories worked night and day, but not so the workers, extra hands having to be employed.

Fairfield arrived in the city a little while after the Courts had opened, and briskly ascended the marble steps leading to the grand entrance of the Citadel of Justice. He soon found himself in a great vestibule roofed by the main tower of the building, and looking up from that view it appeared a vast globe of statuary, for beautiful figures stood in niches and on massive cornices

and scrolls around its sides, while from the centre of the dome was suspended in mid-air an immense marble angel representing Justice; its right hand holding a wreath of flowers and its left a chain. Each magnificent wing was as large as the sail of a ship and every feather perfect as a dove's; the face was exceedingly beautiful and the eyes wide open looked down with expressions of benevolence, firmness, and wisdom that bespoke the dispensing of Justice, incorruptible by fear or favor.

A few yards from the main entrance a lengthy passage ran to the right and left, and from it doors led into the offices at the front of the building where Fairfield had received his "pass" some weeks previously. Back and on each side of the great vestibule were sculptured archways forming the entrances to the three Courts of Justice, and Fairfield approached the one in front of him. It was larger than the side ones and led into the main or Cruelty Court, the only one that sentenced convicted persons to imprisonment in jail or to capital punishment.

Fairfield had learned that all cases were tried first before this Court and if Cruelty in some degree was not found in the evidence the case was dismissed or the accused was remanded to one of the other courts. Entering the archway Fairfield came to a double set of glass doors arranged so as to exclude sounds from without. On the wall above in raised letters "Cruelty Court" was written, and in golden letters on a silver ribbon was the inscription "Heartlessness is the Greatest Crime of Mankind." The visitor could see through the doors, the court sitting in great solemnity. He removed his hat and quietly passed in. The room was lofty, light and well ventilated, also there was masterly completeness in the way of seating accommodation from which either public or officials could see and hear to almost equal advantage. The galleries and the body of the court were, however, on this occasion very sparsely occupied by the general public, and Fairfield, after a hurried glance around, made his way to a seat next to a young man of genial appearance, hoping he might find him willing to answer a few questions on any point which would require elucidation.

Upon the dias sat two Judge Associates, and occupying a handsomely carved oaken chair between these sat the Judge-President in a gown of purple silk; on the left side of its cape was the large design of a chain, worked in copper braid, while on the right was the elongated wreath of golden flowers, the same insignia as the angel in the vestibule held in its hands. The Judge Assistants wore gowns of similar color, but without decoration.

Fairfield had not been in the room five minutes before he became impatient at his own ignorance of the court procedure, and decided to question the youth next to him.

"I hope you will excuse my troubling you, but where is the prisoner? I can hear the Judge's Associates reading affidavits of witnesses and thus glean an insight to the case, but the prisoner seems not to be here?"

"Do not mention trouble," replied the youth, accenting the last word, "see yonder is the prisoner sitting between those two rather tall men at the middle of the sixth row of seats. His arms are resting on the table. The men next him are guards of the Houses of Detention."

"Thank you, but how can you tell those guards from other people in the court," asked Fairfield, noticing there was no distinction in their dress.

"We generally know about the position they occupy and besides I know them by sight. On the floor there is a contrivance to secure the prisoner by the feet but it is only used for dangerous characters and hardly noticeable even then.

"So if this man was secured we could not tell?"

"No, it is as secret as possible. You seem to know but little about the court arrangements?" added the young Justician rather surprised.

"I—I am not used to—to city life," explained Fairfield awkwardly. He was not a good dissembler, but wishing to keep up his rôle as a born Justician, he continued "The fact is, in the country I seldom troubled my head about reading anything, especially court rules, I regret it now though for I would like to understand all that goes on here."

The youth's astonishment subsided and he remarked kindly:—"I hope you will not puzzle your brains while I am at hand. Just ask and I will gladly enlighten you."

"You are very kind I'm sure. How is it then that the prisoner is not placed conspicuously and why are his guards in plain dress?"

"Because until found guilty every man or woman is protected from unnecessary degradation; in the courts the name of the accused is written on a slip of paper and passed along for necessary attesting, and the Press is compelled to withhold the names of accused until he is found guilty. Even if a murder were committed and the actual perpetrator arrested you would find his name suppressed until after conviction, although the details of the crime and locality where it happened is at once published by sensation loving journals."

As a matter of fact Fairfield knew a great deal of what appeared in the daily journals, and had his new friend learned that he was a correspondent of *The Justician* he certainly would have been greatly taken aback.

In the papers there was always part of a column devoted to "Court Proceedings," the sub-headings being:—"Initial" referring to the trials before the Cruelty Court, and "Committed" relating to the trials transferred from the Cruelty Court to one of the other courts. Fairfield knew that after trials were over the names only of those found guilty were published. The innocent were saved the wrong of their names appearing on a criminal charge. Unconvicted persons were always referred to in the papers as "A well-dressed man of about 36 years, employed in the city" "A rather elderly woman residing at Seaforth," and such like vague descriptions.

No complainant was put to expense of obtaining his or her rights from the wrongdoer, for the person wronged simply forwarded affidavits to the Judge-President, and if the Council of Judges considered action should be taken at all, the Government undertook the prosecution. The guards had to go through the same course as civilians, but in cases where immediate arrest was

necessary, they were permitted to effect it first. People thus arrested, rich or poor, were treated alike, for there was no such thing as bail. They were taken to the Houses of Detention and kept there until their case could be considered. All this was done as secretly as possible, and every reasonable want supplied during their waiting. They could communicate freely with their friends outside and had comfortable separate apartments. They were under the surveillance of guards, but these men acted without any offensive over-officiousness.

Fairfield gave strict attention to the case before the court. A couple of affidavits were read supporting the charge, and in answer to a question from the Judge-President if the prisoner had any to present in his favor, he replied that his "Advisor" (evidently a term synonymous with lawyer) recommended him to leave the matter as it stood. The Judges' Assistants then began to interrogate the prisoner, the one on the left putting questions that were most likely to call forth answers unfavourable to the accused, while the one on the right put questions tending to have the opposite effect. Occasionally the Judge-President asked a question apparently unthought of by his Assistants. Finally the prisoner was asked if he had any statement to make.

The man stood up quickly, and looking towards the Judge, replied in a repentant voice "Honored Judge-President, I know all in my favor will be considered faithfully by you and your Assistants. My wrong-doing was really the outcome of a fit of—well bravado, or something of the sort. The old gentleman I took the watch from had a conceited air that encouraged me to play the trick upon him. I, like others in this land, have no need to steal. It was only a foolish prank, and I am not likely ever to commit such an act again. Indeed I swear I never will! Honored Judge, I hope for clemency!"

There was a lull in the proceedings when the prisoner resumed his seat. The Assistants and the Judge-President conferred together for a few moments, when the latter addressed the prisoner, who again stood up.

"Accused, we find you Not Guilty of cruelty to any degree, so you will receive no punishment at the hands of this court, but the evidence warrants me committing you to the Restitution Court unless you offer restitution now. The watch that you stole you foolishly threw in the river, and the loser must be refunded its value. As the offence was a first one, and recklessness rather than viciousness is apparent in the deed, I am willing to discharge you if you can find the sum of 50 golds at once, that is the attested value of the watch."

"Honored Judge-President, it is impossible for me to pay all now. I just arrived here from North Island a few days ago, and I have not the money here," replied the prisoner.

"Then your case is remanded to the Restitution Court. Before you go from here a word of warning may be of service to you in regard to your future actions. You have proved to the satisfaction of this court that you caused the old gentleman, from whom you snatched the watch, no mental distress or physical injury worthy of note, but you ran a great risk, for had a slight resistance happened and the accuser suffered any injury or had any illness occurred to him directly or indirectly through your act, this court would have found you guilty of cruelty and inflicted a term of imprisonment upon you more or less severe. Guards, see the accused returns to the House of Detention until his case can go before the Restitution Court, or the sum of 50 golds be paid in the meantime."

When the Judge-President ended his warning the court adjourned for lunch. Fairfield was about to hurry out with the first of the crowd, but the Justician signed him to wait a moment till the prisoner should leave.

When the court was almost empty Fairfield could see the securing apparatus near the prisoner's feet, which however had not been used in his case, and he rose at once and preceded by one guard and followed by the other, the three thus quickly made their exit at a side door.

Fairfield, accompanied by the youth, went out into the vestibule and stood for a while admiring its embellish-

ments, then they left the building and parted in the street. Fairfield was sorry to lose his guide and instructor so soon, but the youth explained that he was due at a neighbouring village early in the afternoon.

"Well, good-bye, and many thanks for your explanations in court. I never would have believed that a prisoner could be treated so considerately," Fairfield had remarked.

"Don't believe its always so," had replied the other laughing. "They get well treated before conviction true enough, but as soon as the Judge decides against them leniency or consideration of the prisoner's feelings become a thing of the past."

Crossing the street Fairfield walked along under the verandahs, and was much interested by looking in the shop windows, which were set out in a most attractive manner. He observed also that each shop-keeper sold but one class of goods. There were no drapers selling boots, no confectioners selling fruit, and so on; yet the different shops were so evenly distributed that a would-be purchaser could obtain any commodity by walking a few steps.

Fairfield requiring a pair of boots entered a large and well-stocked shop, and while getting a pair fitted took the opportunity to ply a few questions which the shop-manager freely answered. His surprise at his customer's ignorance being arrested by Fairfield's usual insinuation of his long residence in the country.

"How is it you have none of the goods in your window priced?"

"Because sir, prices do not vary much. The Government 'Regulation of Discounts and Profits' keeps the seller's profit limited to a fair percentage. By this you see one manufacturer is prevented offering larger trade discount than another. If discounts amounted to half the value of the goods we sellers would be thus enabled to do the same cutting among each other and so the thing would go on."

"There is no competition in your trade then?"

"Our competition is of a desirable sort, sir. We compete in attention and civility to customers and

prompt execution of orders. Country orders especially are a big item in our trade for there are some people like yourself who visit the city very seldom."

"No doubt," remarked the bogus countryman smiling, "So you don't push off inferior articles then?"

"We have nothing in the place except the best values, and to be candid with you, sir, the public have the 'limited discount and profits regulation' to thank for it. Their being no big discount inducement offered us to sell inferior articles, of course we sell good value to please our patrons."

"I see exactly what you mean," said Fairfield, pleased at the candour of the man, "but how do the manufacturers get along among themselves. Is there no competition between them, no grinding down of their employees?"

No, the Government makes them pay fair wages, so they employ the best workers they can obtain, and as for material, they dare not use rubbish, because we could not buy it from them and sell at larger profit."

Fairfield chatted a little while with this model shop-keeper, and being convinced that the quality and workmanship of the boots he was trying on must necessarily be correct according to the price he was to pay, he simply satisfied himself about the fit and completed the purchase.

Time was getting on, so the correspondent of *The Justician* hurried out into the street. He felt rather hungry, so he looked for a restaurant. Soon he came to one, and was about to enter, when he remembered having heard that light refreshment was provided in two of the towers on the promenade that overlooked the gardens close to the Citadel of Justice.

The day was a glorious one, so he decided to patronise the elevated position in preference to dining on *terra firma*. Crossing the street again he approached the large block of ground close to the Citadel. At each corner of it stood handsome Government Offices, and through a space between them he caught sight of the beautiful public reserve occupying the inner part of the square. He hurried towards one of the revolving stairways, and was soon carried up to the tower. Little rustic tables

encircled the room, and at these many people were seated at lunch. One or two seats were placed just outside the doorway on the promenade in the secluded corners where the tower joined the parapet. Fairfield found one of these disengaged. He seated himself, and after touching an electric button upon the table, an attendant appeared, and soon supplied him with some tempting items he chose from the bill of fare. The attentive civility with which his wants were supplied, and the gay scene around, all should have conducted to the enjoyment of his repast but a feeling of loneliness attacked him. As often happened he wished that Weldron were with him daily to join in his study of *Justician* customs. There is no doubt that had Fairfield guessed ever so vaguely that his friend was still alive and had been abducted he would have taken matters far less quietly; but that Weldron was dead seemed certain and he tried not to think of the dishonorable way his comrade evidently lost his life.

Fairfield, in spite of his troubles, felt obliged to congratulate himself on his choice of surroundings. Above him was the broad expanse of blue sky, with occasional filmy white cloudlets passing across at a great attitude. In the far distance the picturesque outlines of a chain of mountains broke the line of the horizon. On the promenade gaily dressed, cheerful visaged people sauntered by enjoying the fresh and gentle breeze that tempered the warmth of the mid-day sun, and almost immediately below from his side of the promenade Fairfield could look down upon the Public Garden with its handsome trees, well trimmed lawns and flower-beds bright with blossoms of every hue.

In the middle of the square a superb fountain threw out its sprays, forming liquid arches and bowers of great extent and beauty. The centre ones rose high in the air even to a level with the promenade itself, and as they fell to mingle with the rest their myriad drops of water sparkled in rainbow tints like an ever descending rain of precious gems.

When Fairfield bestirred himself to return to the courts, he could see by the great clock in the dome of the Citadel, the afternoon had advanced considerably. He

secured a seat again in the Cruelty Court, where another case had just concluded and he was in time to hear the verdict. A woman stood up where the thief had stood and listened as he had done, but the Judge-President addressed her in severer tones:—

"I proclaim you Guilty of cruelty, and therefore as part of your punishment will speak your name that all may hear. *Leressa Novan*, cruelty is a crime it is this court's special duty to punish, whether such cruelty occur by deed or word, and the more heartless the guilty person the more severe the punishment invariably awarded. Your crime is purely a domestic one. It has been proved that you have deliberately alienated a husband's affections from his faithful wife. Such act or continuation of acts without mitigating circumstances is undoubtedly the most cruel treatment one woman can use towards another; heartlessness and selfishness go hand in hand in such a crime as this. To escape the just punishment you deserve you have stated that the wife was to blame for her husband's conduct, but you have produced no evidence to that effect. Had you been able to prove her unfaithful or even undutiful to her husband I might have either acquitted you or made your punishment light; as it is I cannot. Good, amiable women must be protected from those of their own sex, such as you. You must be taught to love the righteous of your sex and aid them to retain their loved ones, not rob them to gratify your own selfishness. As the wife is willing to forgive her husband and the husband is repentant their names will be withheld to avoid the irritating influence of publicity and thus enable them the better to effect a peaceful reunion. The husband will by her request be saved prosecution for the cruelty you tempted him to commit. I sentence you to imprisonment for the term of three years with hard labor."

The woman set her teeth and kept her eyes upon the table before her. Her hard heartedness helped her to restrain her tears which, had they flown, might have gained her some pity from the spectators.

"Let the convict be removed!" added the Judge-President.

The guards sitting beside the woman, when *Fairfield* had entered the court, were then absolutely in plain clothes, but as soon as the Judge-President had pronounced the accused guilty, they had fastened official bands round their caps and put them on their heads, considerations of the feelings of the accused being at an end, as the young *Justician* had explained. The woman was removed and *Fairfield* ventured to put a question to a man sitting next him.

"Excuse me, but the names of the husband and wife will be suppressed I understand?"

"Yes, as far as publication in the papers, but by paying a silver and leaving name and address any person can learn full particulars. The court entry will be turned up for them. The idea is to prevent scandal mongers from getting their information easily and for nothing."

Fairfield understood by this that the court had no absolute secrets for secrecy leads to corruption. He thanked his neighbour for the information, and after making a casual remark in favor of the custom, left hurriedly before the next case came on, intending to visit the other courts.

Having re-entered the grand vestibule he approached the entrance of the Restitution Court. Within the archway, and over the large glass doors, appeared the name of the court, and below it the inscription "Avarice leads to Greater Crimes." The court itself was similar to the Cruelty Court, only smaller, and instead of an imposing dais there was an ordinary judge's bench occupied by a Judge and two Assistants. The latter wore gowns similar to those in the larger court, and the Judge had the insignia upon his cape similar to the Judge-President, except that instead of being worked in metal braid it was formed by a pattern in the material of the cape itself.

