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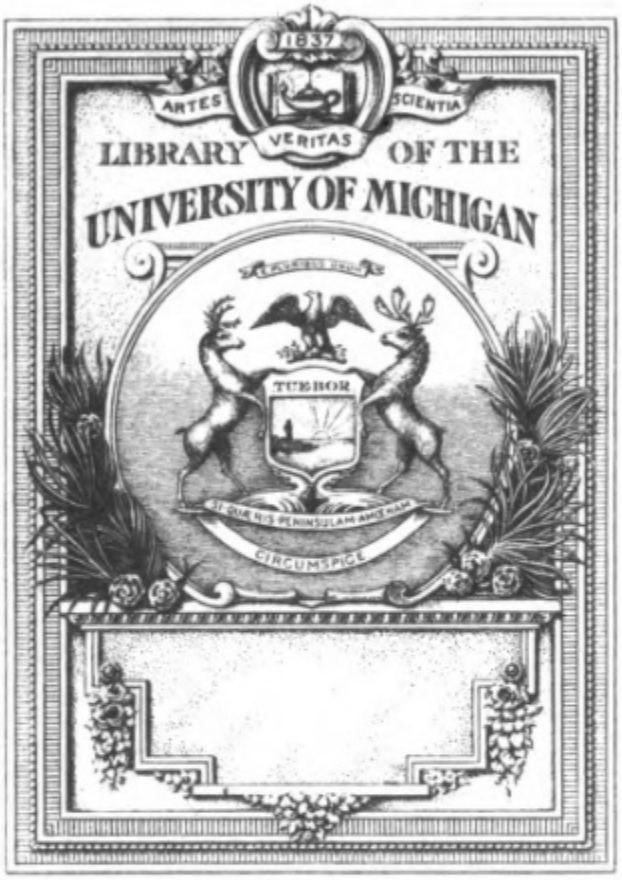

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THE
RED REDMAYNES

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BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

EUDOCIA
EVANDER
PLAIN SONG
GREEN ALLEYS
ORPHAN DINAH
MISER'S MONEY
THE GREY ROOM
CHILDREN OF MEN
A SHADOW PASSES
STORM IN A TEACUP
PAN AND THE TWINS
THE BANKS OF COLNE
CHRONICLES OF SAINT TID
THE HUMAN BOY AND THE WAR

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THE RED REDMAYNES

BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1922

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THE RED REDMAYNES

CHAPTER I

THE RUMOUR

EVERY man has a right to be conceited until he is famous—so it is said; and perhaps unconsciously, Mark Brendon shared that opinion.

His self-esteem was not, however, conspicuous, although he held that only a second-rate man is diffident. At thirty-five years of age he already stood high in the criminal investigation department of the police. He was indeed about to receive an inspectorship, well earned by those qualities of imagination and intuition which, added to the necessary endowment of courage, resource, and industry, had created his present solid success.

A substantial record already stood behind him, and during the war certain international achievements were added to his credit. He felt complete assurance that in ten years he would retire from government employ and open that private and personal practice which it was his ambition to establish.

And now Mark was taking holiday on Dart-

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moor, devoting himself to his hobby of trout fishing and accepting the opportunity to survey his own life from a bird's-eye point of view, measure his achievement, and consider impartially his future, not only as a detective but as a man.

Mark had reached a turning point, or rather a point from which new interests and new personal plans were likely to present themselves upon the theatre of a life hitherto devoted to one drama alone. Until now he had existed for his work only. Since the war he had been again occupied with routine labour on cases of darkness, doubt, and crime, once more living only that he might resolve these mysteries, with no personal interest at all outside his grim occupation. He had been a machine as innocent of any inner life, any spiritual ambition or selfish aim, as a pair of handcuffs.

This assiduity and single-hearted devotion had brought their temporal reward. He was now at last in position to enlarge his outlook, consider higher aspects of life, and determine to be a man as well as a machine.

He found himself with five thousand pounds saved as a result of some special grants during the war and a large honorarium from the French Government. He was also in possession of a handsome salary and the prospect of promotion, when a senior man retired at no distant date. Too intelligent to find all that life had to offer in his work alone, he now began to think of culture, of human pleasures, and those added interests

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and responsibilities that a wife and family would offer.

He knew very few women—none who awakened any emotion of affection. Indeed at five-and-twenty he had told himself that marriage must be ruled out of his calculations, since his business made life precarious and was also of a nature to be unduly complicated if a woman shared it with him. Love, he had reasoned, might lessen his powers of concentration, blunt his extraordinary special faculties, perhaps even introduce an element of calculation and actual cowardice before great alternatives, and so shadow his powers and modify his future success. But now, ten years later, he thought otherwise, found himself willing to receive impressions, ready even to woo and wed if the right girl should present herself. He dreamed of some well-educated woman who would lighten his own ignorance of many branches of knowledge.

A man in this receptive mood is not asked as a rule to wait long for the needful response; but Brendon was old-fashioned and the women born of the war attracted him not at all. He recognized their fine qualities and often their distinction of mind; yet his ideal struck backward to another and earlier type—the type of his own mother who, as a widow, had kept house for him until her death. She was his feminine ideal—restful, sympathetic, trustworthy—one who always made his interests hers, one who concentrated upon his life rather than her own and found in his progress and triumphs the salt of her own existence.

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Mark wanted, in truth, somebody who would be content to merge herself in him and seek neither to impress her own personality upon his, nor develop an independent environment. He had wit to know a mother's standpoint must be vastly different from that of any wife, no matter how perfect her devotion; he had experience enough of married men to doubt whether the woman he sought was to be found in a post-war world; yet he preserved and permitted himself a hope that the old-fashioned women still existed, and he began to consider where he might find such a helpmate.

He was somewhat overweary after a strenuous year; but to Dartmoor he always came for health and rest when opportunity offered, and now he had returned for the third time to the Duchy Hotel at Princetown—there to renew old friendships and amuse himself on the surrounding trout streams through the long days of June and July.

Brendon enjoyed the interest he awakened among other fishermen and, though he always went upon his expeditions alone, usually joined the throng in the smoking-room after dinner. Being a good talker he never failed of an audience there. But better still he liked an hour sometimes with the prison warders. For the convict prison that dominated that grey smudge in the heart of the moors known as Princetown held many interesting and famous criminals, more than one of whom had been "put through" by him, and had to thank Brendon's personal industry and daring for penal servitude. Upon the prison

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staff were not a few men of intelligence and wide experience who could tell the detective much germane to his work. The psychology of crime never paled in its intense attraction for Brendon and many a strange incident, or obcure convict speech, related without comment to him by those who had witnessed, or heard them, was capable of explanation in the visitor's mind.

He had found an unknown spot where some good trout dwelt and on an evening in mid-June he set forth to tempt them. He had discovered certain deep pools in a disused quarry fed by a streamlet, that harboured a fish or two heavier than most of those surrendered daily by the Dart and Meavy, the Blackabrook and the Walkham.

Foggintor Quarry, wherein lay these preserves, might be approached in two ways. Originally broken into the granite bosom of the moor for stone to build the bygone war prison of Princetown, a road still extended to the deserted spot and joined the main throughfare half a mile distant. A house or two—dwellings used by old-time quarrymen—stood upon this grass-grown track; but the huge pit was long ago deserted. Nature had made it beautiful, although the wonderful place was seldom appreciated now and only wild creatures dwelt therein.

Brendon, however, came hither by a direct path over the moors. Leaving Princetown railway station upon his left hand he set his face west where the waste heaved out before him dark against a blaze of light from the sky. The sun was setting and a great glory of gold, fretted with lilac and

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crimson, burned over the distant earth, while here and there the light caught crystals of quartz in the granite boulders and flashed up from the evening sobriety of the heath.

Against the western flame appeared a figure carrying a basket. Mark Brendon, with thoughts on the evening rise of the trout, lifted his face at a light footfall. Whereupon there passed by him the fairest woman he had ever known, and such sudden beauty startled the man and sent his own thoughts flying. It was as though from the desolate waste there had sprung a magical and exotic flower; or that the sunset lights, now deepening on fern and stone, had burned together and became incarnate in this lovely girl. She was slim and not very tall. She wore no hat and the auburn of her hair, piled high above her forehead, tangled the warm sunset beams and burned like a halo round her head. The colour was glorious, that rare but perfect reflection of the richest hues that autumn brings to the beech and the bracken. And she had blue eyes—blue as the gentian. Their size impressed Brendon.

He had only known one woman with really large eyes, and she was a criminal. But this stranger's bright orbs seemed almost to dwarf her face. Her mouth was not small, but the lips were full and delicately turned. She walked quickly with a good stride and her slight, silvery skirts and rosy, silken jumper showed her figure clearly enough—her round hips and firm, girlish bosom. She swung along—a flash of joy on little twinkling feet that seemed hardly to touch the ground.

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Her eyes met his for a moment with a frank, trustful expression, then she had passed. Waiting half a minute, Brendon turned to look again. He heard her singing with all the light-heartedness of youth and he caught a few notes as clear and cheerful as a grey bird's. Then. still walking quickly, she dwindled into one bright spot upon the moor, dipped into an undulation, and was gone—a creature of the heath and wild lands whom it seemed impossible to imagine pent within any dwelling.

The vision made Mark pensive, as sudden beauty will, and he wondered about the girl. He guessed her to be a visitor—one of a party, perhaps, possibly here for the day alone. He went no farther than to guess that she must certainly be betrothed. Such an exquisite creature seemed little likely to have escaped love. Indeed love and a spirit of happiness were reflected from her eyes and in her song. He speculated on her age and guessed she must be eighteen. He then, by some twist of thought, considered his personal appearance. We are all prone to put the best face possible upon such a matter, but Brendon lived too much with hard facts to hoodwink himself on that or any other subject. He was a well-modelled man of great physical strength, and still agile and lithe for his age; but his hair was an ugly straw colour and his clean-shorn, pale face lacked any sort of distinction save an indication of moral purpose, character, and pugnacity. It was a face well suited to his own requirements, for he could disguise it easily; but it was not a face calculated

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to charm or challenge any woman—a fact he knew well enough.

Tramping forward now, the detective came to a great crater that gaped on the hillside and stood above the dead quarry workings of Foggintor. Underneath him opened a cavity with sides two hundred feet high. Its peaks and precipices fell, here by rough, giant steps, here stark and sheer over broad faces of granite, where only weeds and saplings of mountain ash and thorn could find a foothold. The bottom was one vast litter of stone and fern, where foxgloves nodded above the masses of debris and wild things made their homes. Water fell over many a granite shelf and in the desolation lay great and small pools.

Brendon began to descend, where a sheep track wound into the pit. A Dartmoor pony and her foal galloped away through an entrance westerly. At one point a wide moraine spread fanwise from above into the cup, and here upon this slope of disintegrated granite more water dripped and tinkled from overhanging ledges of stone. Rills ran in every direction and, from the spot now reached by the sportsman, the deserted quarry presented a bewildering confusion of huge boulders, deep pits, and mighty cliff faces heaving up to scarps and counter-scarps. Brendon had found the guardian spirit of the place on a former visit and now he lifted his voice and cried out.

"Here I am!" he said.

"Here I am!" cleanly answered Echo hid in the granite.

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"Mark Brendon!"
"Mark Brendon!"
"Welcome!"
"Welcome!"

Every syllable echoed back crisp and clear, just tinged with that something not human that gave fascination to the reverberated words.

A great purple stain seemed to fill the crater and night's wine rose up within it, while still along the eastern crest of the pit there ran red sunset light to lip the cup with gold. Mark, picking his way through the huddled confusion, proceeded to the extreme breadth of the quarry, fifty yards northerly, and stood above two wide, still pools in the midst. They covered the lowest depth of the old workings, shelved to a rough beach on one side and, upon the other, ran thirty feet deep, where the granite sprang sheer in a precipice from the face of the little lake. Here crystal-clear water sank into a dim, blue darkness. The whole surface of the pools was, however, within reach of any fly fisherman who had a rod of necessary stiffness and the skill to throw a long line. Trout moved and here and there circles of light widened out on the water and rippled to the cliff beyond. Then came a heavier rise and from beneath a great rock, that heaved up from the midst of the smaller pool, a good fish took a little white moth which had fluttered within reach.

Mark set about his sport, yet felt that a sort of unfamiliar division had come into his mind and, while he brought two tiny-eyed flies from a box and fastened them to the hairlike leader he always

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used, there persisted the thought of the auburn girl—her eyes blue as April—her voice so bird-like and untouched with human emotion—her swift, delicate tread.