Fairfield gleaned from the evidence obtained from various affidavits, and some witnesses who were called up to support their affidavits, that the accused had systematically robbed his employer until that person became absolutely ruined. It was just such another case as *Fairfield's* own had been (*see Chapter 1*), but very

different was the treatment of the criminal and the result to the wronged promised by the Judge's sentence which was at last pronounced as follows:—

"I proclaim you guilty of larceny and therefore as part of your punishment will speak your name that all may hear. Govan Forsa, we find you robbed your employer. The Cruelty Court, in consideration of the heartless conduct you displayed, sentenced you to six months imprisonment and passed your case on to this court. You worked out the term before appearing here, and now it is my duty to arrange for your making some restitution to the man you robbed."

"But my wife and family, sir, what of them?" asked the prisoner.

"They were aided by an allowance from the Government while you were in prison. This will be discontinued now you are to be free, but if they are in distress you know well that there are various societies to help such cases of need. In prison you could do no good to your family, and as you will now be free under conditions, you must follow out those conditions, or prison awaits you again at the hands of the Cruelty Court, for this court has done with you, should you disobey its commands. You could doubtless never refund the large amount you have stolen, so I shall not require your doing so. Instead, my sentence is that you be liberated when this court rises and retain your liberty while you commit no other crime, find honorable employment, and pay into court weekly, for the term of ten years, twenty-five per cent. of your earnings. Remember you have sworn that you have retained none of the stolen property, you will merit severe punishment should this at any time prove untrue."

Several left the court as this case concluded, and Fairfield among them. He thought he might as well spend the rest of the time in the third and only other court.

The entrance was similar to the Restitution Court. It was inscribed "Insanity Court," and below the name appeared the legend "Motiveless Crimes Denote Insanity." All inside the court was exactly the same

as the other minor court, and the Judge was addressing a prisoner evidently just convicted of some offence against public morals.

"This act," the Judge was saying, "was a foolish one, a most improper one. The Cruelty Court passed your case on here preferring not to deal with it, as the crime was committed without spite or actual cruelty by you. I consider your brain to be, or to have been at the time, in an imperfect condition. The doctors have, however, testified to your present absolute sanity, therefore, I cannot send you to the Lunatic Asylum. Instead, I sentence you to two years detention in the Reformatory, the sentence to be alterable, either increased or partly remitted by me, according to the advice of the staff of Expert Doctors. Let the prisoner be removed!"

"What treatment do they get at the Reformatory?" asked Fairfield of one of the guards standing at the door, on his way out, for the court adjourned when the case ended.

"The A division is pretty severe sir, but as soon as a man shows himself truly repentant they move him to the B division, where he gets less harshness, and more efforts are made to bring his mind to a generally normal condition."

Fairfield briefly thanked the guard and passed again into the grand vestibule and out into the street. Then back to Deeringhurst went the correspondent of *The Justice*, well satisfied with his day's experience.



Chapter IX.—A Day of Pleasure.

FAIRFIELD, on the verandah next morning, anxiously looked at the sky. Rain had fallen considerably during the night, and now a slight mist obscured the landscape. It had been arranged the night before that he and the Doreng family should spend "A day of pleasure," as they termed it, together enjoying a holiday outing. The Inspector joined his visitor, and they lounged comfortably and chatted on various subjects, watching the mist gradually lift and float away, leaving the beginning of a glorious day to tempt the pleasure seekers.

"Well, how did you like the Courts and their proceedings yesterday?" presently asked the Bon. "Perhaps you will tell me to wait and read your opinion in your next article, eh?"

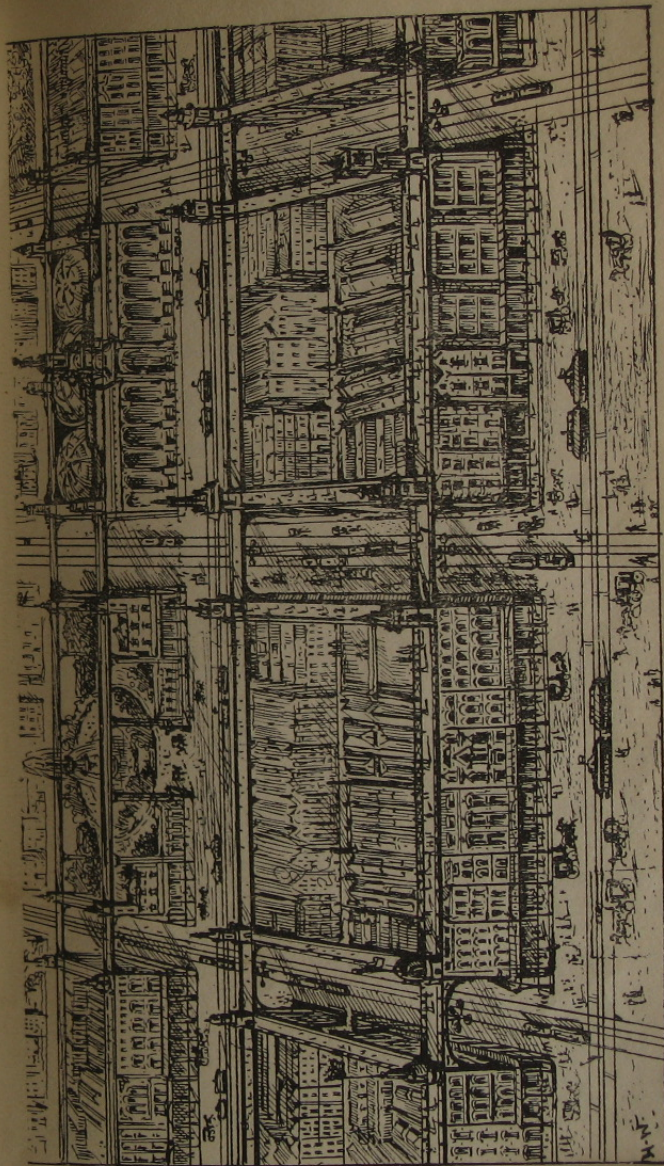
"No, indeed! There is no doubt I could express my opinions better in print if you did not object to the waiting, but I can state briefly now that I was greatly interested, somewhat surprised, and intensely pleased at what I saw and heard, for I spent a while in each court."

"And after visiting the three in one day," laughed the Bon, "I suppose you think you have now mastered a complete knowledge of all our regulations and jurisprudence?"

"No, I'm not quite so self-satisfied as that," replied Fairfield, smiling, "I shall make another visit before I write my article, I promise you that; and there are a few things I would be glad to understand now, for perhaps I might attend the courts for two or three days and not become enlightened."

"Then let me see if I can explain," answered the Bon, settling himself in a still more recumbent attitude, but earnestly attentive for his catechising.

"Well, now, in a case of boisterous conduct in the streets, such as would not be permitted in a well-conducted community, and yet conduct that resulted in



no injury or even annoyance to anyone in particular. What would be the punishment. I cannot see what court would deal with such a case."

"Why the Cruelty Court or the Court of First Inquiry, as it has been sometimes called, first deals with every case. It either dismisses, punishes, part punishes (and commits to one of the other courts), or simply commits to one of the other courts. It acts in either of these four ways, and the last mentioned is the plan in the case you quote. The disturber of the peace as you describe would be quickly remanded to the "Insanity Court" and would be treated by that Court as having acted as an imbecile. A few days in the Reformatory would be the result."

"What? They send a sane man to the Insanity Court?"

"Certainly; but the court would not commit him to the Lunatic Asylum. Only to the B division of the Reformatory. You see no person who does such a foolish, undesigned act, is treated as absolutely sane, so they are brought up before the Insanity Court, and sane people who make fools of themselves feel the indignity of this treatment, I can tell you. It is really very funny to note the sarcasm apart from the justice of the idea," added the Inspector, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"No doubt," replied Fairfield, laughing, "I suppose the bantering, one would get from ones friends, would be considerable punishment if the offence was not great enough to bring disgrace. But tell me, then, how a man is punished for getting seriously in debt."

"Oh, the Cruelty Court punish if he deliberately deceives his creditors, but as a rule the Restitution Court is left to decide such matters. Of course if a man fails by absolutely unavoidable, unforeseen circumstances, no prosecution occurs."

"Is solitary confinement ever ordered for any crime?"

"Never. It was introduced many years ago by a Judge-President, but the House of Villages brought a vote of censure upon him, and after an Appeal to the People he was obliged to resign. He died some years ago and is often referred to derisively as "The Maniac-Maker."

"Excuse my interruption, but I understood it was in the power of Judge-President to censure the rulings of the House of Villages instead of the power of the House of Villages to censure the Judge-President?"

"You are wrong in thinking that the censuring lies only on the one side, it cuts both ways. The people themselves have the deciding of the question as to whether the censure is a right one, and the result of their decision, if in the affirmative, means resignation of the Judge-President, or else of the President of the House of Villages and all his supporters in the House. In this system lies the freedom of the people and the security of the State."

"I see you are a politician as well as a Justician," said Fairfield, in a tone of congratulation, "and now, if I'm not tiring you, Bon Doreng, I will return to the court sentencing, one more question and I have finished."

"Pray go on, you cannot tire me so easily," replied the Inspector good humouredly.

"Lastly, then, what crimes are awarded capital punishment? Captain Bloxforz mentioned something about the matter, but I have really forgotten the facts."

"Three kinds of crime alone bring the death sentence. They are as follows:—First: Murder for mercenary motives. Second: Murder for any motive, if the murderer plans his own escape and hides his identity, thereby perhaps endangering some innocent person being accused of the crime. Third: Treason, that is committing an act, directly or indirectly, endangering the State."

"And why are these three forms of crime picked out for special vengeance?" asked Fairfield, forgetting his promise to question no further.

"Because, as far as the two murder forms at any rate, you will find, if you look carefully into the matter, that they indicate the acme of deliberate selfishness and cruelty combined. As regards the treason, the rules may be a trifle harsh. For instance, it is treason to endeavour to escape from this Island though you may

not have any intention of endangering the State. However, the would-be escapee knows the risk he runs, so perhaps, after all, the punishment is just."

As the Bon made the last remark Fairfield became visibly affected; being suddenly overcome by a great fear of what might happen. Then he uttered just three words as he rested his head upon his hand: "God help Weldron! To-day I have felt impressed that he still lives and have felt the happier for it—and now—now—"

The Bon rose, and clapping his visitor on the back, bade him have no fear. He saw by his words he had struck a tender spot, and now the friendly blow of his honest hand came to the rescue.

If your comrade lives all will end right. He will soon put in an appearance. He has no means of attempting an escape, so he will be safe on that score. Persons must be licensed before they can possess a boat of any sort. You see you do not understand the regulations on these points and—well enough of such matters; we mean to enjoy ourselves to-day, not worry. Come, take my word for it, your fears are groundless."

Fairfield's concern for the life of his old school-fellow passed away, thanks to these kindly assurances, and about half-an-hour after the talk on the verandah he and the Inspector occupied the front, and Mrs. Doreng and Deris the inner seats of a motor-car drawn up at the door.

All was soon ready for a start, the Inspector preferring to drive as many gentlemen did, choosing the route and regulating the speed by their own hands.

Like that of most machines for all purposes used on the Island, the motive-power was "Multo-electricity." The current was stored in an increased form unknown to other countries of the world, and supplying a marvellous force in a compact form. The fluid was generated in large factories and sold in complex honey-comb shaped cells, enclosed in receptacles from an inch to a couple of feet square. These could be placed in the machines or engines used for running of vessels,

and many vehicles used on land, also for working of factory engines of all descriptions.

When the party was about to start, Basca not included, for he had developed an indisposition in his usual manner to escape joining them, the Bon easily set the machinery going and the vehicle proceeded down the drive. As they neared the gates, Fairfield offered to get down and open them. There proved to be no necessity, however, for, as the car passed over a square of iron plating let into the drive itself, a few yards from the gates, its weight caused them to fly open, and when the car had gone through, and over a similar plating on the edge of the pathway outside, the gates closed again automatically.

"That is a fine contrivance!" remarked Fairfield, looking back and addressing the ladies.

"Did you not know about it?" asked Mrs. Doreng, in pleased surprise.

"No, indeed, I had observed those iron plates, but never guessed their use I assure you."

"Ah! you have a great amount of knowledge to gain yet," laughingly remarked Deris.

"Quite right, Deris, quite true!" chimed in the Bon, who, now that they were out clear on the roadway, was able to give his attention to other matters besides the driving.

"The more pleasure for me then," cried Fairfield, in good spirits. Then he turned to the Bon and they talked and joked while speeding along towards the village of Capeville, close at hand. At every cross-road they were joined by all sorts of conveyances (except worn out or rickety ones), for poverty was no more apparent in the belongings of the Islanders than in the appearance of any of the Islanders themselves. And though many vehicles were thus met, few passed the Inspector. He drove at a fast pace, and yet the way he handled the steering gear was such that the passengers had every confidence in the driver.

They soon reached and passed through Capeville, its few shops were all closed, the day being a Saturday. The main street was almost deserted, but just outside

the village the fields were occupied here and there with people playing out-door games, and picnic parties in white canvassed and variegated roped tents of all sizes were dotted about. The gardens of the pretty villas by the roadside were seen to be patronised by their owners, and doubtless their owners' friends. The only work being done was labor of love. The amateur horticulturalist might be trimming his hedges, but the ploughman was not at his plough.

"We will not join in the local amusements," explained the Inspector, as they continued the journey, "you would not find enough novelty out here. I mean to do the best I can in one day for the Special Correspondent. First I will take you to one of our south-island watch towers. You will learn something there while I can combine business with pleasure, for I have to visit it every second week during the year."

The visitor acquiesced in grateful terms, and as a few miles of magnificent country were traversed, he had to acknowledge that never before in his life had he enjoyed such a ride. The diversity of beautiful, happy, and prosperous scenes in so small a compass, fairly astonished, as well as pleased.

Up hill, down dale, on through the invigorating morning air the car sped softly on its rubber-tyred wheels; through villages, past beautiful country residences and cosy farms. The children ran to the gates and clapped their hands, or waved their handkerchiefs at the vehicle as it flew by.

Little forests of splendid timber were seen next. Grazing paddocks with few trees, but enriched with luxuriant grass, in which the lazy cattle roamed knee deep; then a tract of land devoted to pottery or brick-making works. After this came a return to the farming industry, then vineyards, another village, and so on again and again the scene changed. In truth there seemed not an acre of ground wasted. Every occupation for the sustenance and convenience of mankind was carried on systematically and prosperously. Villages, each with its railway station, the Bon explained, were dotted about the entire Island as evenly as buttons on

an upholstered cushion. The Government railways everywhere carried raw produce to the city, manufactures from it, and passengers either way at rates that earned little, if any, direct profit. The Government aimed at a wider and nobler policy. Cheap transit to and from the great city prevented the growth of towns, small villages proving sufficient to supply immediate local wants, the only business places as a rule being a baker's, a butcher's, a grocer's, and (in South Island), often an inn.

After a journey of about an hour and a half the travellers arrived at the base of a high tower, which stood in the centre of a field, and was approached by means of a beaten track running from the main road. The occupants of the car alighted, made their way to the ground floor door, and after knocking it was quickly opened by a tidily dressed and pleasant faced old dame, who entreated them to enter, and expressed her pleasure at seeing the Inspector and most of his family with him.

The party complied, and Mrs. Doreng presently suggested it would be well for them all to dine inside.

"Yes, we have a hamper of provisions with us, and if you allow us the use of your table it will expedite matters. We intended having a pic-nic in the fields, but no doubt that would take time, and in less than a couple of hours we must be at North Seaward," added the Bon.

The old dame was delighted to oblige, and the matter being arranged the Bon next enquired anxiously what was wrong with the lift, for he had heard a man working at it.

"It won't carry anyone up, sir, I fear it can't be mended properly before Monday, but, perhaps, Inspector, you will not need to go up top, as the watch report and entries are all in the office just on the second floor?"

"But I do wish to go," answered the Inspector, petulantly. Then he added "at least I wish my friend, Mr. Fairfield, to go and see the disc. I brought him here especially for that. It's most annoying to have to tramp up all those steps, besides the waste of time."