He began to fish as the light thickened; but he only cast once or twice and then decided to wait half an hour. He grounded his rod and brought a brier pipe and a pouch of tobacco from his pocket. The things of day were turning to slumber; but still there persisted a clinking sound, uttered monotonously from time to time, which the sportsman supposed to be a bird. It came from behind the great acclivities that ran opposite his place by the pools. Brendon suddenly perceived that it was no natural noise but arose from some human activity. It was, in fact, the musical note of a mason's trowel, and when presently it ceased, he was annoyed to hear heavy footsteps in the quarry—a labourer he guessed.

No labourer appeared, however. A big, broad man approached him, clad in a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers and a red waistcoat with gaudy brass buttons. He had entered at the lower mouth of the quarries and was proceeding to the northern exit, whence the little streamlet that fed the pools came through a narrow pass.

The stranger stopped as he saw Brendon, straddled his great legs, took a cigar from his mouth and spoke.

"Ah! You've found 'em, then?"

"Found what?" asked the detective.

"Found these trout. I come here for a swim sometimes. I've wondered why I never saw a

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rod in this hole. There are a dozen half pounders there and possibly some bigger ones.''

It was Mark's instinctive way to study all fellow creatures with whom he came in contact. He had an iron memory for faces. He looked up now and observed the rather remarkable features of the man before him. His scrutiny was swift and sure; yet had he guessed the tremendous significance of his glance, or with proleptic vision seen what this being was to mean during the years of his immediate future, it is certain that he would have intensified his inspection and extended the brief limits of their interview.

He saw a pair of broad shoulders and a thick neck over which hung a square, hard jaw and a determined chin. Then came a big mouth and the largest pair of mustaches Brendon remembered to have observed on any countenance. They were almost grotesque; but the stranger was evidently proud of them, for he twirled them from time to time and brought the points up to his ears. They were of a foxy red, and beneath them flashed large, white teeth when the big man talked in rather grating tones. He suggested one on very good terms with himself—a being of passionate temperament and material mind. His eyes were grey, small, set rather wide apart, with a heavy nose between. His hair was a fiery red, cut close, and of a hue yet more violent than his mustaches. Even the fading light could not kill his rufous face.

The big man appeared friendly, though Brendon heartily wished him away.

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"Sea fishing's my sport," he said. "Conger and cod, pollack and mackerel—half a boat load—that's sport. That means tight lines and a thirst afterward."

"I expect it does."

"But this bally place seems to bewitch people," continued the big man. "What is it about Dartmoor? Only a desert of hills and stones and two-penny half-penny streams a child can walk across; and yet—why you'll hear folk blether about it as though heaven would only be a bad substitute."

The other laughed. "There is a magic here. It gets into your blood."

"So it does. Even a God-forgotten hole like Princetown with nothing to see but the poor devils of convicts. A man I know is building himself a bungalow out here. He and his wife will be just as happy as a pair of wood pigeons—at least they think so."

"I heard a trowel clinking."

"Yes, I lend a hand sometimes when the workmen are gone. But think of it—to turn your back on civilization and make yourself a home in a desert!"

"Might do worse—if you've got no ambitions."

"Yes—ambition is not their strong point. They think love's enough—poor souls. Why don't you fish?"

"Waiting for it to get a bit darker."

"Well, so long. Take care you don't catch anything that'll pull you in."

Laughing at his joke and making another echo ring sharply over the still face of the water,

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the red man strode off through the gap fifty yards distant. Then in the stillness Mark heard the purr of a machine. He had evidently departed upon a motor bicycle to the main road half a mile distant.

When he was gone Brendon rose and strolled down to the other entrance of the quarry that he might see the bungalow of which the stranger had spoken. Leaving the great pit he turned right-handed and there, in a little hollow facing southwest, he found the building. It was as yet far from complete. The granite walls now stood six feet high and they were of remarkable thickness. The plan indicated a dwelling of six rooms and Brendon perceived that the house would have no second story. An acre round about had been walled, but as yet the boundaries were incomplete. Magnificent views swept to the west and south. Brendon's rare sight could still distinguish Saltash Bridge spanning the waters above Plymouth, where Cornwall heaved up against the dying afterglow of the west. It was a wonderful place in which to dwell, and the detective speculated as to the sort of people who would be likely to lift their home in this silent wilderness.

He guessed that they must have wearied of cities, or of their fellow creatures. Perhaps they were disappointed and disillusioned with life and so desired to turn their backs upon its gregarious features, evade its problems, as far as possible, escape its shame and follies, and live here amid these stern realities which promised nothing, yet

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were full of riches for a certain order of mankind. He judged that the couple, who designed to dwell beside the silent hollow of Foggintor, must have outlived much and reached an attitude of mind that desired no greater boon than solitude in the lap of nature. Such people could only be middle-aged, he told himself. Yet he remembered the big man had said that the pair felt "love was enough." That meant romance still active and alive, whatever their ages might be.

The day grew very dim and the fret of light and shadow died off the earth, leaving all vague and vast and featureless. Brendon returned to his sport and found a small "coachman" fly sufficiently destructive. The two pools yielded a dozen trout, of which he kept six and returned the rest to the water. His best three fish all weighed half a pound.

Resolved to pay the pools another visit, Mark made an end of his sport and chose to return by road rather than venture the walk over the rough moor in darkness. He left the quarry at the gap, passed the half dozen cottages that stood a hundred yards beyond it, and so, presently, regained the main road between Princetown and Tavistock. Tramping back under the stars, his thoughts drifted to the auburn girl of the moor. He was seeking to recollect how she had been dressed. He remembered everything about her with extraordinary vividness, from the crown of her glowing hair to her twinkling feet, in brown shoes with steel or silver buckles; but he could

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not instantly see her garments. Then they came back to him—the rose-coloured jumper and the short, silvery skirts.

Twice afterward, during the evening hour, Brendon again tramped to Foggintor, but he was not rewarded by any glimpse of the girl; but as the picture of her dimmed a little, there happened a strange and apparently terrible thing, and in common with everybody else his thoughts were distracted. To the detective's hearty annoyance and much against his will, there confronted him a professional problem. Though the sudden whisper of murder that winged with amazing speed through that little, uplifted church-town was no affair of his, there fell out an incident which quickly promised to draw him into it and end his holiday before the time.

Four evenings after his first fishing expedition to the quarries, he devoted a morning to the lower waters of the Meavy River; at the end of that day, not far short of midnight, when glasses were empty and pipes knocked out, half a dozen men, just about to retire, heard a sudden and evil report.

Will Blake, "Boots" at the Duchy Hotel, was waiting to extinguish the lights, and seeing Brendon he said:

"There's something in your line happened, master, by the look of it. A pretty bobbery to-morrow."

"A convict escaped, Will?" asked the detective, yawning and longing for bed. "That's about the only fun you get up here, isn't it?"

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"Convict escaped? No—a man done in seemingly. Mr. Pendean's uncle-in-law have slaughtered Mr. Pendean by the looks of it."

"What did he want to do that for?" asked Brendon without emotion.

"That's for clever men like you to find out," answered Will.

"And who is Mr. Pendean?"

"The gentleman what's building the bungalow down to Foggintor."

Mark started. The big red man flashed to his mind complete in every physical feature. He described him and Will Blake replied:

"That's the chap that's done it. That's the gentleman's uncle-in-law!"

Brendon went to bed and slept no worse for the tragedy. Nor, when morning came and every maid and man desired to tell him all they knew, did he show the least interest. When Milly knocked with his hot water and drew up his blind, she judged that nobody could appreciate the event better than a famous detective.

"Oh, sir—such a fearful thing——" she began. But he cut her short.

"Now, Milly, don't talk shop. I haven't come to Dartmoor to catch murderers, but to catch trout. What's the weather like?"

" 'Tis foggy and soft; and Mr. Pendean—poor dear soul——"

"Go away, Milly. I don't want to hear anything about Mr. Pendean."

"That big red devil of a man——"

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"Nor anything about the big red devil, either. If it's soft, I shall try the leat this morning."

Milly stared at him with much disappointment.

"God's goodness!" she said. "You can go off fishing—a professed murder catcher like you—and a man killed under your nose you may say!"

"It isn't my job. Now, clear out. I want to get up."

"Well, I never!" murmured Milly and departed in great astonishment.

But Brendon was not to enjoy the freedom that he desired in this matter. He ordered sandwiches, intending to beat a hasty retreat and get beyond reach; then at half past nine, he emerged into a dull and lowering morn. Fine mist was in the air and a heavy fog hid the hills. There seemed every probability of a wet day and from a fisherman's point of view the conditions promised sport. He was just slipping on a raincoat and about to leave the hotel when Will Blake appeared and handed him a letter. He glanced at it, half inclined to stick the missive in the hall letter rack and leave perusal until his return, but the handwriting was a woman's and did not lack for distinction and character. He felt curious and, not associating the incident with the rumoured crime, set down his rod and creel, opened the note, and read what was written:

"3 Station Cottages, Princetown.

"DEAR SIR: The police have told me that you are in Princetown, and it seems as though Providence had sent

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you. I fear that I have no right to seek your services directly, but if you can answer the prayer of a heart-broken woman and give her the benefit of your genius in this dark moment, she would be unspeakably thankful.

"Faithfully yours,
"JENNY PENDEAN."

Mark Brendon murmured "damn" gently under his breath. Then he turned to Will.

"Where is Mrs. Pendean's house?" he asked.

"In Station Cottages, just before you come to the prison woods, sir."

"Run over, then, and say I'll call in half an hour."

"There!" Will grinned. "I told 'em you'd never keep out of it!"

He was gone and Brendon read the letter again, studied its neat caligraphy, and observed that a tear had blotted the middle of the sheet. Once more he said "damn" to himself, dropped his fishing basket and rod, turned up the collar of his mackintosh, and walked to the police station, where he heard a little of the matter in hand from a constable and then asked for permission to use the telephone. In five minutes he was speaking to his own chief at Scotland Yard, and the familiar cockney voice of Inspector Harrison came over the two hundred odd miles that separated the metropolis of convicts from the metropolis of the world.

"Man apparently murdered here, inspector. Chap who is thought to have done it disappeared. Widow wants me to take up case. I'm unwilling

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to do so; but it looks like duty." So spoke Brendon.

"Right. If it looks like duty, do it. Let me hear again to-night. Halfyard, chief at Princetown, is an old friend of mine. Very good man. Good-bye."

Mark then learned that Inspector Halfyard was already at Foggintor.

"I'm on this," said Mark to the constable. "I'll come in again. Tell the inspector to expect me at noon for all details. I'm going to see Mrs. Pendean now."

The policeman saluted. He knew Brendon very well by sight.

"I hope it won't knock a hole in your holiday, sir. But I reckon it won't. It's all pretty plain sailing by the look of it."

"Where's the body?"

"That's what we don't know yet, Mr. Brendon; and that's what only Robert Redmayne can tell us by the look of it."

The detective nodded. Then he sought No. 3, Station Cottages.

The little row of attached houses ran off at right angles to the high street of Princetown. They faced northwest, and immediately in front of them rose the great, tree-clad shoulder of North Hessory Tor. The woods ascended steeply and a stone wall ran between them and the dwellings beneath.

Brendon knocked at No. 3 and was admitted by a thin, grey-haired woman who had evidently been shedding tears. He found himself in a little hall

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decorated with many trophies of fox hunting. There were masks and brushes and several specimens of large Dartmoor foxes, who had run their last and now stood stuffed in cases hung upon the walls.

"Do I speak to Mrs. Pendean?" asked Brendon; but the old woman shook her head.

"No, sir. I'm Mrs. Edward Gerry, widow of the famous Ned Gerry, for twenty years Huntsman of the Dartmoor Foxhounds. Mr. and Mrs. Pendean were—are—I mean she is my lodger."

"Is she ready to see me?"

"She's cruel hard hit, poor lady. What name, sir?"

"Mr. Mark Brendon."

"She hoped you'd come. But go gentle with her. 'Tis a fearful ordeal for any innocent person to have to talk to you, sir."

Mrs. Gerry opened a door upon the right hand of the entrance.

"The great Mr. Brendon be here, Mrs. Pendean," she said; then Brendon walked in and the widow shut the door behind him.

Jenny Pendean rose from her chair by the table where she was writing letters and Brendon saw the auburn girl of the sunset.

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CHAPTER II

The girl had evidently dressed that morning without thought or care—perhaps unconsciously. Her wonderful hair was lifted and wound carelessly upon her head; her beauty had been dimmed by tears. She was, however, quite controlled and showed little emotion at their meeting; but she looked very weary and every inflection of her pleasant, clear voice revealed it. She spoke as one who had suffered much and laboured under great loss of vitality. He found this to be indeed the case, for it seemed that she had lost half herself.

As he entered she rose and saw in his face an astonishment which seemed not much to surprise her, for she was used to admiration and knew that her beauty startled men.

Brendon, though he felt his heart beat quicklier at his discovery, soon had himself in hand. He spoke with tact and sympathy, feeling himself already committed to serve her with all his wits and strength. Only a fleeting regret shot through his mind that the case in all probability would not prove such as to reveal his own strange powers. He combined the regulation methods of criminal research with the more modern deductive system,

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and his success, as he always pointed out, was reached by the double method. Already he longed to distinguish himself before this woman.

"Mrs. Pendean," he said, "I am very glad that you learned I was in Princetown and it will be a privilege to serve you if I can. The worst may not have happened, though from what I have heard, there is every reason to fear it; but, believe me, I will do my best on your account. I have communicated with headquarters and, being free at this moment, can devote myself wholly to the problem."

"Perhaps it was selfish to ask you in your holidays," she said. "But, somehow, I felt——"

"Think nothing whatever of that. I hope that what lies before us may not take very long. And now I will listen to you. There is no need to tell me anything about what has happened at Foggintor. I shall hear all about that later in the day. You will do well now to let me know everything bearing upon it that went before this sad affair; and if you can throw the least light of a nature to guide me and help my inquiry, so much the better."

"I can throw no light at all," she said. "It has come like a thunderbolt and I still find my mind refusing to accept the story that they have brought to me. I cannot think about it—I cannot bear to think about it; and if I believed it, I should go mad. My husband is my life."

"Sit down and give me some account of yourself and Mr. Pendean. You cannot have been married very long."

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"Four years."

He showed astonishment.

"I am twenty-five," she explained, "though I'm told I do not look so much as that."

"Indeed not; I should have guessed eighteen. Collect your thoughts now and just give me what of your history and your husband's you think most likely to be of use."

She did not speak for a moment and Brendon, taking a chair, drew it up and sat with his arms upon the back of it facing her in a casual and easy position. He wanted her to feel quite unconstrained.

"Just chat, as though you were talking of the past to a friend," he said. "Indeed you must believe that you are talking to a friend, who has no desire but to serve you."

"I'll begin at the beginning," she answered. "My own history is brief enough and has surely little bearing on this dreadful thing; but my relations may be more interesting to you than I am. The family is now a very small one and seems likely to remain so, for of my three uncles all are bachelors. I have no other blood relations in Europe and know nothing of some distant cousins who live in Australia.

"The story of my family is this: John Redmayne lived his life on the Murray River in Victoria, South Australia, and there he made a considerable fortune out of sheep. He married and had a large family. Out of seven sons and five daughters born to them during a period of twenty years, Jenny and John Redmayne only saw five

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of their children grow into adult health and strength. Four boys lived, the rest died young; though two were drowned in a boating accident and my Aunt Mary, their eldest daughter, lived a year after her marriage.

"There remained four sons: Henry, the eldest, Albert, Bendigo, and Robert, the youngest of the family, now a man of thirty-five. It is he you are seeking in this awful thing that is thought to have happened.

"Henry Redmayne was his father's representative in England and a wool broker on his own account. He married and had one daughter: myself. I remember my parents very well, for I was fifteen and at school when they died. They were on their way to Australia, so that my father might see his father and mother again after the lapse of many years. But their ship, *The Wattle Blossom,* was lost with all hands and I became an orphan.

"John Redmayne, my grandfather, though a rich man was a great believer in work, and all his sons had to find occupation and justify their lives in his eyes. Uncle Albert, who was only a year younger than my father, cared for studious subjects and literature. He was apprenticed in youth to a bookseller at Sydney and after a time came to England, joined a large and important firm of booksellers, and became an expert. They took him into partnership and he travelled for them and spent some years in New York. But his special subject was Italian Renaissance literature and his joy was Italy, where he now lives.

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He found himself in a position to retire about ten years ago, being a bachelor with modest requirements. He knew, moreover, that his father must soon pass away and, as his mother was already dead, he stood in a position to count upon a share of the large fortune to be divided presently between himself and his two remaining brothers.

"Of these my Uncle Bendigo Redmayne was a sailor in the merchant marine. After reaching the position of a captain in the Royal Mail Steamship Company he retired on my grandfather's death, four years ago. He is a bluff, gruff old salt without any charm, and he never reached promotion into the passenger service, but remained in command of cargo boats—a circumstance he regarded as a great grievance. But the sea is his devotion, and when he was able to do so, he built himself a little house on the Devon cliffs, where now he resides within sound of the waves.

"My third uncle, Robert Redmayne, is at this moment apparently suspected of having killed my husband; but the more I think of such a hideous situation, the less possible does it appear. For not the wildest nightmare dream would seem more mad and motiveless than such a horror as this.

"Robert Redmayne in youth was his father's favourite and if he spoiled any of his sons he spoiled the youngest. Uncle Robert came to England, and being fond of cattle breeding and agriculture, joined a farmer, the brother of an Australian friend of John Redmayne's. He was supposed to be getting on well, but he came and

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went, for my grandfather did not like a year to pass without a sight of him.

"Uncle Bob was a pleasure-loving man especially fond of horse racing and sea fishing. On the strength of his prospects he borrowed money and got into debt. After the death of my own father I saw a little of Uncle Robert from time to time, for he was kind to me and liked me to be with him in my holidays. He did very little work. Most of his time he was at the races, or down in Cornwall at Penzance, where he was supposed to be courting a young woman—a hotel keeper's daughter. I had just left school and was about to leave England and go to live with my grandfather in Australia, when events happened swiftly, one on top of the other, and life was changed for all us Redmaynes."

"Rest a little if you are tired," said Mark. He saw by her occasional breaks and the sighs that lifted her bosom, how great an effort Mrs. Pendean was making to tell her story well.

"I will go straight on," she answered. "It was summertime and I was stopping with my Uncle Robert at Penzance when two great things—indeed three great things—happened. The war broke out, my grandfather died in Australia and, lastly, I became engaged to Michael Pendean.

"I had loved Michael devotedly for a year before he asked me to marry him. But when I told my Uncle Robert what had happened he chose to disapprove and considered that I had made a serious mistake. My future husband's parents were dead. His father had been the head

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of a firm called Pendean and Trecarrow, whose business was the importation of pilchards to Italy. But Michael, though he had now succeeded his father in the business, took no interest in it. It gave him an income, but his own interests were in a mechanical direction. And, incidentally, he was always a good deal of a dreamer and liked better to plan than to carry out.

"We loved one another passionately and I have very little doubt that my uncles would have raised no objection to our marrying in the long run, had not unfortunate events happened to set them against our betrothal.

"On the death of my grandfather it was found that he had written a peculiar will; and we also learned that his fortune would prove considerably smaller than his sons expected. However, he left rather more than one hundred and fifty thousand. It appeared that during the last ten years of his life, he had lost his judgment and made a number of hopeless investments.

"The terms of the will put all his fortune into the power of my Uncle Albert, my grandfather's eldest living son. He told Uncle Albert to divide the total proceeds of the estate between himself and his two brothers as his judgment should dictate, for he knew that Albert was a man of scrupulous honour and would do justly by all. With regard to me, he directed my uncle to set aside twenty thousand pounds, to be given me on my marriage, or failing that, on my twenty-fifth birthday. In the meantime I was to be taken care of by my uncles; and he added that my future

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husband, if he appeared, must be approved of by Uncle Albert.

"Though jarred to find he would receive far less than he had hoped, Uncle Robert was soon in a good temper, for their elder brother informed Uncle Bob and Uncle Bendigo that he should divide the fortune into three equal parts. Thus it came about that each received about forty thousand pounds, while my inheritance was set aside. All would have been well, no doubt, and I was coaxing my uncle round, for Michael Pendean knew nothing about our affairs and remained wholly ignorant that I should ever be worth a penny. It was a marriage of purest love and he had four hundred a year of his own from the business of the pilchard fishery, which we both deemed ample for our needs.

"Then broke the war, on those awful days in August, and the face of the world changed—I suppose forever."

She stopped again, rose, went to the sideboard, and poured herself out a little water. Mark jumped up and took the glass jug from her hand.

"Rest now," he begged, but she sipped the water and shook her head.

"I will rest when you have gone," she answered; "but please come back again presently if you can give me a gleam of hope."

"Be very sure of that, Mrs. Pendean."

She went back to her seat while he also sat down again. Then she resumed.

"The war altered everything and created a painful breach between my future husband and my

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Uncle Robert. The latter instantly volunteered and rejoiced in the opportunity to seek adventure. He joined a cavalry regiment and invited Michael to do the same; but my husband, though no more patriotic man lives—I must speak still as though he lives, Mr. Brendon——"

"Of course you must, Mrs. Pendean—we must all think of him as living until the contrary is proved."

"Thank you for saying that! My husband had no mind for active warfare. He was delicately built and of a gentle temperament. The thought of engaging in hand-to-hand conflict was more than he could endure, and there were, of course, a thousand other ways open to him in which he could serve his country—a man so skilful as he."

"Of course there were."

"Uncle Robert, however, made a personal thing of it. Volunteers for active service were urgently demanded and he declared that in the ranks was the only place for any man of fighting age, who desired longer to call himself a man. He represented the situation to his brothers, and Uncle Bendigo—who had just retired, but who, belonging to the Naval Reserve, now joined up and soon took charge of some mine sweepers—wrote very strongly as to what he thought was Michael's duty. From Italy Uncle Albert also declared his mind to the same purpose, and though I resented their attitude, the decision, of course, rested with Michael, not with me. He was only five-and-twenty then and he had no desire but to do his duty. There was nobody to advise him

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and, perceiving the danger of opposing my uncles' wishes, he yielded and volunteered.

"But he was refused. A doctor declared that a heart murmur made the necessary training quite impossible and I thanked God when I heard it. The tribulations began then and Uncle Bob saw red about it, accusing Michael of evading his duty and of having bribed the doctor to get him off. We had some very distressing scenes and I was thankful when my uncle went to France.

"At my own wish Michael married me and I informed my uncles that he had done so. Relations were strained all round after that; but I did not care; and my husband only lived to please me. Then, halfway through the war, came the universal call for workers; and seeing that men above combatant age, or incapacitated from fighting, were wanted up here at Princetown, Michael offered himself and we arrived together.

"The Prince of Wales had been instrumental in starting a big moss depôt for the preparation of surgical dressings; and both my husband and I joined this station, where the sphagnum moss was collected from the bogs of Dartmoor, dried, cleaned, treated chemically, and dispatched to all the war hospitals of the kingdom. A busy little company carried on this good work and, while I joined the women who picked and cleaned the moss, my husband, though not strong enough to tramp the moors and do the heavy work of collecting it and bringing it up to Princetown, was instrumental in drying it and spreading it on the asphalt lawn-tennis courts of the prison warders'

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cricket ground, where this preliminary process was carried out. Michael also kept records and accounts and indeed organized the whole depôt to perfection.

"For nearly two years we stuck to this task, lodging here with Mrs. Gerry. During that time I fell in love with Dartmoor and begged my husband to build me a bungalow up here when the war was ended, if he could afford to do so. His pilchard trade with Italy practically came to an end after the summer of 1914. But the company of Pendean and Trecarrow owned some good little steamers and these were soon very valuable. So Michael, who had got to care for Dartmoor as much as I did, presently took steps and succeeded in obtaining a long lease of a beautiful and sheltered spot near Foggintor quarries, a few miles from here.

"Meanwhile I had heard nothing from my uncles, though I had seen Uncle Robert's name in the paper among those who had won the D. S. O. Michael advised me to leave the question of my money until after the war, and so I did. We began our bungalow last year and came back to live with Mrs. Gerry until it should be completed.

"Six months ago I wrote to Uncle Albert in Italy and he told me that he should deliberate the proposition; but he still much resented my marriage. I wrote to Uncle Bendigo at Dartmouth also, who was now in his new home; but while not particularly angry with me, his reply spoke slightingly of my dear husband.

"These facts bring me to the situation that

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suddenly developed a week ago, Mr. Brendon." She stopped and sighed again.

"I much fear that I am tiring you out," he said. "Would you like to leave the rest?"