The old lady was much distressed at the Inspector's annoyance, but Fairfield begged them not to think of inconveniencing him. He would run up the stairs alone.

The Bon agreed, as he could spend the time during Fairfield's absence by checking the watch-reports in the office.

Mrs. Doreng remarked that it was really too bad that the visitor should have no guide, and stated laughingly that had she been a few years younger she would have accompanied him herself.

"Well, mother, I am a few years younger," gladly chimed in Deris, "so if you will take my place in superintending the table-laying, why, I will be Mr. Fairfield's guide."

So amid some kindly chaffing, entreaties, and protestations it was decided, and the Bon followed the office-keeper, who had just come on the scene in the nick of time. Mrs. Doreng and the old dame began to see about preparing the luncheon, and Deris led the way to the first flight of steps.

In joyous spirits they commenced the journey, and Deris seemed to have the intention of putting Fairfield on his mettle as a tower-climber; indeed, he soon found it would be necessary to exert himself considerably if he did not want to be left behind. The steps were low and small and not well-suited to a man's stride. "You are not used to climbing towers, are you Mr. Fairfield?" Deris remarked jokingly in a tone of pity as she looked back over her shoulder when they had ascended a few dozen steps.

Fairfield certainly had no intention of being left to follow Deris. His desire was to be at her side, and, for this one day, at least, he meant to grant himself this pleasure unrestricted, if the opportunity occurred. He had told himself that he could treat Deris simply as he would a picture of Agnes; she was the living picture of his fiancée, so where could there be any harm when he possessed no photo of his absent one to feast his eyes upon. Yes, as a picture, that should be his love-limit.

Soon he caught up to Deris, and after they had briskly ascended for some time, she found it necessary to slacken pace, having shortened her breathing by her exertions, and her companion chided her, laughing at her unsuccessful effort to be first at the landing. There were

several of these, and as they started to climb the next flight, Fairfield insisted on Deris taking his arm that he might be of some assistance. So they continued, chatting happily on different subjects the while, but, even as he talked, his thoughts were busy upon another theme. The picture limit was on his mind. He knew that no picture, by its inanimate touch, could thrill his senses as did the arm now linked in his. What was he to do? Should he request Deris to continue her ascent unaided? Pah! he was thinking absurdities. He would no longer worry himself with trifles. When about quarter the distance was reached they stopped at a window there and looked out over the lands below. Beyond the tower directly southward for a few acres were waving fields of corn, and beyond them a range of low hills where mining operations were being carried on.

"Does your father speculate in mining at all, Deris?" asked Fairfield of his companion, seizing a chance to recede from sentiment.

"Not now; he and some others opened up those very mines you see there, but were most unlucky."

"I suppose, as the usual thing, he had to pay calls after calls till he got tired of it?"

Deris did not understand the meaning of "calls," though she assured Fairfield she had a good knowledge of mining and its concerns generally. Upon Fairfield explaining his own knowledge of the financing of mining ventures she was much surprised, and exclaimed:—

"Why, that is terrible gambling! Of course here mining is a speculation, but not prolonged gambling like that. Now, as regards those mines there, a rich company father was in deposited 50,000 golds to work them, and failed to get payable returns up to the time the 50,000 golds had been spent. No doubt the company would have gone on wasting their money till they ruined themselves if such a thing was allowed as you describe."

"What happened then?" asked Fairfield, much interested.

"Why, directly the amount deposited is expended, the Government always takes possession if the mines are not paying, and then they are either worked awhile by the

Government or closed down. One of those is closed down, and the other is still working under the Government and paying a little."

"And does the Government retain the proceeds after all the expense your father's company went to in opening up the mine?" asked Fairfield, thinking this surely an injustice.

"Oh! no, not all; they allow the company twenty-five per cent. of the profits for a number of years, which is quite fair, I think. I know I am sincerely grateful to the Government, for if father had been allowed to continue he would have been ruined; he is so persevering that he would have kept on till he spent his last bronze."

"Well," admitted Fairfield, "your Government seems a true guardian of the people."

"Yes, indeed, it lets no one make himself a king or a beggar; it looks to its people's welfare, ever dealing out happiness and prosperity. Thank Heaven I can appreciate the land of my birth; dear, sweet Island of Justice!"

As she had spoken these words Deris was half leaning upon the sill of the window, as if addressing the landscape before her. Her companion was quite infatuated with the pose and language of the beautiful girl who so eloquently praised her native land, and as she turned and quietly regarded him, hoping his approval, he was not slow to respond.

"Deris! you are a true patriot, and I admire you for it more than ever!"

"You think so; I hope I am," she said laughing, as he took her hand and led her towards the next flight of steps. Fairfield was venturing on dangerous ground. The "picture" was becoming forgotten in the reality; the hand he held as they resumed their journey he pressed, slightly it is true, but with a pressure of affection.

At last the half-way landing was arrived at, and as a form was here to supply rest for the weary, the visitors decided to take a few minutes spell. They had hardly seated themselves when a soft sorrowful twittering attracted their attention. Deris looked up and discovered where the sounds proceeded from.

"Oh! see up there in the corner, a poor little swallow is shut in. Perhaps it is starving to death. Do open the window," she begged, her kind heart ever ready to ache even for the troubles of the tiniest of God's creatures.

Fairfield rose to comply when he noted by the size of the openings in a ventilator that the bird could easily escape there had it wished. Laughing at her fears for the supposed prisoner, he pointed out the place of exit. As he spoke they noticed another swallow settle upon the wood-work of the ventilator and look down timidly at them.

"Ha! there is your 'starving' swallow's mate," cried Fairfield jubilantly, "and he has a morsel of mud in his beak. Yes, now I understand. See over there is the beginning of a mud nest which his mate is perched upon. No doubt he has had a long way to travel for his load; mud is not a plentiful commodity around here just now."

"Oh! the dear little things!" exclaimed Deris. "So the waiting swallow was piping for her mate's return."

As she spoke the new comer flew across and deposited his beakful at the feet of his little partner. Then the pair twittered lovingly as if they had been parted for a year.

Fairfield stepped over to the window and again admired the scene from this greater height. He thought how happy he might be if Agnes were but with him in this happy land. Then he reckoned the power of that little word "if," the uncertainties, aye, the impossibilities it perhaps implied. Deris was near by. There was no uncertainty about that, and just as certain was it that he loved her. Why should he wear his life out with deferred hopes? He would destroy one uncertainty at least; he would ask Deris at once if she loved him. He turned to carry out his new intention and found her still looking upward, watching the birds, but her face in its present position was seen to its fullest advantage. It was enchanting for the reason that its beauty was as much due to the tender loving expression as to perfection

of features and complexion. It was naturally a sweetly happy face, yet now there was a touch of sadness upon it that caused Fairfield to break her reverie gently and ask a question not otherwise intended.

"Deris, do tell me of what you are thinking?" He spoke softly as he seated himself by her side.

"I was just thinking of the little swallow, that was all," she answered, smiling.

"Still that little swallow, eh? Why one of them? Which one, Deris?" he asked, laughing in a low gentle tone to encourage her back to her usual joyousness.

"The one that is left behind waiting for her mate's return. Suppose some day he does *not* return? Fancy how she will watch in the confidence of seeing him soon appear at the lattice up there. When time goes on and he comes not, she will be wondering and piping her discontent, fluttering her little wings with troubled fears. Then, in hopes of finding him, she will fly out over the fields, hither and thither like a little mad thing, still going yet tired and weary, she will be buffeted by the winds, wildly careless of her own safety. And at last, after days of unsuccessful searching, she will manage somehow to return to her solitary resting place to the home she and her mate were building together in the happy days, and there—there she will dwindle and pine, and—"

"Deris! stop! you make me sad. Come, let us go on," cried Fairfield, interrupting her. His thoughts had reverted to his fiancée as he listened to this pathetic little romance that met her case and his so well. Told in the thrilling intonation of Deris' sweet voice, it touched his heart so deeply that he had been forced against his will to interrupt its conclusion.

He took her hand and led her onward. His emotion prevented him venturing another word for some moments.

Long before they reached the top of the tower they were chatting pleasantly, as if nothing had happened. Deris, who was puzzled at the effect of her little word-picture, said nothing, while Fairfield had again made up his mind to do as conscious directed him, and ask no

questions of conscience or of Deris either. Conscience is the voice of honor, and when it sets us a task we may be sure that if we seek reasons to set that task aside, we are trying to act either as rogues or cowards.

At the end of the stairway was a door. They knocked, and it was opened by a young man, who asked if they had come to see the disc. Fairfield answered in the affirmative, though as a matter of fact he had no idea what the disc was. He expected it would simply be a light of some description.

The room they entered was an octagonal one without windows, and a subdued light fell upon the walls, radiating from a low set large table, which occupied the centre of the room. The ceiling was formed of iron, which sloped from the top of the walls to a circular opening, about five feet above the edge of the table. In fact, it resembled an immense broad funnel.

From the opening a powerful light descended and fell upon the table top, or disc as it was called, where appeared a shadow of half South Island. This map left on an average a margin of about two feet of the disc uncovered. At the north, where the Island appeared cut in two, the coast lines ended abruptly.

"You might kindly explain about the disc, its uses, and your duties. I have only a slight knowledge, and this gentleman has none whatever," said Deris, to one of the two watchmen.

The kindly tone in which the Inspector's daughter addressed equals and subordinates alike was irresistible. The man gladly agreed and turned to Fairfield.

"You see here upon the disc half South Isle, the other watch tower further north takes up the map where you see it cut off; then the towers similarly placed in North Island complete the rest of the map of the Island of Justice."

"The formation of the land is very exact," said Fairfield, but I can see nothing except rivers and lakes upon it. "What use is it so?"

The two watchmen could not repress a smile at the visitor's ignorance, and the spokesman replied:—

"Well, we don't watch the land at all, sir; it's the white space surrounding it, the sea, that we take it in turns to study."

A bell rang on the wall close behind Fairfield just at this moment.

"That bell means it is my ten minutes watch. You see, it's too trying on the eyes for one man, so we take it in turns; however, my mate will keep on for another ten minutes as I'm explaining to you."

"I will that," said the other watchman, "you just leave the disc to me till your'e disengaged," and he continued to walk up and down, scanning the margin of the map meanwhile.

"Yes," continued the first watchman, "this white space round here represents twenty miles out to sea, so we can watch that distance for an enemy approaching, or anyone trying to escape. See that speck there, sir, moving along up the coast, that's the 'Vitæ' on her way round the Island."

At the spot indicated was seen a compact dark little shadow, which, at first glance, might have been mistaken for a large insect. Fairfield turned to Deris with a smile.

"Well! I did not expect to see my old friend the 'Vitæ' up here." Then, as he lent over the disc, "I can't distinguish Captain Bloxforz anywhere on board though, I'm sorry to say."

It was evident, by the visitor's remarks, that he was in rather a frivolous state of mind. The watchman, however, took up the joke before Deris could reply by suggesting that Fairfield should have brought a microscope with him.

"But look at all the small specks off that point there. What are they?" enquired Deris.

"Authorised fishing boats, miss, and a worry they are too; only yesterday one went out just beyond the three miles' limit, and I had to telegraph to the coast-guards. However, he was back again before they launched, and a good thing for him. He ran the risk of being heavily fined."

"Why did you call the coast-guards?" asked Fairfield.

"Thought it meant an escape, sir; but attempted escapes are few and far between; they have no chance. Only licensed or authorised boats are allowed outside the harbours, and my mate and I know every one of them and where they should be."

"You think escape impossible, then?" asked the visitor.

Fairfield was thinking of the escape he felt it his duty to make, for the incident of the little swallow was still on his mind.

"Absolutely impossible," replied the watchman; "why, in three seconds the coast-guards have my telegraph, and in as many minutes they are after the escapees with a gun on board that will cast an explosive shot wrecking anything for a space of hundreds of yards, even at many miles distant."

"But how about night time?" asked the visitor, so anxiously, that it was a wonder the men's suspicions were not aroused.

"No difference. This disc does its work the same night or day. It is formed by electrical influence of solids over liquids. Land itself, or objects on water, show black, and the black on the white we can always pick out. We're never asleep up here, are we mate?" he asked of the other.

"Well, never both at the same time," was the reply, given in such comical tones of such good-humoured sarcasm that made the visitors smile.

Various spots on the disc were next pointed out to them; the smallest being buoys and bathers, and the largest, merchant vessels or Government cruisers. Some time was spent learning minor details and listening to one or two stories of anxious hours during exceptional gales when vessels had been driven out of their course, or beyond the authorised limits. This, however, it was explained, occurred very seldom, for ordinary storms had no power whatever over the vessels driven by multi-electricity.

Fairfield and Deris would gladly have remained longer in the disc-room, but a message was sent from below that the lift was being sent up as the Inspector desired them to hurry down to lunch.

It appeared the partially disabled lift would ascend if empty and would bring a couple of passengers down safely enough, so the journey below was accomplished with satisfaction. The lunch was despatched with more than satisfaction, and the party, well pleased after their morning's experiences, again took their places in the motor-car, which was headed towards the city.



Chapter X.—Love and Revenge!

SEVERAL pages might be devoted to description of further scenes of marvel and beauty, encountered by the Doreng party as the car flew along the roads across country to "Veritas," but space will not admit.

As the city was entered, from a different direction to which Fairfield was accustomed, his interest was doubled, for the story of its founding and growth was related by the Bon as they progressed. The route taken was through the old irregular portion of "Veritas," then by the street bordering on the wharves, until they arrived at and passed over the great bridge that spanned the river Seaforth.

It was even more crowded than when Fairfield went under it on board the "Vite," and the throngs of people walking, riding, or driving, seemed all on pleasure bent.

As the visitor thus, for the first time, entered the half city beyond the river, he was fairly astonished to find the buildings built in the same wonderful, beautiful, and useful manner. The corner towers were as varied, the high promenades and the streets below as wide and well kept. He was thinking, however, that a noble pile such as the Citadel of Justice must surely be wanting, when they came to a colossal edifice, which the Bon explained was the House of Villages. It was a structure even more beautiful than the Citadel, though not quite so massive looking. The materials in its formation were mostly similar, but the architecture was lighter. Instead of domes, a central tower rose steeple shaped to a great distance and was then surmounted by an elegant windowed turret of silvery metal, and the surrounding roof of the building was adorned with dozens of minarets of various heights.

Fairfield would gladly have stopped a while to admire, but as the Inspector made no offer to delay, on went the car, while on each side, ahead, behind, convey-

ances full of holiday makers, formed one continuous stream. Most were evidently bound for the same place, the village of Seaforth, and the usual Saturday "All Sports Diversion."

In twenty minutes after the city had been left behind, the village was entered, and just beyond it lay an immense inclosure, with several view-stands, far apart from each other. Each proved to be several stories high, and built of iron and glass. About a quarter of a mile from the enclosure, the road divided into three, each running direct to separate gates. One road was taken by pedestrians and cyclists, another by motor-cars, and the third by horse vehicles and riders. Slow pace was required of all here, and as soon as the Bon brought his car in line he had time to renew conversation. He took from his pocket four tickets, and handed them round, except one, which he retained for himself.

"We have each to give up our own ticket at the gates and receive a book in exchange," he explained to Fairfield.

"More justice I suppose?" asked the visitor half jokingly.

"Yes, you are quite right; this plan is to frustrate gambling and yet permit speculation. Is that not just?"

"Perfectly. I wondered how your sports could be a success if you prevented speculation in connection with them. My experience of the public is that they will have it somehow or other. But how is this plan arranged, may I ask?"

"Well, the books are numbered consecutively, and one only is handed each person on entering; and no one, if he goes out again, can re-enter until the hour to cease admission arrives. So there is no chance of obtaining two books by making two entrances. Each book contains a detachable numbered duplicated slip to be used in each event, horse-racing, etc., in which people may desire to write down or 'state their fancy.' When I say 'state' I mean speculate only a sum included in the reasonable and uniform price of admission ticket. You see by these arrangements gambling is prevented. A person is enabled to write down his fancy on the slips, send it in and retain the duplicate in case of a win."

"What is to prevent me from putting down the winner on my slips say after the horse has won?" asked Fairfield.

This idea of fraud the visitor thought so practicable, by the satisfied tone in which he put the question, caused the ladies and the Inspector to enjoy a hearty laugh at his expense.

"Oh! to be sure there is nothing to prevent your putting down the name a week after, if you wish, but your only chance of getting a dividend is in posting your slip before the race is run, or the match played, as the case may be."

"Ha! no doubt there is something in the term 'posting' that I do not understand," replied Fairfield, giving in good naturedly.

They arrived at the gates, so further explanations were cut short, and as they passed through, tickets were exchanged for books. A few moments later the party having alighted, left the motor-car, and began to parade the lawns, and view the sights of most interest to them.

At one end of the extensive enclosure a football match was being played. At the other end the game seemed to be cricket, and in the centre, the attraction was evidently a kind of polo. Around all was formed a racing track. Each sport had its own grand-stand and its own share of patronage by the people. Overhead from one end of the grounds to the other, high above the contests, were suspended from two towers, ropes of a metal like aluminium, but of a springy texture, and along these hanging cars dashed quickly across. It was a sort of an aerial switchback, and the exultant cries of the flying passengers could now and then be plainly heard below.

The Inspector's party, led by himself, went up the steps of the view-stand, overlooking the racing and other amusements. A chariot race was about to begin, and they were in time to see it run after they had obtained seats. A half-dozen chariots, three horses in each, started, and four came in at the finish, one leading by half a length, and thus winning amidst great excitement. Fairfield could almost imagine he had been transported back to the days of the Romans, but such a fancy was quickly dispelled, for the next race was with motor-cars.

This proved even more exciting than its predecessor, for a collision of disastrous consequences occurred, one of the drivers having crossed the track in front of a car behind him, and he escaped uninjured, though his car was badly damaged. The other driver was carried off the field seriously hurt, his vehicle being a complete wreck.

Inspector Doreng, leaving Fairfield to attend to the ladies, hurried away to the scene of the accident, which had happened over the far side of the course.

The next competition was on bicycles, and a horse-race was mentioned in the books as following that.

"I fear it will be some time before father returns," said Deris to Mrs. Doreng, "we may as well have an interest in the horse-race like other people. Quickly, mother! shall we give Mr. Fairfield our slips to post?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Mrs. Doreng, "that is if we are not troubling too much."

"I shall be delighted, and I would like to post my own at the same time, if—"

"If you knew how?" added Deris for him. "Well you shall. Now, mother, give me yours, thank you, and there is mine, Mr. Fairfield. Have you torn out your own? Yes, that is right. Please write Grasshopper on each. That is if you know no more likely winner."

"I? Why, I don't know any horse at all. There! I have Grasshoppered the lot. Now, what shall I do?" he asked, replacing his pencil in his pocket.

"Run," she cried, "go right down to the track and post the slips anywhere along the fence, where you will see others doing so."

"Quickly! or you will be too late, Mr. Fairfield," cried Mrs. Doreng.

Deris and her step-mother had become quite excited, for they noticed the horses preparing to start.

Fairfield needed no further urging, he was soon off down the steps and making his way through the crowd on the lawn as best he could.

Almost as he arrived at the fence so did a man who had deliberately followed him. The fellow, stylishly dressed, had a few minutes before been sitting beside a

friend of his in the view-stand not far from the Doreng party, and the friend, though known to them, did not for some reason let his presence be observed. He still sat there after his companion left him to follow Fairfield, which, it must be stated, was done at his instigation. As soon as Fairfield arrived at the fence he saw people putting their slips into slots in a metal tube fixed along the top of it. He did likewise, and looking in, as well as he could through the slots, found that the tube was supplied with a continuously sliding bottom which carried the slips along with it. He waited a few moments, looking across the track at the horses getting ready to start; then a bell rang.

"That's the starting bell, I suppose?" he asked of a bystander.

"No, that is the shut-off bell. If you had not posted your slips before that rang, they would be simply dropped out on the floor at the Receiving Room as waste paper; as it is, if you've backed Grasshopper you've a good chance of winning."

"Exactly what I have done. Did you also, may I ask?"

"Yes, and we're few among many I believe, so we'll come in for a big dividend, see if we don't." So saying, the Justice passed on with a knowing jerk of his head.

Next minute, the man who had followed Fairfield, accosted him hurriedly.

"Are you Mr. Fairfield, please?"

"I am," he replied, too astonished for the moment to enlarge.

"Then kindly come with me, as quickly as possible. Inspector Doreng wishes your assistance."

Fairfield hesitated hardly a second, though the race had begun, and the popular excitement and splendid efforts of horses and riders to win the race was tempting to remain and watch. If the Bon wanted him it was his duty to go quickly, the race and its results were quite a secondary consideration. The man pushed his way through the crowd, along the lawn, then across it to the rear of the stand, then to the gates and out of them, Fairfield following in all haste. Here the fellow stopped and looked up and down the road anxiously.

"An extraordinary thing," he muttered, "the Inspector promised to wait here till I brought you to him."

"What was the trouble?" Fairfield asked, beginning to wonder who his strange self-appointed guide could be.

"Oh, the Inspector thinks of having that motor-car driver arrested. I don't know why he wanted you, but just be good enough to wait while I go across the road and make a few inquiries, will you?"

"Certainly. You will find me close to the gate here."

The stranger was soon out of sight among some vehicles drawn up along the roadside, about a hundred yards away. That was the last Fairfield saw of him. He waited patiently for nearly half an hour, then he went across the road and made inquiries, but he could get no satisfaction. No one had noticed the strange he described, or knew anything of the doings of Inspector Doreng.

Fairfield began to suspect he had been duped, but why? He felt his pockets to see if he had been victimised by a thief, yet found that his belongings were safe. He knew thieves were few in Veritas, but, recalling the facial appearance of the fellow who had misled him, he assured himself some villany was intended. "Ah, well! I shall know him again among a thousand, if only by that scar upon his forehead!" Thus Fairfield contended himself, and had he only divined how the disfigurement had been obtained, he certainly would have experienced feelings of satisfaction, if not even delight. Thinking it best to rejoice in his friends, and make some apology for leaving them he approached the gateway.

"No one is allowed to enter until after the last race," said an official, politely, but firmly barring his entrance.

"But, I—my friends are inside!" answered Fairfield.

"Very sorry, but no-one can enter till the last race starts, then the sports are practically over, so we throw open the gateways."

Fairfield was truly "an outsider." He remembered that the Inspector had explained these rules beforehand,

and he thought what a fool he was to have been so easily led out and deserted.

The fellow who had played the trick knew full well that he too could not again enter, but he seemed well content to miss the rest of the sports, and he laughed aloud as he made his way along the road to the village, where he hired a conveyance, and was driven right back to—yes, to the “mine.”

The mysterious stranger to Fairfield, was well enough known to Fairfield's friend Weldron, for he was no other than Mennick, the light-house electrician, who dressed in his best, had been enjoying himself at the sports with Flintsen. Soon after the arrival of the Doreng party, close to where the two men sat, the arch-conspirator formulated the little plot to abduct Fairfield, and he got Mennick to carry it out; then having waited until such time as he safely concluded his accomplice had been successful, he made his way across to where Mrs. Doreng and Deris were waiting.

The “amiable Mr. Flintsen” related how he had only a few minutes before observed them. He hoped they were enjoying the sports and that the Inspector was well. He had not seen him lately. Was the Inspector at the sports too?

The wily scoundrel by his seemingly kind solicitations, having thus ingratiated himself with the ladies, and at their request taken Fairfield's vacant seat beside Deris, remained there until the Inspector returned.

As soon as Mrs. Doreng had her husband's company, Flintsen suggested that he might accompany Deris to look for Mr. Fairfield, whom the ladies feared had become confused in the crowd and forgotten their direction.

The well-matched partner of Basca eventually obtained his desire to lead Deris away from interested watchers or listeners. He took her to the farthest limits of the enclosure, where a cricket match was being played, telling her that this game was more likely to attract the new-comer, it being one of the old-world pastimes. Deris was ill at ease. She hated none. It was not her nature to do so, but her feelings

were adverse towards Flintsen more than any person she had ever known. She had accompanied him against her natural inclination, though her wish to find Fairfield, and her unwillingness to refuse an offer kindly made, aided in impelling her to do so.

Among the thousands of people, even had Fairfield been there, to succeed in finding him was a most unlikely result, and this became doubly assured to Deris, the longer they, or rather she continued the search, for she became painfully convinced that Flintsen had really no desire to find her friend. He hardly cast one searching glance among the crowd, but continued to tell her his personal ambitions and seek words of approval from her. Before he would agree to setting out on their promenade back to the Bon and his wife, he insisted that she should rest awhile upon a rustic semi-circular seat under a beautiful tree of light spreading foliage.

The crowds of gay promenaders passed continuously by, so although Flintsen asked his fair listener many questions, they were not of love though love suggested them. Deris' answers were mostly purposely discouraging in tone though not unkind, and at last her companion began to lose his temper. The insinuating politeness he used so often was but a veneer, which hid the treacherous fibre of his soul, and at last the polished surface gave way.

“I suppose the individual who takes your fancy, Miss Doreng, takes all your good-will. There is none left for me?” He was sorry as soon as the sneering words were out, not sorry that he possessed an evil disposition, but that he was fool enough to show it.

Deris had risen from the seat, and looked down at the sullen wretch before her. There was no anger in her voice, but a depth of sadness and reproach as she quietly said:—“Kindly see me back to my people, Mr. Flintsen, our time is not being well spent here.”

He rose and endeavoured to assume his wonted style. He inwardly cursed his want of tact, and smilingly said as he walked by her side:—“I—I truly regret the remark I made just now. Believe me, I do, Miss Doreng.”

"I hope your regret is sincere, because, to give me such a character is surely no credit to your own?"

He made no reply. The calm rebuke, without the veriest sensation of spite or sarcasm, cut him to the quick. As they passed through the crowds, the shut-off bell sounded for the last speculative event of the day, and when they arrived before the stand, where the Bon and his wife had been left waiting for them, who should they almost run into but Fairfield. Deris extended her hand and warmly greeted him.

"Well, I do hope you will forgive me," cried Fairfield. "I got lured outside and had to wait till the gates were thrown open, only a minute ago! I have been utterly miserable without you!"

As he finished the last sentence, he noticed that Flintsen was with Deris. The two men shook hands. They had met once or twice before, but each time there was a want of cordiality in their greeting, and now their handshake was mutually repugnant, for it could not hide their mutual dislike.

Withal the aversion was but the effect of jealousy, for neither knew evil of the other to deserve abhorrence.

Strange the power jealousy exerts alike over the wicked or over the good, the scoundrel or the man of honor; each may be tempted by jealousy to deeds of revenge. Perhaps, then, it is no wonder that the jealous scoundrel becomes a veritable demon under its spell.

Flintsen, when he heard his rival's words and saw the pleasure they conveyed to the girl he loved in his own vicious way, was determined not to leave. He made up his mind to exert his cunning politeness with them both, to walk up with them and join their party, even accompany them all home, as they would be sure, as an act of courtesy, to ask him.

But he had not bargained for Deris' action. As the three arrived at the foot of the steps to the view-stand, she turned and addressed him with a slight bow.

"You will excuse us, Mr. Flintsen, we will say good-bye, and I thank you for—for the escort you gave me."

"Instead, I must thank you," replied Flintsen, bowing his adieu and smiling graciously. Then he

turned abruptly and the smile vanished, and he bit his lip with rage.

"Curse them both!" he muttered, as he quickly moved away, "I know when a game is up as well as any man. They can have each other, but I—or the devil—will have them both. I swear it!"

What Mr. Flintsen meant by his threat would be premature to disclose at this juncture. Some of his former threats, however, have been heard previously, when applied to Weldron, in the "mine," and it may not be out of place here to go back for a moment to Weldron's experiences:—

When that victorious prisoner took his eyes from the wall of solid gold before him, and he soon did so, for gold had little charm for him under existing circumstances, his main object was flight. Nevertheless, his first thought was for the lives of the men deservedly struck down by him in self defence.

He saw Flintsen was not seriously injured, but Mennick was totally unconscious, and had a nasty gash high up across his forehead, where the sharp edge of the heavy chair had caught him with full force. Blood was trickling from the wound and running in a thin stream along the floor.

Weldron quickly drew, with his manacled hands, a handkerchief from his pocket and managed to tie it firmly over the wound. Then he dragged the limp body forward and rested the head upon the lap of the other wounded man, who then raised himself partly on one arm, and looked at his unsolicited charge in a dazed manner. No one spoke; Weldron having done what his sense of humanity demanded, turned round and rushed to the door, intending to make his exit. Then he remembered it was locked! Another minute and he had taken the keys from the pockets of the men and applied them to the locks, and after pushing a lever, similar to the one outside, the massive door swung open. He dashed up the narrow passage, certain of liberty, for outside he knew where a ladder was kept, and

with no one to stop his getting it and placing it against the outer wall, freedom must be his at last.

He had almost reached the secret door, by which he and the others had entered, remembering its security alone lay in its being cunningly hidden, and a heavy kick would be sufficient to burst it open. He rushed towards it eagerly, when suddenly the earth seemed to give way beneath him, and in a second he was precipitated below.

Weldron lay for hours in a narrow dungeon under the floor of the passage. No light was admitted, and very little air. He was uninjured by the fall, having dropped upon a heap of shavings, evidently placed there intentionally to prevent any trapped person from being also maimed. The prisoner walked many times round the place feeling for a means of exit, but there was absolutely none, and the walls were smooth and high.

As a matter of fact this mantrap was an ingeniously constructed device, always set by the "mine" owners, as they walked over the top of the trap taking a stranger into the treasure room; they thus provided against treachery. The "setting" was done without the necessity for stopping, the last man over only requiring to pull a small bolt projecting from the wall as he passed. The uninitiated would never observe this action, which had the effect of balancing the top, so that anyone stepping upon it before the bolt was again pushed back would assuredly be sent below. The shavings had saved the limbs of the "mine" owners themselves more than once when they were, through forgetfulness, caught in their own trap.

After a while Flintsen recovered and soon found, with grim satisfaction, Weldron was a safe prisoner. He taunted him in a most exasperating manner, and not satisfied with this, threatened to burn him alive; in fact, he made several attempts to do so by dropping lighted matches down on the shavings where his prisoner stood. Weldron had to exert himself actively in stamping these out, or catching them in his still manacled hands, unless he would resign himself to a most horrible death. Flintsen for some time enjoyed the torture thus created.

He was sipping what he considered the sweets of revenge, but thanks to his supply of matches becoming soon exhausted, the prisoner was ultimately again left in solitude.

Cassan, who had become partially sobered was then called by Flintsen to assist in removing the wounded Mennick from the "mine," and Weldron heard them carrying him over the roof of the cell on their way to place him upon a bed in his own room.

After the denouement, Weldron was treated to the grossest cruelty that could be perpetrated, without acts of violence. He lay in the dungeon day after day, a crust occasionally thrown in to him, or a small pannikin of water lowered by a string, and often he prayed the conspirators might bring him forth, if only to kill him.

At last he was allowed to come out, but he did so as a shadow of his former self. Yet his determination never forsook him, and when at last he appeared to agree to the telling of his secret, and requested pencil and paper that he might draw some plans and make some calculations, he was only trying to outwit his jailers. The plans he drew were useless, and the calculations purposely incorrect. He stated that his memory had become impaired, and left them to blame themselves for this by the treatment to which they had subjected him.

But to return to Fairfield and Deris after the Sports were over. They sat opposite each other on the journey back, and Deris spoke of Flintsen, for she desired to excuse her abrupt treatment of him. She explained how he took no interest in the search he had proposed, but told her of a new venture he had entered upon, and most insinuatingly spoke of his wishes to please her. She said nothing of his unkind remark, but stated that she thought his seeking the approval of an uninterested stranger, as she was to him, unbearable in its persistency.