"No. For the sake of clearness it is better you hear everything now. A week ago I was walking out of the post-office, when who should suddenly stop in front of me on a motor bicycle but Uncle Robert? I waited only to see him dismount and set his machine on a rest before the post-office. Then I approached him. My arms were round his neck and I was kissing him before he had time to know what had happened, for I need not tell you that I had long since forgiven him. He frowned at first but at last relented. He was lodging at Paignton, down on Torbay, for the summer months, and he hinted that he was engaged to be married. I behaved as nicely as I knew how, and when he told me that he was going on to Plymouth for a few days before returning to his present quarters, I implored him to let the past go and be friends and come and talk to my husband.

"He had been to see an old war comrade at Two Bridges, two miles from here, and meant to lunch at the Duchy Hotel and then proceed to Plymouth; but I prevailed upon him at last to come and share our midday meal, and I was able to tell him things about Michael which promised to change his unfriendly attitude. To my delight he at last consented to stop for a few hours, and I arranged the most attractive little dinner that I could. When my husband returned from the bun-

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galow I brought them together again. Michael was on his defence instantly; but he never harboured a grievance very long and when he saw that Uncle Bob was not unfriendly and very interested to hear he had won the O. B. E. for his valuable services at the depot, Michael showed a ready inclination to forget and forgive the past.

"I think that was almost the happiest day of my life and, with my anxiety much modified, I was able to study Uncle Robert a little. He seemed unchanged, save that he talked louder and was more excitable than ever. The war had given him wide, new interests; he was a captain and intended, if he could, to stop in the army. He had escaped marvellously on many fields and seen much service. During the last few weeks before the armistice, he succumbed to gassing and was invalided; though, before that, he had also been out of action from shell shock for two months. He made light of this; but I felt there was really something different about him and suspected that the shell shock accounted for the change. He was always excitable and in extremes—now up in the clouds and now down in the depths—but his terrible experiences had accentuated this peculiarity and, despite his amiable manners and apparent good spirits, both Michael and I felt that his nerves were highly strung and that his judgment could hardly be relied upon. Indeed his judgment was never a strong point.

"But he proved very jolly, though very egotistical. He talked for hours about the war and what he had done to win his honours; and we no-

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ticed particularly a feature of his conversation. His memory failed him sometimes. By which I do not mean that he told us anything contrary to fact; but he often repeated himself, and having mentioned some adventure, would, after the lapse of an hour or less, tell us the same story over again as something new.

"Michael explained to me afterwards that this defect was a serious thing and probably indicated some brain trouble which might get worse. I was too happy at our reconciliation, however, to feel any concern for the moment and presently, after tea, I begged Uncle Robert to stop with us for a few days instead of going to Plymouth. We walked out over the moor in the evening to see the bungalow and my uncle was very interested. Finally he decided that he would remain for the night, at any rate, and we made him put up with us and occupy Mrs. Gerry's spare bedroom, instead of going to the Duchy Hotel as he intended.

"He stopped on and liked to lend a hand with the building sometimes after the builders had gone. He and Michael often spent hours of these long evenings there together; and I would take out tea to them.

"Uncle Robert had told us about his engagement to a young woman, the sister of a comrade in the war. She was stopping at Paignton with her parents and he was now going to return to her. He made us promise to come to Paignton next August for the Torbay Regatta; and in secret I begged him to write to both my other

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uncles and explain that he was now satisfied Michael had done his bit in the war. He consented to do so and thus it looked as though our anxieties would soon be at an end.

"Last night Uncle Robert and Michael went, after an early tea, to the bungalow, but I did not accompany them on this occasion. They ran round by road on Uncle Robert's motor bicycle, my husband sitting behind him, as he always did.

"Supper time came and neither of them appeared. I am speaking of last night now. I did not bother till midnight, but then I grew frightened. I went to the police station, saw Inspector Halfyard, and told him that my husband and uncle had not come back from Foggintor and that I was anxious about them. He knew them both by sight and my husband personally, for he had been of great use to Michael when the moss depôt was at work. That is all I can tell you."

Mrs. Pendean stopped and Brendon rose.

"What remains to be told I will get from Inspector Halfyard himself," he said. "And you must let me congratulate you on your statement. It would have been impossible to put the past situation more clearly before me. The great point you made is that your husband and Captain Redmayne were entirely reconciled and left you in complete friendship when you last saw them. You can assure me of that?"

"Most emphatically."

"Have you looked into your uncle's room since he disappeared?"

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"No, it has not been touched."

"Again thank you, Mrs. Pendean. I shall see you some time to-day."

"Can you give me any sort of hope?"

"As yet I know nothing of the actual event, and must not therefore offer you hope, or tell you not to hope."

She shook his hand and a fleeting ghost of a smile, infinitely pathetic but unconscious, touched her face. Even in grief the beauty of the woman was remarkable; and to Brendon, whose private emotions already struck into the present demands upon his intellect, she appeared exquisite. As he left her he hoped that a great problem lay before him. He desired to impress her—he looked forward with a passing exaltation quite foreign from his usual staid and cautious habit of mind; he even repeated to himself a pregnant saying that he had come across in a book of quotations, though he knew not the author of it.

"There is an hour in which a man may be happy all his life, can he but find it."

Then he grew ashamed of himself and felt something like a blush suffuse his plain features.

At the police station a car was waiting for him and in twenty minutes he had reached Foggintor. Picking his way past the fishing pools and regarding the frowning cliffs and wide spaces of the quarry under a mournful mist, Mark proceeded to the aperture at the farther end. Then he left the rill which ran out from this exit and soon stood

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by the bungalow. It was now the dinner hour. Half a dozen masons and carpenters were eating their meal in a wooden shed near the building and with them sat two constables and their superior officer.

Inspector Halfyard rose as Brendon appeared, came forward, and shook hands.

"Lucky you was on the spot, my dear," he said in his homely Devon way. "Not that it begins to look as if there was anything here deep enough to ask for your cleverness."

Inspector Halfyard stood six feet high and had curiously broad, square shoulders; but his imposing torso was ill supported. His legs were very thin and long, and they turned out a trifle. With his prominent nose, small head, and bright little slate-grey eyes, he looked rather like a stork. He was rheumatic, too, and walked stiffly.

"This here hole is no place for my legs," he confessed. "But from the facts, so far as we've got 'em, Foggintor quarry don't come into the story, though it looks as if it ought to. But the murder was done here—inside this bungalow—and the chap that's done it hadn't any use for such a likely sort of hiding-place."

"Have you searched the quarries?"

"Not yet. 'Tis no good turning fifty men into this jakes of a hole till we know whether it will be needful; but all points to somewhere else. A terrible strange job—so strange, in fact, that we shall probably find a criminal lunatic at the bottom of it. Everything looks pretty clear, but it don't look sane."

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"You haven't found the body?"

"No; but you can often prove murder mighty well without it—as now. Come out to the bungalow and I'll tell you what there is to tell. There's been a murder all right, but we're more likely to find the murderer than his victim."

They went out together and soon stood in the building.

"Now let's have the story from where you come in," said Brendon, and Inspector Halfyard told his tale.

"Somewhere about a quarter after midnight I was knocked up. Down I came and Constable Ford, on duty at the time, told me that Mrs. Pendean was wishful to see me. I knew her and her husband very well, for they'd been the life and soul of the Moss Supply Depôt, run at Princetown during the war.

"Her husband and her uncle, Captain Redmayne, had gone to the bungalow, as they often did after working hours, to carry on a bit; but at midnight they hadn't come home, and she was put about for 'em. Hearing of the motor bike, I thought there might have been a breakdown, if not an accident, so I told Ford to knock up another chap and go down along the road. Which they did do—and Ford came back at half after three with ugly news that they'd seen nobody, but they'd found a great pool of blood inside the bungalow—as if somebody had been sticking a pig there. 'Twas daylight by then and I motored out instanter. The mess is in the room that will

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be the kitchen, and there's blood on the lintel of the back door which opens into the kitchen.

"I looked round very carefully for anything in the nature of a clue, but I couldn't see so much as a button. What makes any work here wasted, so far as I can see, is the evidence of the people at the cottages in the by-road to Foggintor, where we came in. A few qarrymen and their families live there, and also Tom Ringrose, the water bailiff down on Walkham River. The quarrymen don't work here because this place hasn't been open for more than a hundred years; but they go to Duke's quarry down at Merivale, and most of 'em have push bikes to take 'em to and from their job.

"At these cottages, on my way back to breakfast, I got some information of a very definite kind. Two men told the same tale and they hadn't met before they told it. One was Jim Bassett, under foreman at Duke's quarry, and one was Ringrose, the water bailiff who lives in the end cottage. Bassett has been at the bungalow once or twice, as granite for it comes from the quarry at Merivale. He knew Mr. Pendean and Captain Redmayne by sight and, last night, somewhere about ten o'clock by summer time, while it was still light, he saw the captain leave and pass the cottages. Bassett was smoking at his door at the time and Robert Redmayne came alone, pushing his motor bicycle till he reached the road. And behind the saddle he had a big sack fastened to the machine.

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"Bassett wished him 'good night' and he returned the compliment; and half a mile down the by-road, Ringrose also passed him. He was now on his machine and riding slowly till he reached the main road. He reached it and then Ringrose heard him open out and get up speed. He proceeded up the hill and the water bailiff supposed that he was going back to Princetown."

Inspector Halfyard stopped.

"And that is all you know?" asked Brendon.

"As to Captain Redmayne's movements—yes," answered the elder. "There will probably be information awaiting us when we return to Princetown, as inquiries are afoot along both roads—to Moreton and Exeter on the one side and by Dartmeet to Ashburton and the coast towns on the other. He must have gone off to the moor by one of those ways, I judge; and if he didn't, then he turned in his tracks and got either to Plymouth, or away to the north. We can't fail to pick up his line pretty quickly. He's a noticeable man."

"Did Ringrose also report the sack behind the motor bicycle?"

"He did."

"Before you mentioned it?"

"Yes, he volunteered that item, just as Bassett had done."

"Let me see what's to be seen here, then," said Brendon, and they entered the kitchen of the bungalow together.

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CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERY

BRENDON followed Halfyard into the apartment destined to be the kitchen of Michael Pendean's bungalow, and the inspector lifted some tarpaulins that had been thrown upon a corner of the room. In the midst stood a carpenter's bench, and the floor, the boards of which had already been laid, was littered with shavings and tools. Under the tarpaulin a great red stain soaked to the walls, where much blood had flowed. It was still wet in places and upon it lay shavings partially ensanguined. At the edge of the central stain were smears and, among them, half the impress of a big, nail-studded boot.

"Have the workmen been in here this morning?" asked Brendon, and Inspector Halfyard answered that they had not.

"Two constables were here last night after one o'clock—the men I sent from Princetown when Mrs. Pendean gave the alarm," he said. "They looked round with an electric torch and found the blood. One came back; the other stopped on the spot all night. I was out here myself before the masons and carpenters came to work, and I forbade them to touch anything till we'd made our examination. Mr. Pendean was in the habit of doing a bit himself after hours."

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"Can the men say if anything was done last night—in the way of work on the bungalow?"

"No doubt they'd know."

Brendon sent for a mason and a carpenter; and while the latter alleged that nothing had been added to the last work of himself and his mate, the mason, pointing to a wall which was destined to inclose the garden, declared that some heavy stones had been lifted and mortared into place since he left on the previous evening at five o'clock.

"Pull down all the new work," directed Brendon.

Then he turned to examine the kitchen more closely. A very careful survey produced no results and he could find nothing that the carpenters were not able to account for. There was no evidence of any struggle. A sheep might as easily have been killed in the chamber as a man; but he judged the blood to be human and Halfyard had made one discovery of possible importance. The timbers of the kitchen door were already set up and they had received a preliminary coat of white paint. This was smeared at the height of a man's shoulder with blood.

Brandon then examined the ground immediately outside the kitchen door. It was rough and trampled with many feet of the workmen but gave no special imprints or other indications of the least value. For twenty yards he scrutinized every inch of the ground and presently found indications of a motor bicycle. It had stood here—ten yards from the bungalow—and the marks of the wheels and the rest lowered to support it were

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clear enough in the peat. He traced the impressions as the machine was wheeled away and observed that at one soft place they had pressed very deeply into the earth. The pattern of the tire was familiar to him, a Dunlop. Half an hour later one of the constables approached, saluted Mark, and made a statement.