Fairfield hinted that Flintsen was not the only one who valued her approval, but Deris simply added that "an hour in Flintsen's company was more than she ever wished again."

"What is to be his new venture?" asked Fairfield.

"He says he has obtained special permission of the Government to have balloon ascensions daily."

"But I thought all such things were strictly prohibited, for fear of escape from the Island?"

"Ah, but these are to be by a captive balloon with fastenings approved by the authorities. He intends charging fifty golds for every passenger; that is, every one except me, for in a few days he wishes me to be the first to accompany him into the regions of the air," and Deris laughed gaily at the idea.

It may be advisable to explain here more fully Flintsen's connection with the "mine." He was, as a matter of fact, sufficiently wealthy even to satisfy himself, as he and his confederates were bankers for the secret and illegal holding of the individual wealth of clients who thus amassed fortunes in excess of the amount the Government allowed any individual to possess. For this business the "mine" owners charged a large percentage, and each year, when it came to be deducted from the depositors' capital, the private coffers of Messrs. Flintsen and Co. were considerably swelled. The "mine" had been in existence successfully for some years, through the instrumentality of its founder, Basca, who being an unsuspected spy on his step-father, the Inspector, had every opportunity to aid its security.

Flintsen's great discomfort, it should be understood, was thus not the want of wealth, but the danger of flaunting it when not in a position to account for its possession. Having been so far unsuccessful in becoming an inventor at Weldron's expense, he intended to try these balloon ascensions as a pastime and a means to account for making a fortune. He also had ideas of an escape from the Island with Deris if the chance occurred.

But to return again to Fairfield and Deris:—The evening was fast closing in as the motor-car re-entered the city, and as the awning of grey spread over the sky and changed to a darker color, it was relieved by the brightness of myriads of stars that twinkled in its depths. The streets of Veritas, too, became lighted as if by day,

for on every corner-tower was a pyramid of powerful electric lights; below every archway formed by the high promenades, where they crossed the streets, more of these illuminants were suspended. The shop windows, the interior of street cars, and the houses themselves were lighted up with the beautiful softer light so soothing to the eyes, and similar to that in the rooms at Deeringhurst, and on board the "Vitæ," where Fairfield had first experienced it. The high level promenades and fronts of places of amusement were adorned with prettily arranged lamps of every conceivable color. Veritas by night was indeed a veritable fairy land.

Fairfield had taken much to heart Deris' remark about accompanying Flintsen on his aerial trip. He leaned towards her and wished to have taken her hand in his; he contented himself however by speaking in a low voice that reached alone her attentive ears.

"Deris! Will you grant me a little favour. Do so for my sake, though perhaps I would not ask it unless I believed it to be for your own welfare?"

"Why, how serious you are," she said, smiling sweetly.

"Yes, no doubt I am serious, I ask your promise never to trust yourself with Flintsen anytime or anywhere."

"But," replied Deris, more amused than vexed, "I never intended so, and especially after to-day's experience I shall avoid him."

"Then you promise me?" asked Fairfield, half satisfied.

"Yes, of course I do," she answered. She was about to kindly, yet chaffingly add some further response, when Fairfield stopped her by an exclamation.

"Thank God!" were the two words he had spoken. His companion's intended mirthful speech was completely checked by this short and unexpected prayer. "Why was he so earnest?" she asked herself. "How was it that everything she said or did seemed of so intense an importance to him?" But the sights of the city dispelled more sentimental thoughts, people were parading before the well lighted shops in dense crowds. Every-

one, not entering some place of amusement, seemed bent on shopping. Saturday night in Veritas was full of life, and unlike other cities, complete happiness.

The party had intended to visit one of the theatres, but it was decided to defer this till another night as Mrs. Doreng showed signs of fatigue; accordingly, all returned to Deeringhurst without unnecessary delay.

Fairfield purchased an evening paper before they quitted the light of the city, and, glancing at it, he read that "Grasshoper" had won the Saturday Racing Cup. Being only "stated" (backed) by about a couple of hundred persons, each would, therefore, receive a large dividend on the Monday.



Chapter XI.—Virtue and Villainy.

IT was a Sunday morning, a week after the Saturday described in the previous chapter. Basca, fully dressed, sat in his room upon the edge of the bed where he had slept. In his hand he held a flask of seemingly ordinary construction, and turning it upside down, he pressed on its shoulder, the action which proved necessary to free the contents of one side, and then he pressed it underneath to free the contents of the other side. Both of the interior compartments of the secretly divided flask proved to be empty, for not a drop of liquor fell out. Having satisfied himself on this point, he unlocked a box which he drew from under his bed, and he took out a bottle of spirits, with which he partially filled each side of the flask. After replacing the bottle he brought forth a paper packet then closed the box, and, kneeling down, used it as a table, putting the articles upon it. At this juncture some one was heard coming along the passage, and Basca, evidently fearsome of being disturbed at his Sunday morning's work, hobbled softly to the door and gently locked it. The curse he put upon the person who approached was quite undeserved, if he that proclaimed it had only known, for the attendant passing by had no intention of disturbing him.

Basca, however, made no effort to revoke his malediction, but returned to his work, which consisted in opening the packet and emptying a small quantity of the powder it contained into one side of the flask. He exercised much care that not a fraction of this entered the other half of the divided mouth, and when the deed was done he kept his thumb fairly in position to indicate the poisoned half, for such it was. It became evident to the cripple he could not go about with his thumb thus as an indicator, so he resumed his seat on the bed, still holding the flask, while he should think matters out.

There occurred more walking in the passage, which irritated the thinker, but at last he decided the under pressure affected the poisoned side, and must alone free the mixture! The next thing was to impress this on his memory. Ha! he had it! "Low pressure meant death, high pressure meant life!" He accordingly removed his thumb and turned the flask around in his bony claw-like fingers, eyeing it as if it were some article of priceless value. Then becoming aware that someone was at his door he quickly placed the flask in his pocket just as they gently knocked.

"Who's there!"

"Your mother, dear. I have brought you your breakfast," replied the affectionate voice of Mrs. Doreng.

"You need'nt have bothered!" replied Basca, with a snarl, then hoping she might not have noticed the tone of his answer, he added "don't bother yourself, mother, I'm fairly well this morning. I'll be out in a few minutes."

And Basca hurried to keep his word. He pushed back his box beneath the bed, threw open the window, looked cautiously round, and seeing that he was not observed, stepped out and dug a small hole in a flower bed, using a trowel that happened to be there. Next he emptied the remaining contents of the paper into the hole, then threw in the paper itself torn in tiny bits. Lastly, he filled in the little grave. A grave that might be the forerunner of a larger grave. Who, then, was to be its occupier? The soliloquy Basca indulged in as he left the spot was full of meaning, but the words gave only a vague idea of his plans. "I've stood by you against many men, but now, beware! Move one finger of yours to harm her, and by my hands you die!" Having thus spoken he re-entered his apartment, and from thence made his way to the breakfast room to receive a family's greetings and sympathies, so continually bestowed upon "a suffering, kind, and patient cripple."

In the city of Veritas, Sunday morning had a silence of its own. Silence that would have been death-like but for the ringing of low sweet-toned bells, not in

churches, but in every corner-tower. No weary bell-ringers attended them. They were kept in motion by the electric current applied to them from sunrise till noon. Hardly another sound was heard, though truly enough, Veritas was never a noisy city, except in parts where factories of certain kinds predominated. The streets and footpaths were paved with blocks of a material springy yet solid as india-rubber, and this day being Sunday the people so blythe and gay curbed their usual buoyance of spirits. Happiness and joyousness were seen, but not heard.

The streets were patronised, for the day being fine, some people were strolling in the sunshine or walking to church, and many passed along bound for a country tour, or to visit the churches in the distant villages. One public place of worship only, but of great dimensions, was to be found in each half of the city, for the tradespeople as a rule resided in the near surrounding country and visited local churches on the Sabbath. People were permitted to amuse themselves privately how they liked on a Sunday morning, but if they made their amusement a public one they would be stopped by the authorities; but on Sunday afternoon or evening any amusement of a quiet and instructive or sentimental nature was permitted to be offered either privately or publicly.

Occupying the centre of a whole block, not far from the Citadel, stood the south City Church in its grounds. The building was of perfectly plain exterior and a space of about two hundred feet on each side was enclosed by a high brick wall. Behind these evidently a plantation grew, for Fairfield once, when walking on a high promenade near by, had observed there the tops of trees over which wire netting was stretched from the three walls to the beginning of the church roof, thus covering in the whole side areas. To this church the same Sunday morning that Basca mixed his drug, but an hour or so later, his relatives and Fairfield came devoutly, and entering, took their seats near the centre. The interior of this place of worship was the most pleasing sight the new-comer had ever beheld.

The immense room was in shape almost a triangle, and at the extremity stood a large cluster of bamboos, formed and painted in a most lifelike manner, their leafy tops festooned sideways, and some forward like a canopy over a small platform below. Beautiful music was casting its soothing influence over the vast assemblage, and Fairfield discovered that it came from rows of openings in the bamboo stems.

In truth the grove was an organ, the organist unseen behind the compact stems of the monster reeds.

The side walls of the church were supported by arches on pillars about eight feet high, and between each of these a large sheet of plate glass occupied the space. Through the glass on a level with the congregation appeared a real miniature forest, and when the organ ceased playing shutters above the glass opened and the notes of a thousand songbirds floated in.

Presently the minister appeared upon the platform under the organ grove and the shutters around the building closed again, that the singing of the birds might not prevent the words of the minister being heard. Still the forest remained in sight, its little ponds and rivulets glistened beneath the variously tinted foliage of the trees through which the sunlight filtered. Birds of beautiful plumage flitted from limb to limb, and peaceful doves sat cooing in pairs upon the great fern fronds. On the rocks graceful cranes were pluming their long delicate feathers, and in tiny lakelets small species of waterfowl happily disported.

On the walls and ceiling in the church itself, nature was not forgotten, for formed in high relief were painted carvings of nature's bounties of the vegetable world, waving corn sheafs, fruits, and flowers.

The minister commenced a personal address to the congregation which Fairfield learned was the initial proceeding in the two cities as well as all the country churches. This day it ran as follows:—

“Assembled worshippers! Before we lift our voices to our exalted Creator, we must insist that our minds shall be in keeping with our words, for if we utter what is not from our hearts or is not of our belief, it is worse

than silence, and we shall assuredly be punished as for blasphemy. We meet here not to complain or bemoan our lot, but to joyously and gratefully offer our heartfelt thanks to the Giver of all good, to promise him with intense determination to be virtuous and kind, and by the earnestness of our promises prove our repentance for previous lapses from the path of rectitude. Like brave men and women we seek not to escape any punishment we may have merited, but we know that for every good deed we do in future the God of Love and Justice will mitigate that punishment or reward us. Our exalted Father desires nothing from us for Himself, except our faith in His justice, and our worshipful gratitude poured forth as joyously as the songbird's praise for the advent of Spring, but He wishes us for our individual salvation to act as true brothers and sisters to each other, for as we help all our bretheren on earth, so the Father will judge our worth on the day of our judgement. Let any individual who is wronging his fellow-being remember that God requires his repentance and efforts to undo his wrong doing, and that he shall offer up his heartfelt promises to be virtuous in future. The persistent sinner must not think that the Creator in His magnanimity will value hymns of praise offered by him while continuing his iniquity. Let us thank the Almighty that in the Island of Justice we are aided to please him by the State assistance to do what is kind and good and true. May we ever cast out all doleful indecision and foster determination to merit God's bounty hereafter as He grants it here each day. We will now sing ‘Oh! God we thank Thee from our hearts.’”

As the minister had concluded his address, and when he had thus given out the hymn a choir of many voices of unseen singers was heard. First the joyous hymn was rendered faintly, then the notes swelled gradually till towards the end of the verse. Afterwards the verse was repeated by the choir and congregation with powerful organ accompaniment. Next a wonderful sermon from the Bible followed. It happened to be chosen from Matthew, 6th chapter, ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ and proved delightfully inspiring. As a matter

of fact the Justicians claimed that they alone possessed the earliest manuscript of the Book, and the only perfect translation and interpretation from beginning to end. Well they might make this assertion, for a child could understand the meaning in every line of its teachings, while science upheld its historical parts perfectly.

When the last hymn was commenced Fairfield rose with the rest and joined in its singing with extreme earnestness, for never before had such truly philanthropic and religious sentiment been awakened in his breast. The surroundings in that church were appropriate to the worship of the God of Nature; the teachings were grand and sublime, and when the service had concluded Fairfield felt that he had earned a priceless lesson of God's requirement of man.

One night, it was nearly a week after Fairfield's experience in a Justician Church, Basca sat alone in the meeting room of the "mine," at East Cape. He was awaiting the coming of his partner Flintsen, whom he knew to be engaged in a private laboratory of his own that he had set up in a small room at the back of the building. The cripple's look boded evil for some one, as being alone he made no facial effort to disguise his feelings. His teeth were firmly set and the crafty look in his eyes was murderous and snakelike.

"I never guessed it would be so soon," he muttered, "surely I can outwit him? But I haven't time! I fear I haven't time."

Footsteps were heard approaching even as he spoke. "Here he comes, I must delay him somehow. Time! Give me time and I'll checkmate him as I've often done before this!"

Flintsen came up the passage, and before he could enter the room Basca had buried his face in his hands upon the table before him that he might be discovered in this attitude.

"Halloa!" exclaimed Flintsen on seeing him. "Suffering again, eh?" he asked, with a slight exaggeration of his usual cynical smile and a touch of sarcasm in his voice.

"Yes, true enough this time, I've got a headache fit to split my skull," replied Basca, looking up.

"Have a lie down, then, perhaps that might do you good, but I want you to let me out first, I'll be ready in a few moments." Flintsen had his hat and overcoat on, and moved towards the door. "If you come out and fasten the gate, after you hear me bang it, that will do."

"I wish you'd mind the place to-night and let me go home?"

"Why I'm minding it night and day since Menick's been laid up, in fact he's never been the same man since Weldron struck him down in the treasure room."

"Oh, he's been right enough up to a few days ago," answered the cripple, carelessly.

"Well he's darned ill at present, so what the deuce has that to do with it; and Cassan's for ever muddled or drunk. Cursed nice company I've got nearly all day. Surely you don't grudge me a couple of hours of an evening?" growled Flintsen.

"I do this evening," answered Basca, pressing his temple in evident pain.

"Well I can't stop now, I'll get back soon as I can though."

"Flint, do me a favor for this once. Don't go out to-night?" entreated the cripple.

"I must go no matter what happens, so there you have it!" exclaimed the other, quickly losing patience, and leaving the room without further ado.

"Brute!" muttered Basca, "then I'll have no mercy!" Having thus made up his mind he called the other repeatedly until he returned to the room.

"Confound it Basca, what on earth is the matter with you?" he asked irritably.

"Nothing to worry you," was the reply in a conciliating tone of voice. "you are determined to go out, well you might be sociable before you go. Have a drop of this with me. It's a little 'tip-top-special' I've brought from the city. Our stuff here isn't a patch on it." So saying he held out a flask across the table invitingly. It was the identical flask Basca had manipulated the previous Sunday morning.

Flintsen moved a step forward and eyed the flask critically, with a touch of humor in his look.

"I'm a bit timid of your pocket articles. What's become of that patent match box? And as for this flask it might be the one you used on Weldron that night—"

"Be hanged! Surely you don't think I'd deceive you, do you?"

"Oh no! not intentionally, but some of the drug might have stuck in the bottom of the flask you know."

"Don't be a fool, Flint. It isn't the same flask, and as for—but what's the use of arguing, get a couple of glasses and I'll drink first if you doubt me."

The last remark was made in such a tone of reproach that even the wily Flintsen became partly reassured, and laughing the matter off he got the glasses out of the cupboard and set them on the table, seating himself beside it and opposite Basca. The latter held the flask over Flintsen's glass and asked him to give the sign when to stop. Then, remembering the sentence "low pressure means death," he suited the action to the unspoken words and caused the poisoned liquor to flow.