"They've pulled down the wall, sir, and found nothing there; but Fulford, the mason, says that a sack is missing. It was a big sack, in the corner of the shed out there, and the cement that it contained is all poured out; but the sack has gone."

The detective visited the spot and turned over the pile of cement, which revealed nothing. Then, having himself searched the workmen's shed without discovering any clue, he strolled in the immediate neighbourhood of the bungalow and examined the adjacent entrance to the quarries. Not the least spark of light rewarded the search. He came back presently out of the rain which had now begun to fall steadily—but not before he had strolled as far as the fishing pools and seen clear marks of naked, adult feet on the sandy brink.

Inspector Halfyard, who had remained in the bungalow, joined him while he examined the other five chambers with close attention. In the apartment destined for a sitting-room, which faced out upon the great view to the southwest, Brendon found a cigar half smoked. It had evidently been flung down alight and had smouldered for some time, scorching the wooden floor before it went out. He found also the end of a broken, brown boot lace with a brass tag. The lace had

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evidently frayed away and probably had broken when being tied. But he attached not the least importance to either fragment. Nothing that he regarded as of value resulted from inspection of the remaining rooms and Brendon presently decided that he would return to Princetown. He showed Halfyard the footprints by the water and had them protected with a tarpaulin.

"Something tells me that this is a pretty simple business all the same," he said. "We need waste no more time here, inspector—at any rate until we have got back to the telephone and heard the latest."

"What's your idea?"

"I should say we have to do with an unfortunate man who's gone mad," replied the detective; "and a madman doesn't take long to find as a rule. I think it's murder right enough and I believe we shall find that this soldier, who's had shell shock, turned on Pendean and cut his throat, then, fondly hoping to hide the crime, got away with the body. Why I judge him to be mad is because Mrs. Pendean, who has told me the full story of the past, was able to assure me that the men had become exceedingly friendly, and that certain differences, which existed between them at the outbreak of the war, were entirely composed. And even granting that they quarrelled again, the quarrel must have suddenly sprung up. That seems improbable and one can't easily imagine a sudden row so tremendous that it ends in murder.

"Redmayne was a big, powerful man and he

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may have struck without intention to kill; but this mess means more than a blow with a fist. I think that he was a homicidal maniac and probably plotted the job beforehand with a madman's limited cunning; and if that is so, there's pretty sure to be news waiting for us at Princetown. Before dark we ought to know where are both the dead and the living man. These footprints mean a bather, or perhaps two. We'll study them later and drag the pond, if necessary."

The correctness of Brendon's deduction was made manifest within an hour, and the operations of Robert Redmayne defined up to a point. A man was waiting at the police station—George French, ostler at Two Bridges Hotel, on West Dart.

"I knew Captain Redmayne," he said, "because he'd been down once or twice of late to tea at Two Bridges. Last night, at half after ten, I was crossing the road from the garage and suddenly, without warning, a motor bike came over the bridge. I heard the rush of it and only got out of the way by a yard. There was no light showing but the man went through the beam thrown from the open door of the hotel and I saw it was the captain by his great mustache and his red waistcoat.

"He didn't see me, because it was taking him all his time to look after himself, and he'd just let her go, to rush the stiff hill that rises out of Two Bridges. He was gone like a puff of smoke and must have been running terrible fast—fifty mile

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an hour I dare say. We heard as there was trouble at Princetown and master sent me up over to report what I'd seen."

"Which way did he go after he had passed, Mr. French?" asked Brendon, who knew the Dartmoor country well. "The road forks above Two Bridges. Did he take the right hand for Dartmeet, or the left for Post Bridge and Moreton?"

But George could not say.

" 'Twas like a thunder planet flashing by," he told Mark, "and I don't know from Adam which way he went after he'd got up on top."

"Was anybody with him?"

"No, sir. I'd have seen that much; but he carried a big sack behind the saddle—that I can swear to."

There had been several telephone calls for Inspector Halfyard during his absence; and now three separate statements from different districts awaited him. These were already written out by a constable, and he took them one by one, read them, and handed them to Brendon. The first came from the post office at Post Bridge, and the post-mistress reported that a man, one Samuel White, had seen a motor bicycle run at great speed without lights up the steep hill northward of that village on the previous night. He gave the time as between half past ten and eleven o'clock.

"We should have heard of him from Moreton next," said Halfyard; "but, no. He must have branched under Hameldown and gone south, for the next news is from Ashburton."

The second message told how a garage keeper

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was knocked up at Ashburton, just after midnight, in order that petrol might be obtained for a motor bicycle. The description of the purchaser corresponded to Redmayne and the message added that the bicycle had a large sack tied behind it. The rider was in no hurry; he smoked a cigarette, swore because he could not get a drink, lighted his lamps, and then proceeded by the Totnes road which wound through the valley of the Dart southward.

The third communication came from the police station at Brixham and was somewhat lengthy. It ran thus:

"At ten minutes after two o'clock last night P. C. Widgery, on night duty at Brixham, saw a man on a motor bicycle with a large parcel behind him run through the town square. He proceeded down the main street and was gone for the best part of an hour; but, before three o'clock, Widgery saw him return without his parcel. He went fast up the hill out of Brixham, the way he came. Inquiries to-day show that he passed the Brixham coast-guard station about a quarter after two o'clock, and he must have lifted his machine over the barrier at the end of the coast-guard road, because he was seen by a boy, from Berry Head lighthouse, pushing it up the steep path that runs to the downs. The boy was going for a doctor, because his father, one of the lighthouse watchers, had been taken ill. The boy says the motor bicyclist was a big man and he was blowing, because the machine was heavy and the road just there very steep and rough. He saw no more of him on returning from the doctor. We are searching the Head and cliffs round about."

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Inspector Halfyard waited until Brendon had read the messages and put them down.

"About as easy as shelling peas—eh?" he asked.

"I expected an arrest," answered the detective. "It can't be long delayed."

As though to confirm him the telephone bell rang and Halfyard rose and entered the box to receive the latest information.

"Paignton speaking," said the message. "We have just called at address of Captain Redmayne —No. 7 Marine Terrace. He was expected last night—had wired yesterday to say he'd be home. They left supper for him, as usual when he is expected, and went to bed. Didn't hear him return, but found on going down house next morning that he had come—supper eaten, motor bike in tool house in back yard, where he keeps it. They called him at ten o'clock—no answer. They went in his room. Not there and bed not slept in and his clothes not changed. He's not been seen since."

"Hold on. Mark Brendon's here and has the case. He'll speak."

Inspector Halfyard reported the statement and Brendon picked up the mouthpiece.

"Detective Brendon speaking. Who is it?"

"Inspector Reece, Paignton."

"Let me hear at five o'clock if arrest has been made. Failing arrest I will motor down to you after that hour."

"Very good, sir. I expect to hear he's taken any minute."

"Nothing from Berry Head?"

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"We've got a lot of men there and all round under the cliffs, but nothing yet."

"All right, inspector. I'll come down if I don't hear to the contrary by five."

He hung up the receiver.

"All over bar shouting, I reckon," said Halfyard.

"It looks like it. He's mad, poor devil."

"It's the dead man I'm sorry for."

Brendon considered, having first looked at his watch. Personal thoughts would thrust themselves upon him, though he felt both surprise and shame that they could do so. Certain realities were clear enough to his mind, however future details might develop. And the overmastering fact was that Jenny Pendean had lost her husband. If she were, indeed, a widow——

He shook his head impatiently and turned to Halfyard.

"Should Robert Redmayne not be taken to-day, one or two things must be done," he said. "You'd better have some of that blood collected and the fact proved that it is human. And keep the cigar and boot lace here for the minute, though I attach no importance to either. Now I'll go and get some food and see Mrs. Pendean. Then I'll come back. I'll take the police car for Paignton at half past five if we hear nothing to alter my plans."

"You will. This isn't going to spoil your holiday, after all."

"What is it going to do, I wonder?" thought Brendon. But he said no more and prepared to

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go on his way. It was now three o'clock. Suddenly he turned and asked Halfyard a question.

"What do you think of Mrs. Pendean, inspector?"

"I think two things about her," answered the elder. "I think she's such a lovely piece that it's hard to believe she's just flesh and blood, like other women; and I think I never saw such worship for a man as she had for her husband. This will knock her right bang out."

These opinions made the detective melancholy; but he had not yet begun to reflect on how the passing of a dearly loved husband would change the life of Mrs. Pendean. He suddenly felt himself thrust out of the situation forever, yet resented his own conviction as irrational.

"What sort of a man was he?"

"A friendly fashion of chap—Cornish—a pacifist at heart I reckon; but we never talked war politics."

"What was his age?"

"Couldn't tell you—doubtful—might have been anything between twenty-five and thirty-five. A man with weak eyes and a brown beard. He wore double eye-glasses for close work, but his long sight he said was good."

After a meal Brendon went again to Mrs. Pendean; but many rumours had reached her through the morning and she already knew most of what he had to tell. A change had come over her; she was very silent and very pale. Mark knew that she had grasped the truth and knew that her husband must probably be dead.

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She was, however, anxious to learn if Brendon could explain what had happened.

"Have you ever met with any such thing before?" she asked.

"No case is quite like another. They all have their differences. I think that Captain Redmayne, who has suffered from shell shock, must have been overtaken by loss of reason. Shell shock often produces dementia of varying degrees—some lasting, some fleeting. I'm afraid your uncle went out of his mind and, in a moment of madness, may have done a dreadful thing. Then he set out, while he was still insane, to cover up his action. So far as we can judge, he took away his victim and meant apparently to throw him into the sea. I feel only too sure that your husband has lost his life, Mrs. Pendean. You must be prepared to accept that unspeakable misfortune."

"It is hard to accept," she answered, "because they were good friends again."

"Something of which you do not know may have cropped up between them to upset Redmayne. When he comes to his senses, he will probably think the whole thing an evil dream. Have you a portrait of your husband?"

She left the room and returned in a few moments with a photograph. It presented a man of meditative countenance, wide forehead, and steadfast eyes. He wore a beard, mustache and whiskers, and his hair was rather long.

"Is that like him?"

"Yes; but it does not show his expression. It

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is not quite natural—he was more animated than that.''

"How old was he?''

"Not thirty, Mr. Brendon, but he looked considerably older.''

Brendon studied the photograph.

"You can take it with you if you wish to do so. I have another copy,'' said Mrs. Pendean.

"I shall remember very accurately,'' answered Brendon. "I am tolerably certain that poor Mr. Pendean's body was thrown into the sea and may already be recovered. That appears to have been Captain Redmayne's purpose. Can you tell me anything about the lady to whom your uncle is engaged?''

"I can give you her name and address. But I have never seen her.''

"Had your husband seen her?''

"Not to my knowledge. Indeed I can say certainly that he never had. She is a Miss Flora Reed and she is stopping with her mother and father at the Singer Hotel, Paignton. Her brother, my uncle's friend in France, is also there I believe.''

"Thank you very much. If I hear nothing further, I go to Paignton this evening.''

"Why?''

"To pursue my inquiry and see all those who know your uncle. It has puzzled me a little that he has not already been found, because a man suffering from such an upset of mind could make no successful attempt to evade a professional search for long. Nor, so far as we know, has he

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apparently attempted to escape. After going to Berry Head early this morning, he returned to his lodgings, ate a meal, left his motor bicycle. and then went out again—still in his tweed suit with the red waistcoat."

"You'll see Flora Reed?"

"If necessary; but I shall not go if Robert Redmayne has been found."

"You think it is all very simple and straightforward, then?"

"So it appears. The best that one can hope is that the unfortunate man may come back to his senses and give a clear account of everything. And may I ask what you design to do and if it is in my power to serve you personally in any way?"

Jenny Pendean showed surprise at this question. She lifted her face to Brendon's and a slight warmth touched its pallor.

"That is kind of you," she said. "I will not forget. But when we know more, I shall probably leave here. If my husband has indeed lost his life, the bungalow will not be finished by me. I shall go, of course."

"May I hope that you have friends who are coming forward?"

She shook her head.

"As a matter of fact I am much alone in the world. My husband was everything—everything. And I was everything to him also. You know my story—I told you all there was to tell this morning. There remain to me only my father's two brothers—Uncle Bendigo in England, and

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Uncle Albert in Italy. I wrote them both to-day."

Mark rose.

"You shall hear from me to-morrow," he said, "and if I do not go to Paignton, I will see you again to-night."

"Thank you—you are very kind."

"Let me ask you to consider yourself and your own health under this great strain. People can endure anything, but often they find afterwards that they have put too heavy a call on nature, when it comes to pay the bill. Would you care to see a medical man?"