When the glass was half filled Flintsen stopped him, and he then began to fill his own to the same degree. Flintsen had watched most intently all the time. He saw the blood go from the cripple's fingers near the bottom of the flask, and thus concluded a pressure was applied. Now, when Basca was about to fill his own glass, he saw him deliberately grasp the flask higher up and apply the pressure there.

Flintsen was skilled in slight of hand tricks and the intended careless little flourishes given by the operator were clumsy and ineffective to deceive his practised eye. Almost before his would-be assassin had time to replace the flask on the table he rose from his chair and seized *Basca's glass*, while holding it aloft he cried:—"Come! I've no time to waste, let us drink together!"

The cripple turned a deathly white. He knew he was playing a desperate game with a now determined man. He picked up the flask and put it in his pocket, while looking with a troubled expression at Flintsen's potion left for him to drink, he muttered in explanation: "I—I'd better not take any spirits, my head is worse."

Then he buried his face in his hands and again feigned illness.

With a fearful oath Flintsen cast his liquor at the cripple's face, and it ran down his long bony fingers and dripped on to the floor, while the empty glass Flintsen then threw on the table, rolled across, fell, and shattered at his feet.

Basca looked up. Every moment was more and more changing the dominant strength of the two men, for Basca's power all lay in his craftiness and he was being rapidly and surely undone.

"What do you mean by all this, Flintsen," he asked, with an effort to appear astonished, while he clutched the back of the chair for support.

"I mean that you've been watching me in my laboratory. I thought as much yesterday. Now you know, that I know it. Coward, you're trembling! Curse you, you've tried to murder me, but now, by Heaven, I'll murder you instead!" With every word he spoke his fury seemed to increase, and as he hissed out the last he rushed round and gripped his victim by the throat.

Basca fell forward upon his knees and gasped for mercy. Flintsen's only reply, beyond a volley of curses, was to place his disengaged hand in his breast pocket, and, as the cowering wretch noted the action, his appeals for mercy grew frantic.

"Don't! For God's sake don't do it! Don't shoot me, Flint! Don't! don't kill me!" he moaned, his eyes almost starting from his head.

Flintsen was unmoved by pity, but something else suddenly occurred to his mind, in fact he remembered that the "mine" must be watched in his absence, and there was only his intended victim able to take his place.

"Get up, then!" he snarled, as he let go his hold, but as soon as he did so Basca fell in a heap upon the floor. He was like a rat after a bull terrier had well nigh shaken the life out of it. "I'm going!" added Flintsen, "and remember, if *my* revenge is to fall on anyone, a miserable shrimp like you can't stop it! If you try to cross my plans again I'll snuff out your puny life as I

would blow out a match. You've had *your* way long enough, now I'll have mine! D'y'e hear, I'm going, and in ten minutes you can follow and shut the gate!"

Having thus delivered threat and instructions to his once co-equal if not master, he strode out at the door and closed it after him.

In a few moments, Basca, with a painful effort, rose from the floor. He was not hurt, but his limbs shook from the strain his nerves had undergone. Never before in his life had he been chastised. It had done him good, morally. His face was much changed, its usual shifty look and all viciousness had departed, and in its ashy whiteness it was almost pleasing. There was a glimmer of unselfish determination in his eyes and a smile upon his lips such as a martyr might have worn. He made his way to the closed door as best he could and looked through a chink in the battered woodwork.

At last he heard Flintsen coming from his laboratory towards the front door by which he would make his exit. There was a dim light burning in the passage, but sufficient to enable him to see Flintsen as he passed. No sooner had he done so than the cripple stepped back from the door in horror, while half aloud he exclaimed almost as a prayer, the first perhaps that ever passed his lips since he was a boy:—"Yes! sure enough he has it with him! God help me, and if I've strength, I'll stop him yet! To save her I'll—I'll tell all, though it means my own ruin," he murmured.

Directly he heard the massive iron gate slam he left the room and made his way along the passage. There he entered a sleeping apartment where Mennick lay upon a bed and Cassan upon the floor, the former seriously ill, and the latter drunk. Basca shook the besotted wretch until he opened his eyes and indignantly spluttered his objections at being so rudely disturbed. His sleep had sobered him somewhat, so by dint of half coaxing and half dragging, Basca succeeded in getting him from the room. Then he led him into the yard and up to the gate. Finally, he placed the keys in the fellow's hand and bade him lock the gate after he had passed through.

As soon as Basca had done this he listened on the other side, and after some moments of evident fumbling with the locks, he heard the drunkard stagger away and concluded all was secure. It should be mentioned that Weldron was still prisoner at the "mine," but latterly he was always made a close prisoner after sunset. The cripple experienced his utter weakness as soon as he began to pick his way between the boulders and over the stones, for endeavoring to save time he cut across East Cape instead of following the pathway's slight detour, and he was much fatigued when he arrived at the few wooden steps that formed the last descent to the plain. Thinking now the rough part of his journey was over, he carelessly placed his worst foot foremost and slipping off the wood, made sodden by a heavy dew, he fell backwards heavily and slid downward over the sharp slippery edges until he landed below, severely bruised and shaken.

Considerably weaker, and now in pain, but with a kind of blind determination, he staggered forward till he reached the beginning of the main roadway where he had met Flintsen the night he had succeeded in abducting Weldron.

He felt completely dazed by this time. His strength had given out, yet he knew that he must not delay. "If I stop I'll be too late," he cried aloud. "Oh, if only I had the strength to carry me a little further—further!" Then with a sudden thought he brought the flask from his pocket. He had taken no liquor all day—quite unusual for him,—and now he felt assured the stimulant would give him temporary strength.

Before placing the flask to his lips he tried to remember the codes of life and death, but his brain was flurried and his memory impaired. For several moments he pondered. "Ha! I know now. High pressure of course means death," he remarked to himself, "so low pressure means life—here goes," and quickly he drank the poisoned liquor even to its very dregs. The deed was done! Basca was caught in his own trap, for unknowingly he had reversed the wording of the code that he himself devised!

Satisfied with returning strength he moved on again and poured out what he believed to be the poisoned liquor upon the pathway as he walked, then he threw the flask into a deep pond by the roadside.

Basca had not proceeded far when he became racked with pain, but he bore it bravely, and muttering the words "for her sake," he still continued. Soon he felt loss of power in his limbs, and a peculiar stiffness obliged him to halt a moment, then he staggered on again until the pains increased to an alarming extent and he fell upon the pathway at the very spot where by his action Weldron had fallen previously. He realised what had happened. "Great Heaven! I have poisoned myself!" he gasped. Then names of those who loved him better than he deserved were uttered, plainly as his frothing lips could form the words.

Five minutes of mortal agony; two of hovering between life and death and then Basca, the miserable crippled sinner, was across the great barrier that divides this world from the next. His was a fearful death, one that no being with a touch of humanity in his heart would award the greatest criminal. Yet Basca's death at such a time would surely benefit him hereafter, for truly he died in trying to perform the one noble deed of his lifetime! Faint and injured he had exerted himself to the utmost intending to expose Flintsen and stop him in his dire revenge upon the innocent. Exposure of his confederate meant his own exposure, disgrace, and ruin had he succeeded; yet he tried to do the deed.

So Basca was dead! After all his wickedness and cunning devices, he had left the world by its grandest exit, the path of death for love and duty.

About half an hour after this tragedy, Fairfield, accompanied by Mrs. Doreng and Deris, arrived before the entrance of the leading Justician theatre. The splendid building occupied a block to itself and the description on its facade read "The Drama," while in colored electric lights on the *cheveux de frise* of the verandah the name of the play was inscribed.

"From North to South!" said Mrs. Doreng, calling Fairfield's attention to the title as they descended from

the street car. "Mr. Doreng advised us to come here as the plot of the piece is laid between North and South Island, thus the scenes of life in each will interest you to form comparisons."

"The Bon is ever thoughtful of my advancement," replied Fairfield, smiling gratefully, as he led the ladies across the street and into the vestibule of the theatre.

A man stepped forward just at this moment in evident haste and approached, bowing slightly.

"Mr. Fairfield, I believe. Please excuse my stopping you," he said in a hurried speech, while he hardly raised his head sufficiently for Fairfield to see his features.

"What is it you require?" the latter asked somewhat abruptly, being rather suspicious of strangers since his experience at the Sports' Ground, and also not liking to keep the ladies waiting.

The man brought from under his cloak a brown paper parcel about a foot square. "Kindly take this for Inspector Doreng. He knows all about the matter. It is most important he receives this box sometime to-night. I have no reliable means to place it in his keeping except by your favor as I am leaving the city shortly."

People were crowding into the theatre, so Fairfield took the proffered parcel, promising to deliver it when he got home, and the man, after thanking him, quickly turned and made his way out to the street.

Fairfield, carrying the parcel, then entered the theatre with his lady friends. They chose the stalls, and being in good time found the house only half filled. There was but one entrance to this part of the theatre and it was furnished with two turnstiles, thus admitting only two abreast at a time. Fairfield wondered what would be the result in the case of fire, a hurried exit being thus prevented, but on looking round the interior he saw there could be no danger, as there was no inflammable material in the structure. Marble and metal, leather and carpets, no woodwork could be seen anywhere. Beautiful paintings, and sculpture adorned the walls, but they were executed on the polished surface of the stone.

Fairfield was beginning to get used to solid grandeur, for such was the general formation of the entire city, which was one of stability as well as beauty, and if its fate should ever be that of burial under the earth for centuries, one might safely conclude Veritas would be found intact if again brought to light.

On the stage naturally such solidity was absent and when the curtain rose Fairfield saw that fire would have had a chance there, but it was explained to him that in the event of such occurring a solid iron curtain could be raised so as to completely separate the stage from the front of the building.

When the play commenced everyone had an un-interrupted view, and this was accountable by two reasons. Firstly, that the floor everywhere had a goodly slope down towards the stage, and secondly, that each seat was provided with an adjustment by which it could be lowered or raised. An attendant passed along, and by those means brought all heads to the same level. Fairfield was slightly taller than the "average," so the attendant offered him the handle of the adjustment, saying, "lower, if you please." However, having observed by others that the asking was merely a polite formality, he simply waved his hand as a request that it should be done for him. He was lowered in a couple of seconds while he sat without the slightest inconvenience. Mrs. Doreng was slightly below the "average," so she came in for raising, but as she had not removed her hat it was, according to rule, reckoned in the height and thus caused no obstruction to those behind her. Had she removed it the attendant would have raised her another inch or so. Deris, being exactly the "average" with her hat off, for she preferred to remove it, remained as she was.

Before the play began the audience turned and looked towards a space in the centre of the first tier above the stalls: the Judge-President had entered his private box. Every man in the great audience rose and faced the Judge-President, raised the right hand and extended it sideways from the shoulder, while his voice rang out the salute, "For Justice!"

The band echoed the syllables in three chords loudly and grandly struck, the Judge-President rose and bowed, and then the audience resumed their seats.

An impressive ceremony, this reception of the Island's chief. Its greatest charm was in its dramatic solemnity. Yet another surprise was in store for Fairfield, for again the audience rose, this time with loud hurrahs. It was the President of the House of Villages. When he bowed his acknowledgment the audience again resumed their seats.

Fairfield now gave his particular attention to the ladies by his side and the play before him. The scene produced upon the immense stage was exquisite, charming as a dream, realistic as nature itself. The subject was a farmyard and distant hayfields on a moonlight night.

"Is it not severe on the actors that the stage is roofless?" asked Fairfield.

"Where?" enquired Deris in astonishment.

Then Fairfield pointed out that the stars were shining over their heads.

It is doubtful whether the ladies saw their companion was really deceived by the advanced stage craft, but such was the fact. They smiled, but Fairfield could not tell whether it was at his mistake or at what they considered a joke on his part.

The time passed quickly and pleasantly. The play being well written proved exceedingly interesting, and its author should have been a contented man, for the acting and scenic effect were such as gave his work every possible advantage.

The end of the second act had almost arrived. It was a fire scene, and just as a building was bursting into well arranged and angry flames a voice from the wings was heard calling "Stop the play."

The actors drew aside, the orchestra ceased its low music and a tall man rushed forward to the footlights. The audience were perplexed. Many became frightened, but none were so astonished as Fairfield and his lady friends, for the man they saw was Inspector Doreng.

"Friends!" he cried, "listen! we are in great danger!"

Before he could say more one of the musicians had sprung to a lever close by and freed the great fire curtain,

which in another moment had cut off the back of the stage from view.

"Madman! What have you done, the danger is not on the stage at all?" cried the Inspector, looking round at the curtain and then the erring musician. Then again addressing the audience he hurriedly continued in tones of extreme earnestness:—

"Hear me if you value your lives! We arrested a fellow outside this theatre half an hour ago. He shot himself before being secured, and a few minutes before he died, confessed giving someone a box to carry in here. Let the man who has that box come out at once, there is not a moment to be lost!"

Fairfield lifted the parcel from under his chair, rose and held it up. "This must be it!" he called out to the Bon.

As the Inspector discovered Fairfield standing there with the mysterious parcel and his wife and daughter on either side he turned deathly pale, and his voice actually trembled as pointing to the exit he cried:—"Hurry out, for Heaven's sake! I've already cleared the traffic! Place the box in the centre of the street, and fly for your life!"

"An infernal machine! A bomb!" shrieked several of the audience in mortal terror, and before Fairfield had time to advance half a dozen steps he saw that instead of being first out he must be last.

A scene of indescribable confusion followed. The galleries seemed to clear quickly, but below the exit was blocked. Men fought against the few cowardly of their brethren to let the women and children out first. This only made matters worse, for at the doorway the iron turnstiles became twisted and broken, making escape impossible, except to an athlete or two able to climb through the wreckage.

Fairfield stood for a few moments utterly bewildered at the scene before him, people were frantic in their endeavour to escape from proximity to him. Shouts of the men and screams of the women and children rent the air. He believed, in spite of the turmoil, he could hear the ticking of the clockwork inside the fatal box he held in his hand. Yet no sensation of personal fear entered his mind. His thoughts were how to remove the box

from the building as the Inspector had directed him.

Mrs. Doreng had fainted as had many other ladies. She lay across the one of the seats while her step-daughter was trying to bring her back to consciousness. Deris looked up once at Fairfield and sadly smiled. Words were unnecessary, that look meant that if they must die together she was ready for the end.

Suddenly a man was seen pushing his way towards the spot where the three were left deserted.

It was the Bon. "What can we do? That fool by raising the fire curtain cut off the exit across the stage, and I believe that machine is timed to explode almost immediately. We are in the jaws of death! There is power enough in that box to level this whole theatre to the ground!" he gasped.

Fairfield glanced round in hopeless determination. Over at the side of the building below the floor of the first tier of galleries he noted a party of men trying to reach a window by climbing on each others shoulders.

In another moment he was at their heels. "Stand back!" he cried, flourishing the awe inspiring box towards them. The crowd was not dense around them there, so they easily and gladly fell back on either side. Fairfield halted when a pace before the window. He glanced up and noted its distance from below, then lifted the box in both hands above his shoulder and heaved it upwards with all his strength and judgement.

There was a crash of broken glass and the box disappeared out into the street.

Everyone rushed to the opposite side of the theatre, the Inspector carrying the still unconscious form of his wife, and in another moment Fairfield caught up to them and hurried Deris along.

They had hardly crossed the building when a violent concussion struck the far wall, followed by the deafening sounds of a terrific explosion. The massive structure seemed to rock for a moment and then the great wall fell outward, dragging portions of the galleries and ceiling with it.

The noise was deafening and the air for a time was thick with dust. When at last this subsided the moonlight shone peacefully in through the ruins of half a Justician theatre.

Chapter XII.—Escape amid a Tumult.

TWO weeks after the great explosion, the sensation it caused was no longer the talk of Veritas. The man who did the deed was dead and had implicated no one. By examination of his pass he was known to be a man of previously good repute and had only arrived from North Island a few days previous to the one on which he ended his life so tragically. He was thought to have been the tool of some vicious person, and the bomb after all had exploded prematurely, it being intended to wreck the Inspector's house through the instrumentality of Fairfield.