"No, Mr. Brendon—that is not necessary. If my husband should be—as we think, then my own life has no further interest for me. I may end it."

"For God's sake don't allow yourself to speak in that way," said Brendon. "Look forward. If we can no longer be happy in the world, that is not to deny us the power and privilege of being useful in it. Think what your husband would have wished you to do and how he would have expected you to face any great tragedy, or grief."

"You are a good man," said Mrs. Pendean quietly. "I appreciate what you have said. You will see me again."

She took his hand and pressed it. Then he left her, bewildered by the subtle atmosphere that seemed to surround her. He did not fear her threat. There was a vitality and self-command about Mrs. Pendean that seemed to shut out any likelihood of self-destruction. She was young

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and time could be trusted to do its inevitable work. But he perceived the quality of her love for the man who was too certainly destroyed. She might face life, proceed with her own existence, and bring happiness into other lives; but it did not follow that she would ever forget her husband or consent to wed another.

He returned to the police station and was astonished to find that Robert Redmayne continued at large. No news concerning him had been reported; but there came a minor item of information from the searchers at Berry Head. The cement sack had been found in the mouth of a rabbit hole to the west of the Head above a precipice. The sack was bloodstained and contained some small tufts of hair and the dust of cement.

An hour later Mark Brendon had packed a bag and started in a police motor car for Paignton; but there was no more to be learned when he arrived. Inspector Reece shared Brendon's surprise that Redmayne had not been arrested. He explained that fishermen and coast guards were dragging the sea, as far as it was possible to do so, beneath the cliff on which the sack had been found; but the tide ran strongly here and local men suspected the current might well have carried a body out to sea. They judged that the corpse would be found floating within a mile or two of the Head in a week's time, if no means had been taken to anchor it at the bottom.

Brendon called at Robert Redmayne's lodgings after he had eaten some supper at the

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Singer Hotel. There he had taken a room, that he might see and hear something of the vanished man's future wife and her family. At No. 7 Marine Terrace the landlady, a Mrs. Medway, could say little. Captain Redmayne was a genial, kind-hearted, but hot-headed gentleman, she told Mark. He was irregular in his hours and they never expected him until they saw him. He often thus returned from excursions after the household was gone to bed. She did not know at what hour he had come back on the previous night, or at what hour he had gone out again; but he had not changed his clothes or apparently taken anything away with him.

Brendon examined the motor bicycle with meticulous care. There was a rest behind the saddle made of light iron bars, and here he detected stains of blood. A fragment of tough string tied to the rest was also stained. It had been cut—no doubt when Redmayne cast his burden loose on reaching the cliffs. Nothing offered any difficulty in the chain of circumstantial evidence, nor did another morning furnish further problems save the supreme and sustained mystery of Robert Redmayne's continued disappearance.

Brendon visited Berry Head before breakfast on the following day and examined the cliff. It fell in broad scales of limestone, whereon grew thistles and the white rock-rose, sea pinks and furze. Rabbits dwelt here and the bloodstained sack had been discovered by a dog. It was thrust into a hole, but the terrier had easily reached it and dragged it into light.

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Immediately beneath the spot, the cliffs fell starkly into the sea—a drop of three hundred feet. Beneath was deep water and only an occasional cleft or cranny broke the face of the shining precipice, where green things made shift to live and the gulls built their rough nests with scurvy grass. No sign marked the cliff edge, but beneath, on the green sea, were boats from which fishermen still dredged for the dead. This work, long continued, had yielded no results whatever.

Later in the day Brendon returned to his hotel and introduced himself to Miss Reed and her family to find that her brother, Robert Redmayne's friend, had returned to London. She and her parents were sitting together in the lounge when he joined them. All three appeared to be much shocked and painfully mystified. None could throw any light. Mr. and Mrs. Reed were quiet, elderly people who kept a draper shop in London; their daughter revealed more character. She was a head taller than her father and cast in a generous mould. She exhibited a good deal of manner and less actual sorrow than might have been expected; but Brendon discovered that she had only known Robert Redmayne for half a year and their actual engagement was not of much more than a month's duration. Miss Reed was dark, animated, and commonplace of mind. Her ambition had been to go upon the stage and she had acted on tour in the country; but she declared that theatrical life wearied her and she had promised her future husband to abandon the art.

"Did you ever hear Captain Redmayne speak

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of his niece and her husband?'' Brendon inquired, and Flora Reed answered:

"He did; and he always said that Michael Pendean was a 'shirker' and a coward. He also assured me that he had done with his niece and should never forgive her for marrying her husband. But that was before Bob went to Princetown, six days ago. From there he wrote quite a different story. He had met them by chance and he found that Mr. Pendean had not shirked but done good work in the war and got the O. B. E. After that discovery, Bob changed and he was certainly on the best of terms with the Pendeans before this awful thing happened. He had already made them promise to come here for the regattas.''

"You have neither seen nor heard of the captain since?''

"Indeed, no. My last letter, which you can see, came three days ago. In it he merely said he would be back yesterday and meet me to bathe as usual. I went to bathe and looked out for him, but of course he didn't come.''

"Tell me a little about him, Miss Reed,'' said Mark. "It is good of you to give me this interview, for we are up against a curious problem and the situation, as it appears at present, may be illusive and quite unlike the real facts. Captain Redmayne, I hear, had suffered from shell shock and a breath of poison gas also. Did you ever notice any signs that these troubles had left any mark upon him?''

"Yes,'' she answered. "We all did. My

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mother was the first to point out that Bob often repeated himself. He was a man of great good temper, but the war had made him rough and cynical in some respects. He was impatient, yet, after he quarrelled or had a difference with anybody, he would be quickly sorry; and he was never ashamed to apologize."

"Did he quarrel often?"

"He was very opinionated and, of course, he had seen a good deal of actual war. It had made him a little callous and he would sometimes say things that shocked civilians. Then they would protest and make him angry."

"You cared much for him? Forgive the question."

"I admired him and I had a good influence over him. There were fine things in him—great bravery and honesty. Yes, I loved him and was proud of him. I think he would have become calmer and less excitable and impatient in time. Doctors had told him that he would outgrow all effects of his shock."

"Was he a man you can conceive of as capable of striking or killing a fellow creature?"

The lady hesitated.

"I only want to help him," she answered. "Therefore I say that, given sufficient provocation, I can imagine Bob's temper flaring out, and I can see that it would have been possible to him, in a moment of passion, to strike down a man. He had seen much death and was himself absolutely indifferent to danger. Yes, I can imagine him doing an enemy, or fancied enemy,

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a hurt; but what I cannot imagine him doing is what he is supposed to have done afterwards—evade the consequence of a mistaken act."

"And yet we have the strongest testimony that he has tried to conceal a murder—whether committed by himself, or somebody else, we cannot yet say."

"I only hope and pray, for all our sakes, that you will find him," she replied, "but if, indeed, he has been betrayed into such an awful crime, I do not think you will find him."

"Why not, Miss Reed? But I think I know. What is in your mind has already passed through my own. The thought of suicide."

She nodded and put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Yes; if poor Bob lost himself and then found himself and discovered that he had killed an innocent man in a moment of passion, he would, if I know him, do one of two things—either give himself up instantly and explain all that had happened, or else destroy himself as quickly as he could."

"Motive is not always adequate," Brendon told them. "A swift, passing storm of temper has often destroyed a life with no more evil intent than a flash of lightning. In this case, only such a storm seems to be the explanation. But how a man of the Pendean type could have provoked such a storm I have yet to learn. So far the testimony of Mrs. Pendean and the assurances of Inspector Halfyard at Princetown indicate an amiable and quiet person, slow to

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anger. Inspector Halfyard knew him quite well at the Moss Depôt, where he worked through two years of the war. He was apparently not a man to have infuriated Captain Redmayne or anybody else."

Mark then related his own brief personal experience of Redmayne on the occasion of their meeting by the quarry pools. For some reason this personal anecdote touched Flora Reed and the detective observed that she was genuinely moved by it.

Indeed she began to weep and presently rose and left them. Her parents were able to speak more freely upon her departure.

Mr. Reed indeed, from being somewhat silent and indifferent, grew voluble.

"I think it right to tell you," he said, "that my wife and I never cared much for this engagement. Redmayne meant well and had a good heart I believe. He was free-handed and exceedingly enamoured of Flora. He made violent love from the first and his affection was returned. But I never could see him a steady, married man. He was a rover and the war had made him—not exactly inhuman, but apparently unconscious of his own obligations to society and his own duty, as a reasonable being, to help build up the broken organization of social life. He only lived for pleasure and sport or spending money; and though I do not suggest he would have been a bad husband, I did not see the makings of a stable home in his ideas of the future. He had inherited some forty thousand pounds, but he was

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very ignorant of the value of money and he showed no particular good sense on the subject of his coming responsibilities."

Mark Brendon thanked them for their information and repeated his growing conviction that the subject of their speech had probably committed suicide.

"Every hour which fails to account for him increases my fear," he said. "Indeed it may be a good thing to happen; for the alternative can at best be Broadmoor; and it is a hateful thought that a man who has fought for his country, and fought well, should end his days in a criminal lunatic asylum."

For two days the detective remained at Paignton and devoted all his energy, invention, and experience to the task of discovering the vanished men. But, neither alive nor dead, did either appear, and not a particle of information came from Princetown or elsewhere. Portraits of Robert Redmayne were printed and soon hung on the notice board of every police station in the west and south; but one or two mistaken arrests alone resulted from this publicity. A tramp with a big red mustache was detained in North Devon and a recruit arrested at Devonport. This man resembled the photograph and had joined a line regiment twenty-four hours after the disappearance of Redmayne. Both, however, could give a full account of themselves.

Then Brendon prepared to return to Princetown. He wrote his intention to Mrs. Pendean and informed her that he would visit Station Cot-

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tages on the following evening. It happened, however, that his letter crossed another and his plans were altered, for Jenny Pendean had already left Princetown and joined Mr. Bendigo Redmayne at his house, "Crow's Nest," beyond Dartmouth. She wrote:

"My uncle has begged me to come and I was thankful to do so. I have to tell you that Uncle Bendigo received a letter yesterday from his brother, Robert. I begged him to let me send it to you instantly, but he declines. Uncle Bendigo is on Captain Redmayne's side I can see. He would not, I am sure, do anything to interfere with the law, but he is convinced that we do not know all there is to be told about this terrible thing. The motor boat from 'Crow's Nest' will be at Kingswear Ferry to meet the train reaching there at two o'clock to-morrow and I hope you may still be at Paignton and able to come here for a few hours."

She added a word of thanks to him and a regret that his holiday was being spoiled by her tragedy.

Whereupon the man's thoughts turned to her entirely and he forgot for a while the significance of her letter. He had expected to see her that night at Princetown. Instead he would find her far nearer, in the house on the cliffs beyond Dartmouth.

He telegraphed presently that he would meet the launch. Then he had leisure to be annoyed that the letter from Robert Redmayne was thus delayed. He speculated on Bendigo Redmayne.

"A brother is a brother," he thought, "and no doubt this old sailor's home would offer a very efficient hiding-place for any vanished man."

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CHAPTER IV

A CLUE

A MOTOR boat lay off Kingswear Ferry when Mark Brendon arrived. The famous harbour was new to him and though his mind found itself sufficiently occupied, he still had perception disengaged and could admire the graceful river, the hills towering above the estuary, and the ancient town lying within their infolding and tree-clad slopes. Dominating all stood the Royal Naval College, its great masses of white and red masonry breaking the blue sky.

A perfect little craft awaited him. She was painted white and furnished with teak. Her brasses and machinery glittered; the engines and steering wheel were set forward, while aft of the cabins and saloon an awning was rigged over the stern. The solitary sailor who controlled the launch was in the act of furling this protection against the sun as Mark descended to the water; and while the man did so, Brendon's eyes brightened, for a passenger already occupied the boat: a woman sat there and he saw Jenny Pendean.

She wore black and he found, as he leaped aboard and greeted her, that her mourning attire was an echo to her heart. That had happened

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which convinced the young wife that all hope must be abandoned; she knew that she was a widow, for the letter in her uncle's possession told her so. She greeted the detective kindly and was glad that he had responded to her invitation, but Mark soon found that her attitude of mind had changed. She now exhibited an extreme listlessness and profound melancholy. He told her that a letter from himself had gone to her at Princetown and he asked her for information respecting the communication received from Captain Redmayne; but she was not responsive.