As for Basca, his remains had been found and the crematorium had done its cleanly work. His ashes were according to the custom of the Island encased in a golden urn and placed over a tablet and medallion portrait to his memory. These memorials were erected on the wall of the vestibule at Deeringhurst. They were in good company, for on the opposite wall were those of Deris' mother, one of the best women who ever lived, and on the right hand side appeared those of his own father, a man it would have been well for Basca, had he followed in his worthy footsteps.

Deris still mourned her step-brother's fate, for she had been much attached to him in spite of his peculiar ways. Doubtless had she known that he had died trying to save her from Flintsen's intended revenge she would have also worshipped his very memory.

"Please, sir, does Mr. Fairfield live here?" asked a small boy, who one evening entered the gates and approached the verandah at Deeringhurst, where Fairfield sat alone enjoying a smoke, watching the stars, and thinking.

"He does, and I am he. What do you want mylad?"

"I've a letter for you, sir,—that is if you're sure you're Mr. Fairfield, please," he added timidly.

"Well," replied the doubted one laughing, "I'm not

in the habit of passing myself off under other people's names. Who gave you the letter?"

"No one, sir, I found it in a bottle the waves had thrown up on the beach. It's addressed here so I brought it."

"Show me the writing, quickly!" cried Fairfield, and before the boy knew what was going to happen, Fairfield had snatched the letter, struck a match, and scanned the writing. "From Weldron," he ejaculated, and was about to rush into the house to read the epistle by the light within, when he thought of the finder. "You're a good lad, here's a gold for you," he exclaimed as he placed the coin in the boy's hand, and disappeared before this young Justician recovered his astonishment at becoming the recipient of a sum of money for doing his duty. All he had desired was to have his action appreciated.

Fairfield rushed to his room, turned on the light, and hastily opening the envelope read its contents. He paced up and down the room several times uttering sundry exclamations, then he sat down and began to read the whole again slowly and thoughtfully.

The letter was written in pencil and ran as follows:—
 "Dear true friend Fairfield,—I've thrown the bottle containing this note into the sea from the top of East Cape lighthouse, my prison. I left Deeringhurst against my will, trapped by Basca into the hands of Flintsen and his mates here, scoundrels all. Tell no one, follow my instructions, a chance awaits you to free me. Then I have a special, only feasible plan, to leave this wretched island. We can repay the Bon for his goodness by awarding him the secrets of this place. Now for ourselves:—You find out the night Flintsen is to make his first balloon ascent (he arranges his plans here, so I shall know) and that day come stealthily, arriving at mid-day at south-east corner of the enclosure, bringing a rope thirty feet long, half the length being knotted every couple of feet. Bring files and a hammer to knock off my manacles and leg irons, and a change of clothes for me. Be at the corner at five o'clock and wait till I throw over a pebble as a signal, then throw the knotted portion of the rope over for me to climb up. If for some reason I don't keep my appointment, come again same hour other nights. I'm

suffering severely. Your old chum, Weldron. P.S.—If any others than the addressee should open this envelope let them deliver to him the contents, and if they have not divulged the information to anyone he will purchase their temporary silence at a high sum."

Five days after receiving Weldron's letter, and having learned that the next night was to be that of Flintsen's first balloon ascent, Fairfield had all the articles for the rescue in a portmanteau, and was waiting the hour to set out on his undertaking. From this window he saw Deris in the garden gathering flowers and decided to take her into his confidence, in spite of Weldron's injunction to "tell no one." He was quickly by her side, and after greeting her said earnestly:—"Deris, I have so much to tell you, and—and if you are going to trim those flowers in the summer house, where we first met, let me go with you? I may soon be—be parting from you for ever!" He added the last sentence with an effort, and looked at her fondly, anxious to note its effect.

Deris made no reply, but leant forward so that her face was hidden as she culled another flower.

He thought she was either annoyed at his brusqueness or that she did not care.

"Perhaps you—you are glad that I'm going?" he asked with a half suppressed sigh.

Then she looked up, and he noticed that her beautiful eyes were glistening with tears.

He saw the cruelty of his speech against the kindness of her silence and hastened to make amends.

"Deris! Forgive me, I was wrong to speak so. I will wait in the summer-house for you. Shall I? May I?"

"Yes?" came the answer, as she placed the flower in her basket like one in a dream.

Fairfield moved away sorrowfully enough, and went to the appointed meeting place. He had not long to wait, and when Deris entered he knew that she had nerved herself to hear all.

He read aloud Weldron's letter, purposely omitting the reference to Basca's villany, but Flintsen he did not spare. He told her that in a couple of hours he hoped to rejoin his lost comrade.

"Deris," he added, leaning across the table and taking her hand in his, "you have heard that he expects me to leave this island with him. I thoroughly believe any escape is impossible, so I am ready to refuse to try it—that is, if you love me as I love you. I will not risk my life by committing the treason of attempted escape if you love me. Tell me truly; decide for me. Shall I stop or go?"

Fairfield was much agitated, but Deris was calmly and intently thinking. At last she spoke almost entreatingly:—

"I cannot answer you as a woman should till you tell me more of your life's story?"

"What do you mean Deris? Speak plainer; my answer shall not deceive you."

"I remember, the day we met here for the first time, that you mistook me for someone else?"

"Yes; yes, I know I did," admitted Fairfield, placing his hand to his brow. "Yes, and what of that?"

"Then the incident of the little swallow waiting for its mate who promised to return—I have often thought since that it reminded you of—of someone waiting for you. Now tell me am I right?" she asked sadly and sweetly.

"Yes, yes you are right; but," he added pleadingly, "when I promised her to return I—I did not know it would be impossible." There was an awkward pause, and then he added desperately:—"Still, if you do not care for me Deris, say so and I know what to do! I will not fear death then, so I will go!"

Fairfield had suddenly become impatient, almost annoyed; not with Deris so much as with the dilemma in which he was placed. She looked at him fondly, but her determination never wavered.

"I do care for you; ah! deeply indeed, and because it is so I—I can help you to do what is right. Duty is your first call, and if this girl is kind and good you must keep your promise to her. To lose you thus is a terrible ordeal, but my duty is not to rob her of your love. If you have a chance of escape, honour demands of us both that you make the effort."

She rose and leaned against the table for support. The words she would have given worlds to have left unsaid had proved almost too much for her womanly strength to speak them.

It was now Fairfield's opportunity to show his fortitude. He sprang to her side and placed his strong arm to support her while he exclaimed:—

"Deris, you are right. You are a true daughter of the Island of Justice! Ah! if there were more women in the world like you there would be far better men!"

He led her out to the open air, hoping it might refresh her, and as they came forth there was borne towards them on the gentle breeze the distant sound of melody.

A band in the village had struck up that sweet refrain which had charmed Fairfield's heart more than once previously, though never so much as when Deris had, in singing it, first made her presence known to him. Then the meeting; now the parting was drawing nigh.

Come love!

Out where the sunlight is shining,
Through life we'll not lurk in the shade.
Happy, no fear of repining,
Together let's pass from the glade.

They listened for a moment. Neither could venture to speak, and as they walked slowly towards the house Deris looked up at her companion with that sad and beautiful expression she wore in the Justician theatre the time they both stood facing death together.

Half-an-hour later a man was making his way along the solitary road to East Cape. He carried a large leather bag, which seemed to be of considerable weight, for at intervals he changed it from one hand to the other, or carried it upon his shoulder, while he kept keenly glancing around him, evidently desirous that he might be the observer before he could be observed. The man was Fairfield, and in due course he arrived at the spot dictated by Weldron. Opening the portmanteau he took out the rope and made two coils of it upon the ground; then he ensconced himself behind a large rock, and waited for the signal. He was beginning to think it was not forthcoming when a small white pebble struck the rock just over his head and fell close beside him. Quickly he placed a few coils of the rope upon his arm and threw the attached coil over the wall. As he did so all unwound until there was little more than the end remaining. This

he held, and as he felt the rope tighten he walked partly round the angle of the wall to prevent it being pulled from his grasp. He was soon favoured by seeing a head and shoulders appear above, and next moment he knew it was his old friend Weldron who sprang on top and was busy with his manacled hands coiling the rope around the corner stone, which, as a crude ornament to the architecture, conveniently rose about a couple of feet above the rest of the wall. This accomplished, the escapèe slid down the rope and once more stood beside his comrade. The two men grasped each other's hands and spoke words of joy and gratitude that Providence had again united them. They left the rope where it hung, and Fairfield, carrying the things, helped Weldron down the side of the steep cliff to the seashore. There, out of hearing, the files and hammer were brought into use, and it took some time before the ex-prisoner's shackles could be removed. As soon as this was accomplished he discarded his outer clothing in exchange for the suit Fairfield had brought, then the bag and tools were thrown into the sea and the two men sped along the beach at a smart pace. Arriving in a direct line with Deeringhurst they cut across country and never halted until a small dense forest at the rear of the estate was reached. Here they rested and recounted many of their adventures. Fairfield saw a great change in Weldron. He was pale, thin, and careworn, also slightly lame with the chafing of the leg-irons which he had been compelled to wear night and day since his attack upon his jailers.

"You have suffered much Weldron, and you hate this country, I can see!" remarked Fairfield, after they had exhausted their respective narrations.

"Like poison! The Island of Justice forsooth? What justice have I had?" asked the other, bitterly.

"Imprisonment and torture have not made you an impartial judge, Weldron; generally speaking the Island is a marvel of happiness and righteousness; and you have only experienced the exception to the rule, I assure you."

"Then you do not want to leave it, eh? You do not wish to return to your country, and—and to——"

"Yes, yes, I do. My mind is made up, Weldron,"

interrupted Fairfield. "If you have a plan of escape I will join you in trying to carry it out!"

"Very well, delays are dangerous, it must be this very night if you are ready!"

"So soon as that?"

"Yes, to-night. Let me undertake the whole business as my plans are all matured. Will you follow my instructions. Will you come?"

Fairfield saw the end was surely drawing nigh. He hesitated but a moment, then offering his hand to his old comrade he replied firmly:—"Yes, Weldron, I wish to leave the Island, so I am ready to do your bidding!"

The first result was that the subordinate was sent to obtain a few necessary articles from Deeringhurst while Weldron remained in the wood. He took the opportunity thus to say farewell to Deris. When he told her of the arrangements for departure that very night the shock was doubly severe to her already overwrought nerves. Fairfield was to join Weldron at the gates when daylight disappeared, so time quickly passed, and the hour of parting came.

It was a beautiful evening and the pale moon shone down on the garden and piazza of Deeringhurst, casting deep shadows here and there. Beside one of the granite pillars stood Deris and Fairfield, trying to cheer each other for the last time. They descended the steps partially into the bright moonlight. She remained on the last step while he stood on the pathway, yet they held each others hand, fearing the final disuniting that was to come.

"My escape may bring further reproach upon your father for want of vigilance—but now that I have told you all the secrets of the light-house you can enable him to make a raid that will bring him fame and enrich the Government. Assure him from Weldron and myself that we will keep the secret of the Island's existence. Never shall the world know of it from us."

"So be it!" answered Deris, and then she took from the bosom of her dress a letter and placed it in Fairfield's hand.

"Take this. It would be called treason that I give it you, but as God is my witness, I mean no crime, and

am willing to take any risk. You will find in that envelope a chart indicating the true position of the Island on the globe. I—I took the plan from my father's room when you left this morning, and made the tracing for you before replacing the original. Hide it carefully, for only high officials are allowed to possess such information."

Fairfield took the letter. A new light came into his eyes:—

"Why have you given me this? Is it that?"—He did not complete the sentence; maybe his intense emotion prevented him, or perhaps he recognised the love in her eyes shone for him and duty—not for him alone!

She spoke; but not to answer the question she might have guessed he had intended to ask.

"Good-bye!" she said sweetly; her noble earnestness sustaining her to the last. "Good-bye, and remember that if some day you return of your free will our Government must then pardon your going now."

Fairfield understood and felt that he must break away; he could bear the strain no longer.

"Then good-bye Deris. May God bless and guard you," he cried. Then holding his hand aloft in solemn declaration he added in thrilling accents:—"Believe me, if she whom I loved and left awaits me not, I will return to you and the Island of Justice!"

Then he brought his hand to his fevered brow and stood motionless.

Deris spoke again:—

"And say she *does* await you? Tell her all, and if— if it be her wish to trust me, then bring her to this land of light. She need have naught to fear."

Fairfield could not reply in words. He passionately kissed the hand he had held the while in his, and then releasing it, rushed blindly away.

He believed he was going to his death, for he well knew the overwhelming odds against possibility of escape; yet he felt no fear, only regret that death could come so soon to part him from love's duplicates on earth.

Deris looked sadly after him a moment, and then retreated into the house and to her room. There in seclusion she knelt before a couch and burst into a flood of tears.

At the gate Fairfield found Weldron waiting.

"Have you brought the two revolvers; your own and one for me?" was the first question he asked.

Being answered in the affirmative, he desired they should hurry to the city—Fairfield to direct the way to the building erected by Flintsen and containing the captive balloon.

"I wonder what induced Flintsen to make his first ascent by night?" asked Fairfield as they went along.

"I can tell you why, for the plans were arranged at the 'mine.' You see, Flintsen looks to every item of profit. If he wasn't such a scoundrel one might admire his business tact. He charges for admission to the grounds of course; well, then he expects a larger attendance there at night, as people require to be nearer to see the balloon thoroughly. Those outside the fence will see nothing till the balloon is high in the air and the electric light on the car turned on, when it would be visible, of course, for miles."

It took the comrades about half-an-hour to arrive at their destination, for they had to exercise the greatest caution that Weldron should not be recognised. They arrived at the gardens just as they were being closed to the public, and Fairfield gained entrance by stating that he and his friend were acquaintances of the balloon proprietor. Then they made their way to a small building temporarily erected near the centre.

As yet all was in darkness outside, but through the ventilators a dim light was discernable within.

Weldron knocked at the door.

A bolt was pulled back and he entered smartly, followed closely by Fairfield.

The room was a good-sized one, and very high, and from the centre of the ceiling to within about ten feet of the floor, the space was occupied by a large and fully inflated balloon with car attached. Below stood a large reel of wire rope, the end of which was fastened securely to the bottom of the car.

Flintsen proved to be quite alone.

"Who are you? What do you want?" he had asked as they forced their way in. Then he recognised his

disturbers, and fell back a pace, a paleness coming over his features. "You—you have escaped?" he gasped.

"Yes, and I have come here to make you an offer, to give you a chance to save yourself and the 'mine,'" answered Weldron, folding his arms and waiting Flintsen's reply.

"What do you mean? Tell me what you want?"

"We intend to leave this Island in that balloon or remain and expose your villainies! Which do you choose?"

The fellow scowled and glanced around him stealthily as if he sought some weapon to wipe his tormentors from the face of the earth.

"None of your tricks!" cried Weldron, drawing his revolver, "we want no violence on either side, you've simply got to take your choice, let us escape or be prepared for arrest!"

Flintsen saw resistance was useless.

"Come, the game is yours so far," he said, forcing a smile, "but you can't expect me to let you get away in my balloon; any death is as good as hanging, you know that would be my punishment for treason."

"We are not here to argue with a scoundrel such as you. The fate of your miserable skin is no concern of ours. You can invent your own lies to account for our escape."

"No, no!" whined Flintsen, "it would never do, I'd be found out. I can't agree to let you go! I dare not!" and he seated himself on the edge of the big reel and shook his head dejectedly.

"All right!" said Weldron to his companion, pulling him by the arm. "Then we know what to do!" Before they could reach the door Flintsen was after them.

"Stop! Tell me this! Are my secrets safe so far? Swear it and I'll agree!"

Weldron was half out of the door, so Fairfield answered the fellow—

"Flintsen, you scoundrel! I'd like to thrash you where you stand, but much as I detest you, I wouldn't bemean myself by deceiving you as you have deceived

others! Your secret is *not* safe, the Inspector's daughter has possession of it, and to-morrow whether we stop or go, she will send her father and his guards to the 'mine.'"