"My uncle will tell you what there is to tell," she said. "It appears that your original suspicion has proved correct. My husband has lost his precious life at the hands of a madman."

"Yet it seems incredible, Mrs. Pendean, that such an afflicted creature, if alive, should still be evading the general search. Can you tell me from where this letter came? We ought to have heard of it instantly."

"So I told my Uncle Bendigo."

"Is he sure that it really does come from his brother?"

"Yes; there is no doubt about that. The letter was posted in Plymouth. But please do not ask me about it, Mr. Brendon. I do not want to think of it."

"I hope you are keeping well; and I know you are being brave."

"I am alive," she said, "but my life has none the less ended."

"You must not think or feel so. Let me say a

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thing that comforted me in the mouth of another when I lost my mother. It was an old clergyman who said it. 'Think what the dead would wish and try to please them.' It doesn't sound much; but if you consider, it is helpful."

The boat was speedy and she soon slipped out between the historic castles that stood on either bank of the entrance to the harbour.

Mrs. Pendean spoke.

"All this loveliness and peace seem to make my heart more sore. When people suffer, they should go where nature suffers too—to bleak, sad regions."

"You must occupy yourself. You must try to lose yourself in work—in working your fingers to the bone if need be. There is nothing like mental and physical toil at a time of suffering."

"That is only a drug. You might as well drink, or take opium. I wouldn't run away from my grief if I could. I owe it to the dead."

"You are not a coward. You must live and make the world happier for your life."

She smiled for the first time—a flicker, that lightened her beauty for a moment and quickly died.

"You are good and kind and wise," she answered. Then she changed the subject and pointed to the man in the bows. He sat upright with his back to them at the wheel forward. He had taken off his hat and was singing very gently to himself, but hardly loud enough to be heard against the drone of the engines. His song was from an early opera of Verdi.

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"Have you noticed that man?"

Mark shook his head.

"He is an Italian. He comes from Turin but has worked in England for some time. He looks to me more Greek than Italian—not modern Greek but from classical times—the times I used to study as a schoolgirl. He has a head like a statue."

She called to the boatman.

"Stand out a mile or so, Doria," she said. "I want Mr. Brendon to see the coast line."

"Aye, aye, ma'am," he answered and altered their course for the open sea.

He had turned at Jenny Pendean's voice and shown Mark a brown, bright, clean-shorn face of great beauty. It was of classical contour, but lacked the soulless perfection of the Greek ideal. The Italian's black eyes were brilliant and showed intelligence.

"Giuseppe Doria has a wonderful story about himself," continued Mrs. Pendean. "Uncle Ben tells me that he claims descent from a very ancient family and is the last of the Dorias of—I forget—some place near Ventimiglia. My uncle thinks the world of him; but I hope he is as trustworthy and as honest in character as he is handsome in person."

"He certainly might be well born. There is distinction, quality, and breeding about his appearance."

"He is clever, too—an all-round sort of man, like most sailors."

Brendon admired the varied charms of the

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Dartmouth coast, the bluffs and green headlands, the rich, red sandstone cliffs, and pearly precipices of limestone that rose above the tranquil waters. The boat turned west presently, passed a panorama of cliffs and little bays with sandy beaches, and anon skirted higher and sterner precipices, which leaped six hundred feet aloft.

Perched among them like a bird's nest stood a small house with windows that blinked out over the Channel. It rose to a tower room in the midst, and before the front there stretched a plateau whereon stood a flagstaff and spar, from the point of which fluttered a red ensign. Behind the house opened a narrow coomb and descended a road to the dwelling. Cliffs beetled round about it and the summer waves broke idly below and strung the land with a necklace of pearl. Far beneath the habitation, just above high-tide level, a strip of shingle spread, and above it a sea cave had been turned into a boathouse. Hither came Brendon and his companion.

The motor launch slowed down and presently grounded her bow on the pebbles. Then Doria stopped the engine, flung a gangway stage ashore, and stood by to hand Jenny Pendean and the detective to the beach. The place appeared to have no exit; but, behind a ledge of rock, stairs carved in the stone wound upward, guarded by an iron handrail. Jenny led the way and Mark followed her until two hundred steps were climbed and they stood on the terrace above. It was fifty yards long and covered with sea gravel. Two little brass cannon thrust their muzzles over the para-

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pet to seaward and the central space of grass about the flagpole was neatly surrounded with a decoration of scallop shells.

"Could anybody but an old sailor have created this place?" asked Brendon.

A middle-aged man with a telescope under his arm came along the terrace to greet them. Bendigo Redmayne was square and solid with the cut of the sea about him. His uncovered head blazed with flaming, close-clipped hair and he wore also a short, red beard and whiskers growing grizzled. But his long upper lip was shaved. He had a weather-beaten face—ruddy and deepening to purple about the cheek bones—with eyebrows, rough as bent grass, over deep-set, sulky eyes of reddish brown. His mouth was underhung, giving him a pugnacious and bad-tempered appearance. Nor did his looks appear to libel the old sailor. To Brendon, at any rate, he showed at first no very great consideration.

"You've come I see," he said, shaking hands. "No news?"

"None, Mr. Redmayne."

"Well, well! To think Scotland Yard can't find a poor soul that's gone off his rocker!"

"You might have helped us to do so," said Mark shortly, "if it's true that you've had a letter from your brother."

"I'm doing it, ain't I? It's here for you."

"You've lost two days."

Bendigo Redmayne grunted.

"Come in and see the letter," he said. "I never thought you'd fail. It's all very terrible

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indeed and I'm damned if I understand anything about it. But one fact is clear: my brother wrote this letter and he wrote it from Plymouth; and since he hasn't been reported from Plymouth, I feel very little doubt the thing he wanted to happen has happened."

Then he turned to his niece.

"We'll have a cup of tea in half an hour, Jenny. Meantime I'll take Mr. Brendon up to the tower room along with me."

Mrs. Pendean disappeared into the house and Mark followed her with the sailor.

They passed through a square hall full of various foreign curiosities collected by the owner. Then they ascended into a large, octagonal chamber, like the lantern of a lighthouse, which surmounted the dwelling.

"My lookout," explained Mr. Redmayne. "In foul weather I spend all my time up here and with yonder strong, three-inch telescope I can pick up what's doing at sea. A bunk in the corner, you see. I often sleep up here, too."

"You might almost as well be afloat," said Brendon, and the remark pleased Bendigo.

"That's how I feel; and I can tell you there's a bit of movement, too, sometimes. I never wish to see bigger water than beat these cliffs during the south-easter last March. We shook to our keel, I can tell you."

He went to a tall cupboard in a corner, unlocked it and brought out a square, wooden desk of old-fashioned pattern. This he opened and produced a letter which he handed to the detective.

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Brendon sat down in a chair under the open window and read this communication slowly. The writing was large and sprawling; it sloped slightly upward from left to right across the sheet and left a triangle of white paper at the right-hand bottom corner:

"DEAR BEN: It's all over. I've done in Michael Pendean and put him where only Judgment Day will find him. Something drove me to do it; but all the same I'm sorry now it's done—not for him but myself. I shall clear to-night, with luck, for France. If I can send an address later I will. Look after Jenny—she's well rid of the blighter. When things have blown over I may come back. Tell Albert and tell Flo. Yours,

"R. R."

Brendon examined the letter and the envelope that contained it.

"Have you another communication—something from the past I can compare with this?" he asked.

Bendigo nodded.

"I reckoned you'd want that," he answered and produced a second letter from his desk.

It related to Robert Redmayne's engagement to be married and the writing was identical.

"And what do you think he's done, Mr. Redmayne?" Brendon asked, pocketing the two communications.

"I think he's done what he hoped to do. At this time of year you'll see a dozen Spanish and Brittany onion boats lying down by the Barbican at Plymouth, every day of the week. And if poor Bob got there, no doubt plenty of chaps would

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hide him when he offered 'em money enough to make it worth while. Once aboard one of those sloops, he'd be about as safe as he would be anywhere. They'd land him at St. Malo, or somewhere down there, and he'd give you the slip."

"And, until it was found out that he was mad, we might hear no more about him."

"Why should it be found that he was mad?" asked Bendigo. "He was mad when he killed this innocent man, no doubt, because none but a lunatic would have done such an awful thing, or been so cunning after—with the sort of childish cunning that gave him away from the start. But once he'd done what this twist in his brain drove him to do, then I judge that his madness very likely left him. If you caught him to-morrow, you'd possibly find him as sane as yourself—except on that one subject. He'd worked up his old hatred of Michael Pendean, as a shirker in the war, until it festered in his head and poisoned his mind, so as he couldn't get it under. That's how I read it. I had a pretty good contempt for the poor chap myself and was properly savage with my niece, when she wedded him against our wishes; but my feeling didn't turn my head, and I felt glad to hear that Pendean was an honest man, who did the best he could at the Moss Depôt."

Brendon considered.

"A very sound view," he said, "and likely to be correct. On the strength of this letter, we may conclude that when he went home, after disposing of the body under Berry Head, your brother must have disguised himself in some way and taken

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an early train from Paignton to Newton Abbot and from Newton Abbot to Plymouth. He would already have been there and lying low before the hunt began."

"That's how I figure it," answered the sailor.

"When did you last see him, Mr. Redmayne?"

"Somewhere about a month ago. He came over for the day with Miss Reed—the young woman he was going to marry."

"Was he all right then?"

Bendigo considered and scratched in his red beard.

"Noisy and full of chatter, but much as usual."

"Did he mention Mr. and Mrs. Pendean?"

"Not a word. He was full up with his young woman. They meant to be married in late autumn and go abroad for a run to see my brother Albert."

"He may correspond with Miss Reed if he gets to France?"

"I can't say what he'll do. Suppose you catch him presently? How would the law stand? A man goes mad and commits a murder. Then you nab him and he's as sane as a judge. You can't hang him for what he did when he was off his head, and you can't shut him up in a lunatic asylum if he's sane."

"A nice problem, no doubt," admitted Brendon, "but be sure the law will take no risks. A homicidal maniac, no matter how sane he is between times, is not going to run loose any more after killing a man."

"Well, that's all there is to it, detective. If I

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hear again, I'll let the police know; and if you take him, of course you'll let me and his brother know at once. It's a very ugly thing for his family. He did good work in the war and got honours; and if he's mad, then the war made him mad."

"That would be taken very fully into account, be sure. I'm sorry, both for him and for you, Mr. Redmayne."

Bendigo looked sulkily from under his tangled eyebrows.

"I shouldn't feel no very great call to give him up to the living death of an asylum, if he hove in here some night."

"You'd do your duty—that I will bet," replied Brendon.

They descended to the dining-room, where Jenny Pendean was waiting to pour out tea. All were very silent and Mark had leisure to observe the young widow.

"What shall you do and where may I count upon finding you if I want you, Mrs. Pendean?" he asked presently.

She looked at Redmayne, not at Brendon, as she answered.

"I am in Uncle Bendigo's hands. I know he will let me stop here for the present."

"For keeps," the old sailor declared. "This is your home now, Jenny, and I'm very glad to have you here. There's only you and your Uncle Albert and me now, I reckon, for I don't think we shall ever see poor Bob again."

An elderly woman came in.

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"Doria be wishful to know when you'll want the boat," she said.

"I should like it immediately if possible," begged Brendon. "Much time has been lost."

"Tell them to get aboard, then," directed Brendigo, and in five minutes Mark was taking his leave.

"I'll let you have the earliest intimation of the capture, Mr. Redmayne," he said. "If your poor brother still lives, it seems impossible that he should long be free. His present condition must be one of great torment and anxiety—to him—and for his own sake I hope he will soon surrender or be found—if not in England, then in France."

"Thank you," answered the older man quietly. "What you say is true. I regret the delay myself now. If he is heard of again by me, I'll telegraph to Scotland Yard, or get 'em to do so at Dartmouth. I've slung a telephone wire into the town as you see."

They stood again under the flagstaff on the plateau, and Brendon studied the rugged cliff line and the fields of corn that sloped away inland above it. The district was very lonely and only the rooftree of a solitary farmhouse appeared a mile or more distant to the west.

"If he should come to you—and I have still a fancy that he may do so—take him in and let us know," said Brendon. "Such a necessity will be unspeakably painful, I fear, but I am very sure you will not shrink from it, Mr. Redmayne."

The rough old man had grown more amiable during the detective's visit. It was clear that a

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natural aversion for Brendon's business no longer extended to the detective himself.

"Duty's duty," he said, "though God keep me from yours. If I can do anything, you may trust me to do it. He's not likely to come here, I think; but he might try and get over to Albert down south. Good-bye to you."