Weldron stepped back into the room, laughing at Flintsen's undoing, but the cowardly fellow, regardless of the taunts he had received, launched out into abject entreaty.

"Wait, both of you! I'll do what you want! I'll agree to anything if you'll do this? Let me escape with you! You'll take me? Won't you!"

The two comrades looked at each other for an answer.

"Let the miserable wretch come!" said Fairfield.

"All hands here then!" cried Weldron, rushing to the reel, and immediately all three set to work unwinding and circling the heavy wire rope round the room.

When about half its length had been unrolled, Flintsen cut the strands by Weldron's directions, while the others held the cable firmly. The detached portion was then re-wound till it was taut, and the breakage hidden from view under the succeeding coils upon the reel.

The work was just completed when a knock was heard at the door; it was opened by Flintsen, who found the men had come to ask if they might open the gates and admit the public. The grounds were already illuminated so he gave assent.

Soon the people entered and crowded around the doors of the balloon house. Flintsen, assisted by the others, stretched ropes across inside to keep the crowd back when the doors should be thrown open. This was next done and a couple of men arrived to attend to the reel, and an official stepped under the ropes. The latter examined the fastenings of the cable to the car, and having satisfied himself of its security gave his sanction for the ascension to take place.

Flintsen then addressed the crowd before the doors. "I wish to state that purchasers of trip-tickets will be taken according to priority of the number on such tickets. The first ascension will be undertaken by myself and a couple of friends to test the working of the balloon."

A storm of applause greeted this announcement. A band began to play in a pavillion close by, and as the great clock in the tower of the Citadel of Justice struck the hour the attendants pulled certain levers and the roof of the room parted in the centre, the two halves rising up in a horizontal position. The men then turned their attention to the reel ready to allow it to pay out the cable.

Flintsen had ascended a rope ladder hanging from the car, and Weldron and Fairfield quickly followed. The balloon was swaying in the opening and Fairfield nearly lost his footing as he climbed over the edge into the car after the others. This caused a ripple of excitement among the spectators, though had Fairfield fallen, the distance was hardly sufficient to cause a fatality.

When all were safely aboard Flintsen unhitched the ladder and drew it in, then he gave the signal to let the reel revolve. Slowly the balloon rose clear of the building and as the aeronauts turned on the electric lights with which it was decorated a mighty roar of applause broke from the now assembled multitude, at this first aerial ascension ever permitted in the Island.

Next moment a sudden jerk, greater than the occupants of the car had even expected, threw them almost off their feet.

It was a thrilling experience, for they well knew that in defiance of the laws of the country they had deserted it. They were criminals every one of them, and Flintsen the least of the three as regards this deed of treason, for he had been forced to it by the others.

As the balloon ascended higher and higher, the darkness of the night intervened between it and the lights of the city below. Due to the weight of the hanging rope it only reached a moderate height and moved along very slowly. Powerful night-glasses had been provided for the ordinary passengers the car was intended to accommodate, and Fairfield and Weldron eagerly made use of them.

Below on terra firma people were seen rushing about in wild excitement. Torches could be seen flitting and flickering here and there, and weapons and military accoutrements soon gleamed among the

crowds that filled the streets. A panic had seized the islanders. Any escapee would have been successfully overhauled on land or sea, but this sudden aerial flight had outwitted the most complete schemes for the protection of the Island. Guns of immense range were common enough, but they were not fixed or capable of being fixed at a few minutes notice to fire upwards towards the heavens. After a while it became evident the balloon had moved a very little distance forward and was even descending slightly.

What is the meaning of this?" enquired Weldron, gruffly of Flintsen.

"It means two heavy passengers is the limit and instead there are three of us, all weighty men, besides the rope below."

"Confound you! You took good care not to mention that before."

"I knew neither of you would stop?" replied Flintsen, with an unusual candour for him and plainly showing that he had been keeping them in ignorance of the advantage of leaving him behind.

Further remarks were useless, so Weldron began to throw out sundry articles, retaining only those likely to be absolutely necessary. The whole lot weighed but a few pounds, and the effect on the balloon was hardly noticeable.

Slowly and calmly they were passing over the excited city. Any accident, any obstruction, and they knew they would fall into the hands of a populace whose wrath would be doubly strong through being usually dormant in this land of peace.

"To attempt escape means treason, and treason means death!" was the sentence that kept ringing in Fairfield's ears as he watched and noted how they drew closer to the city's turmoil.

Then some object seemed to rivet his attention. He turned to Weldron and pointed below and slightly ahead.

"See those white blocks shining under the electric light there—they are the ruins of a theatre wherein not many nights ago I stood facing death! The building was half-blown down by a bomb some scoundrel got me

innocently to take into the building. A few days ago the other walls collapsed. Look at it now! What chaos! Ten people were cruelly killed; hundreds might have perished just the same!"

"Weldron glanced below, and then with a sudden thought asked excitedly:—

"What was this bomb like?"

"Correctly speaking it was an infernal machine. Outwardly it resembled an ordinary package—square, covered in brown paper, fastened with pink twine, and a—"

"A leather strap to hold it by?" cried Weldron.

"Yes! Why? Where did you see it?"

Weldron pointed to Flintsen as he answered in measured words:—"In that man's hand! I looked out from where I was imprisoned. He did not know I was watching; but, by heavens, I saw him with it!"

As the two men regarded Flintsen angrily the fellow retreated against the side of the car, and drawing a long keen knife from his vest, crouched like a tiger driven to bay.

Fairfield drew his revolver and covered him.

"Coward! Murderer! Move a muscle and I'll put a bullet through you!"

Weldron turned to his companion, his anger at its height.

"Come Fairfield! The wretch has stated this balloon cannot carry us all. A cold-blooded murderer merits no compassion. Let us seize him and throw him out, as he deserves! His doom means our salvation!"

Weldron was about to spring at the crouching form, but Fairfield held him back.

"No! Stop! Let us not take his punishment into our own hands." Then he addressed Flintsen. "You've shown disregard for hundreds of human lives. Mine was but one of them. Ten have been sacrificed by your wanton vengeance. We will take you back that your own countrymen may avenge their murdered brothers! Look below!" and he pointed downward. "See! we are now floating over their graves!"

Flintsen tried to answer but the words struck in his throat. Then he made another effort:—

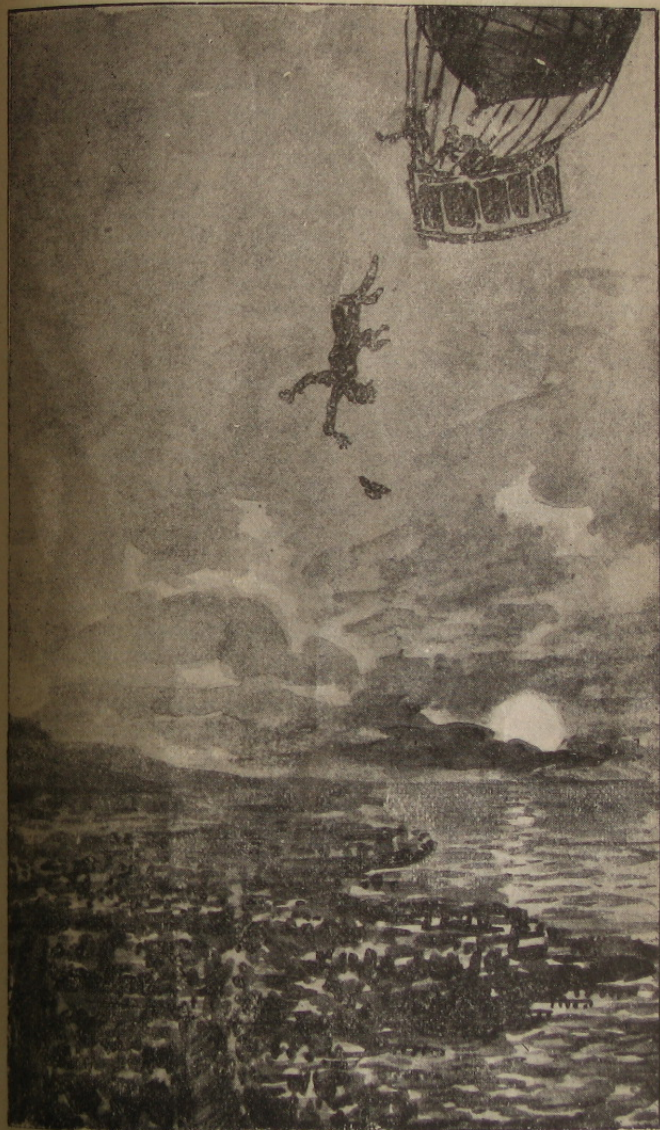
"Curse you! I would have sacrificed the whole

Island to kill you and her—yes—you and her together! He dropped the knife at his feet. "There! I am guilty and disarmed!" Then with a maniacal laugh he clutched the ropes quickly and, still facing his opponents, sprang up on the edge of the car as he added: "But no one shall take my life—but myself!"

The comrades, disconcerted by his disarming himself, now saw his intention and sprang to seize him, but it was too late, for, as they stretched forward, he let go his hold and fell backwards into space. Looking over they saw their enemy falling headlong down through the haze of the city lights until he disappeared to a violent death among the ruins he had caused in life.

The balloon then rose gradually, only just in time for shot came flying on either side of it. The lights around the car were quickly extinguished. It was lucky for Fairfield and Weldron that only small arms could be directed towards them, and they soon became out of range, where higher up they encountered currents of air which took them quickly along and soon the city of South Veritas and its glare of light grew dim back in the distance. After a few hours another glare appeared ahead and passing over it in turn the aeronauts knew it must be the only other city, that of North Veritas. Fairfield could not help regretting that he was leaving the Island of Justice before he had half explored it. North Veritas was on the coast at an angle opposite its sister city in the south, so the occupants of the car knew they had crossed the Island and were now out over the sea.

Then they floated along peacefully enough in utter darkness, for even the stars had become obscured during the last hour or so, evidently by clouds above them. Throughout the whole night they travelled on, the rate of progress and altitude varying little. All next day it was the same and nothing but the wide expanse of sky above and sea below met the eye. They now had managed to drag the dangling cable up and cut it free which lightened the car considerably. Towards next evening several small islands were passed over, being too barren to tempt the danger of descent; had they been at all inviting the aeronauts would have risked it for they



Headlong through the Haze of the City Lights!

had only provided themselves with a few biscuits and a small supply of water, now nearly exhausted.

"Well, Fairfield," remarked his friend, after darkness had set in and they had conversed for some time on various subjects, "I promised you we should risk as great a danger together elsewhere when I dragged you away from Serpeant Head. I might have said 'dangers,' and kept my word, eh?"

"Yes, we have gone through many since that day, and God only knows what is in store for us to-night or to-morrow."

"Ha, ha! We only want another gale, like the one we experienced during our first balloon ascent, to decide matters quickly. That not only prevented our intended scientific experiment, but experimented with us instead!" answered Weldron, trying to be cheerful.

"Perhaps we may get it sooner than you think, look over there!" remarked Fairfield, pointing almost in the direction they were going.

Weldron turned and gazed out where his friend indicated and sure enough in the far distance lightning occasionally glimmered in the sky. The two men who had again placed themselves at the mercy of the elements had not the slightest knowledge of their position outside the great terrestrial sphere revolving below them. What an infinitesimal atom their frail carriage formed in comparison to the mighty worlds moving as they were in space illimitable.

Towards the grey hours of the morning the balloon with its living freight was carried to where the electrical disturbance was at work, yet, strange, to say, Fairfield and Weldron were sleeping soundly. The mental strain, of the past few days especially, and the want of sleep had wearied them to a degree. They had fought and conquered the machinations of man, so now they peacefully slept in the hands of a Higher Power above.

Suddenly a terrific flash of lightning outglared everything and a peal of thunder almost deafening in its clamour rent the air.

The aeronauts awoke, but hardly had time to collect their senses. They only knew they were still in the car

and that it was falling and dragging through the air, a few yards above their heads, a flaming torch of immense proportions.

It was the balloon converted by the lightning into a gigantic fire-brand.

* * * * *

There is little more of this story to tell and what remains may as well be curtailed as much as possible. Fairfield and Weldron had a most providential escape for their aerial journey ended at a spot they might have selected in preference to any other had the power of choosing been theirs. The car dropped into the shallow waters near the edge of a large lake. The fall was thus broken, the fire quenched, and the lives of the aeronauts saved.

The lights of a town could be seen not far distant, and when the two friends arrived there after a short walk they were astonished and pleased to find themselves back in their own land about seventy miles from their native city.

It is an undisputable fact that chance, luck, fate, or Providence (we designate an occurrence so, according to its degree of gravity) will often surpass man's greatest ingenuity and most continued efforts, or even his most extravagant hopes. Thus it is that facts are often stranger than fiction, and fate favoured these intrepid voyagers to the last.

Weldron knew one of the local potentates of the town, so he and his friend were most hospitably received and supplied with funds sufficient to take them home by rail.

They started next day with grateful hearts and it was evening again when they made their way on foot to the residence of Major Devouë.

Fairfield's proud spirit required some conquering, as thinking of his last interview with the Major he hesitated before ringing the bell. This indecision was only momentary, for he told himself he had a right to see his love, who must think him lost for ever. He would tell her how he lived and loved as of yore.

The door was opened by a servant who retreated as Agnes, hearing her lover's voice, rushed to meet him with outstretched arms.

When the first greetings were over her cousin (feminine cousin please) might have been noted paying special attention to Weldron. Absence had made all hearts grow fonder. Soon the two couples drew away quite naturally to opposite corners of the large drawing room and were talking very earnestly. What Weldron and Agnes' cousin were saying we need not encroach upon, but the conversation of the other two is of considerable import. Fairfield had quickly noted that in the midst of Agnes' joy he could discern some great grief still felt.

"Ah Fred! since you and I parted I lost another who truly loved me: my dear devoted father is—*is gone, never to return,*" she said in broken accents.

"Your father dead?" exclaimed Fairfield in genuine sorrow, forgetting the old man's harshness towards him.

"Yes, and his last fond words were of you and me."

"Ah! Agnes, it was my poverty that parted us, but now I am rich again in being permitted to love you. And here"—placing his hand to his breast-pocket—"I have what may prove of more value to us than gold! A tiny scrap of paper, yet it is a chart that can lead us to a new and happy land!"

"Oh! I am indeed thankful, for I cannot bear this place since my loss; you do not know how gladly I shall welcome a change of scene."

"Dearest, then we will go before very long; that is, if you are still willing when you have heard all. I must tell you that the chart was secretly given me by someone who is veritably your double. A true noble-hearted girl who wished me to return to you, though I know she is as fond of me as I cannot help being of her."

"Fred! oh what can you mean? I—I don't understand you," sorrowfully cried his fiancée, gently disengaging herself from his arms. His candour perplexed her sorely.

"Agnes, you may easily understand me, for you can believe me implicitly when I tell you that I love you

truly and am yours alone, while she is your dearest friend, for her devotion to your rights is stronger than her self-love!"

Agnes hesitated. In many instances she had noted that women were each other's greatest foes. "Perhaps it was not so everywhere?" she thought. Then she spoke somewhat sadly.

"Ah! Fred, do you not remember that you doubted me once?"

"And now, Agnes, is the doubting to be on your part? Why should it be so? Remember I repented, and the little keepsake you gave me as my reward is here next my heart now. In the hands of fate it saved my life when I was carried away against my will; now I have risked the vengeance of a nation and the war of the elements to return to you!"

She hesitated no longer, and placing both her hands in his, her answer was sweetly given.

"My love would be nothing without my faith. May God grant you both anywhere in the wide world, and till death!"

He drew her fondly to him, and as they lovingly sauntered towards where they had left Weldron and her cousin, he exclaimed:—

"Then fully trusting each other there spreads before us a wider realm than others even see in dreams. There is yet one land where every wrong is righted, where poverty and misery cannot exist. 'Tis the land of fraternity, truth, and happiness—THE ISLAND OF JUSTICE."



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