Mr. Redmayne went back to the house, and Jenny, who stood by them, walked as far as the top of the steps with Brendon.

"Don't think I bear any ill will to this poor wretch," she said. "I'm only heartbroken, that's all. I used to declare in my foolishness that I had escaped the war. But no—it is the war that has killed my dear, dear husband—not Uncle Robert. I see that now."

"It is all to the good that you can be so wise," answered Mark quietly. "I admire your splendid patience and courage, Mrs. Pendean, and—and—I would do for you, and will do, everything that wit of man can."

"Thank you, kind friend," she replied. Then she shook his hand and bade him farewell.

"Will you let me know if you leave here?" he asked.

"Yes—since you wish it."

They parted and he ran down the steps, scarcely seeing them. He felt that he already loved this woman with his whole soul. The tremendous emotion swept him, while reason and common sense protested.

Mark leaped aboard the waiting motor boat and they were soon speeding back to Dartmouth, while

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Doria spoke eagerly. But the passenger felt little disposed to gratify the Italian's curiosity. Instead he asked him a few questions respecting himself and found that the other delighted to discuss his own affairs. Doria revealed a southern levity and self-satisfaction that furnished Brendon with something to think about before the launch ran to the landing-stage at Dartmouth.

"How comes it you are not back in your own country, now the war is over?" he asked Doria.

"It is because the war is over that I have left my own country, signor," answered Giuseppe. "I fought against Austria on the sea; but now—now Italy is an unhappy place—no home for heroes at present. I am not a common man. I have a great ancestry—the Doria of Dolceaqua in the Alpes Maritimes. You have heard of the Doria?"

"I'm afraid not—history isn't my strong suit."

"On the banks of the River Nervia the Doria had their mighty castle and ruled the land of Dolceaqua. A fighting people. There was a Doria who slew the Prince of Monaco. But great families—they are like nations—their history is a sand hill in the hour-glass of time. They arise and crumble by the process of their own development. Si! Time gives the hour-glass a shake and they are gone—to the last grain. I am the last grain. We sank and sank till only I remain. My father was a cab driver at Bordighera. He died in the war and my mother, too, is dead. I have no brothers, but one sister. She disgraced herself and is, I hope, now dead also. I know her

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not. So I am left, and the fate of that so mighty family lies with me alone—a family that once reigned as sovereign princes."

Brendon was sitting beside the boatman in the bows of the launch, and he could not but admire the Italian's amazing good looks. Moreover there were mind and ambition revealed in him, coupled with a frank cynicism which appeared in a moment.

"Families have hung on a thread like that sometimes," said Mark; "the thread of a solitary life. Perhaps you are born to revive the fortunes of your race, Doria?"

"There is no 'perhaps.' I am. I have a good demon who talks to me sometimes. I am born for great deeds. I am very handsome—that was needful; I am very clever—that, too, was needful. There is only one thing that stands between me and the ruined castle of my race at Dolceaqua—only one thing. And that is in the world waiting for me."

Brendon laughed.

"Then what are you doing in this motor launch?"

"Marking the time. Waiting."

"For what?"

"A woman—a wife, my friend. The one thing needful is a woman—with much money. My face will win her fortune—you understand. That is why I came to England. Italy has no rich heiresses for the present. But I have made a false step here. I must go among the élite, where there

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is large money. When gold speaks, all tongues are silent."

"You don't deceive yourself?"

"No—I know what I have to market. Women are very attracted by the beauty of my face, signor."

"Are they?"

"It is the type—classical and ancient—that they adore. Why not? Only a fool pretends that he is less than he is. Such a gifted man as I, with the blood of a proud and a noble race in his veins —everything to be desired—romance—and the gift to love as only an Italian loves—such a man must find a very splendid, rich girl. It is only a question of patience. But such a treasure will not be found with this old sea wolf. He is not of long descent. I did not know. I should have seen him and his little mean hole first before coming to him. I advertise again and get into a higher atmosphere."

Brendon found his thoughts wholly occupied with Jenny Pendean. Was it within the bounds of possibility that she, as time passed to dim her sufferings and sense of loss, might look twice at this extraordinary being? He wondered, but thought it improbable. Moreover the last of the Dorias evidently aimed at greater position and greater wealth than Michael Pendean's widow had to offer. Mark found himself despising the extraordinary creature, who violated so frankly and cheerfully every English standard of reserve and modesty. Yet the other's self-possession and

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sense of his own value in the market impressed him.

He was glad to give Doria five shillings and leave him at the landing-stage. But none the less Giuseppe haunted his imagination. One might dislike his arrogance, or rejoice in his physical beauty, but to escape his vitality and the electric force of him was impossible.

Brendon soon reached the police station and hastened to communicate with Plymouth, Paignton, and Princetown. To the last place he sent a special direction and told Inspector Halfyard to visit Mrs. Gerry at Station Cottages and make a careful examination of the room which Robert Redmayne had there occupied.

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CHAPTER V

ROBERT REDMAYNE IS SEEN

A SENSE of unreality impressed itself upon Mark Brendon after this stage in his inquiry. A time was coming when the false atmosphere in which he moved would be blown away by a stronger mind and a greater genius than his own; but already he found himself dimly conscious that some fundamental error had launched him along the wrong road—that he was groping in a blind alley and had missed the only path leading toward reality.

From Paignton on the following morning he proceeded to Plymouth and directed a strenuous and close inquiry. But he knew well enough that he was probably too late and judged with certainty that if Robert Redmayne still lived, he would no longer be in England. Next he returned to Princetown, that he might go over the ground again, even while appreciating the futility of so doing. But the routine had to be observed. The impressions of naked feet on the sand were carefully protected. They proved too indefinite to be distinguished, but he satisfied himself that they represented the footprints of two men, if not three. He remembered that Robert Redmayne had spoken of bathing in the pools and he strove to

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prove three separate pairs of feet, but could not.

Inspector Halfyard, who had followed the case as closely as it was possible to do so, cast all blame on Bendigo, the brother of the vanished assassin.

"He delayed of set purpose," vowed Halfyard, "and them two days may make just all the difference. Now the murderer's in France, if not Spain."

"Full particulars have been circulated," explained Brendon, but the inspector attached no importance to that fact.

"We know how often foreign police catch a runaway," he said.

"This is no ordinary runaway, however. I still prefer to regard him as insane."

"In that case he'd have been taken before now. And that makes what was simple before more and more of a puzzle in my opinion. I don't believe that the man was mad. I believe he was and is all there; and that being so, you've got to begin over again, Brendon, and find why he did it. Once grant that this was a deliberately planned murder and a mighty sight cleverer than it looked at first sight, then you've got to ferret back into the past and find what motives Redmayne had for doing it."

But Brendon was not convinced.

"I can't agree with you," he answered. "I've already pursued that theory, but it is altogether too fantastic. We know, from impartial testimony, that the men were the best of friends up to the moment they left Princetown together on

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Redmayne's motor bicycle the night of the trouble."

"What impartial testimony? You can't call Mrs. Pendean's evidence impartial."

"Why not? I feel very certain that it is; but I'm speaking now of what I heard at Paignton from Miss Flora Reed, who was engaged to Robert Redmayne. She said that her betrothed wrote indicating his complete change of opinion; and he also told her that he had asked his niece and her husband to Paignton for the regattas. What is more, both Miss Reed and her parents made it clear that the soldier was of an excitable and uncertain nature. In fact Mr. Reed didn't much approve of the match. He described a man who might very easily slip over the border line between reason and unreason. No, Halfyard, you'll not find any theory to hold water but the theory of a mental breakdown. The letter he wrote to his brother quite confirms it. The very writing shows a lack of restraint and self-control."

"The writing was really his?"

"I've compared it with another letter in Bendigo Redmayne's possession. It's a peculiar fist. I should say there couldn't be a shadow of doubt."

"What shall you do next?"

"Get back to Plymouth again and make close inquiries among the onion boats. They go and come and I can trace the craft that left Plymouth during the days that immediately followed the posting of Redmayne's letter. These will probably be back again with another load in a week or two. One ought to be able to check them."

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"A wild-goose chase, Brendon."

"Looks to me as though the whole inquiry had been pretty much so from the first. We've missed the key somewhere. How the man that left Paignton in knickerbockers, and a big check suit and a red waistcoat on the morning after the murder got away with it and never challenged a single eye on rail or road—well, it's such a flat contradiction to reason and experience that I can't easily believe the face value."

"No—there's a breakdown somewhere—that's what I'm telling you; but whether the fault is ours, or a trick has been played to put us fairly out of the running, no doubt you'll find out soon or late. I don't see there's anything more we can do up here whether or no."

"There isn't," admitted Mark. "It's all been routine work and a devil of lot of time wasted in my opinion. Between ourselves, I'm rather ashamed of myself, Halfyard. I've missed something—the thing that most mattered. There's a signpost sticking up somewhere that I never saw."

The inspector nodded.

"It happens so sometimes—cruel vexing—and then people laugh at us and ask how we earn our money. Now and again, as you say, there's a danger signal to a case so clear as the nose on a man's face, and yet, owing to following some other clue, or sticking to a theory that we feel can and must be the only right one, we miss the real, vital point till we go and bark our shins on it. And then, perhaps, it's too late and we look silly."

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Brendon admitted the truth of this experience.

"There can only be two possible situations," he said; "either this was a motiveless murder—and lack of motive means insanity; or else there was a deep reason for it and Redmayne killed Pendean, after plotting far in advance to do so and get clear himself. In the first case he would have been found, unless he had committed suicide in some such cunning fashion that we can't discover the body. In the second case, he's a very cute bird indeed and the ride to Paignton and disposal of the corpse—that all looked so mad—was supercraft on his part. But, if alive, mad or sane, I'm of opinion he did what he said in his letter to his brother he meant to do, and got off for a French or Spanish port. So that's the next step for me—to try and hunt down the boat that took him."

He pursued this policy, left Princetown for Plymouth on the following day, took a room at a sailors' inn on the Barbican and with the help of the harbour authority followed the voyages of a dozen small vessels which had been berthing at Plymouth during the critical days.

A month of arduous work he devoted to this stage of the inquiry, and his investigation produced nothing whatever. Not a skipper of any vessel involved could furnish the least information and no man resembling Robert Redmayne had been seen by the harbour police, or any independent person at Plymouth, despite sharp watchfulness.

A time came when the detective was recalled to London and heartily chaffed for his failure;

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but his own unusual disappointment disarmed the amusement at his expense. The case had presented such few apparent difficulties that Brendon's complete unsuccess astonished his chief. He was content, however, to believe Mark's own conviction: that Robert Redmayne had never left England but destroyed himself—probably soon after the dispatch of his letter to Bendigo from Plymouth.

Much demanded attention and Brendon was soon devoting himself to a diamond robbery in the Midlands. Months passed, the body of Michael Pendean had not been recovered, and the little world of Scotland Yard pigeon-holed the mystery, while the larger world forgot all about it.

Meantime, with a sense of secret relief, Mark Brendon prepared to face what had sprung out of these incidents, while permitting the events themselves to pass from his present interests. There remained Jenny Pendean and his mind was deeply preoccupied with her. Indeed, apart from the daily toll of work, she filled it to the exclusion of every other personal consideration. He longed unspeakably to see her again, for though he had corresponded during the progress of his inquiries and kept her closely informed of everything that he was doing, the excuse for these communications no longer existed. She had acknowledged every letter, but her replies were brief and she had given him no information concerning herself, or her future intentions, though he had asked her to do so. One item of information only had she vouchsafed and he learned that she was finishing

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the bungalow to her husband's original plan and then seeking a possible customer to take over her lease. She wrote:

"I cannot see Dartmoor again, for it means my happiest as well as my most unhappy hours. I shall never be so happy again and, I hope, never suffer so unspeakably as I have during the recent past."

He turned over this sentence many times and considered the weight of every word. He concluded from it that Jenny Pendean, while aware that her greatest joys were gone forever, yet looked forward to a time when her present desolation might give place to a truer tranquility and content.

The fact that this should be so, however, astonished Brendon. He judged her words were perhaps ill chosen and that she implied a swifter return to peace than in reality would occur. He had guessed that a year at least, instead of merely these four months, must pass before her terrible sorrow could begin to dim. Indeed he felt sure of it and concluded that he was reading an implication into this pregnant sentence that she had never intended it to carry. He longed to see her and was just planning how to do so, when chance offered an opportunity.

Brendon was called to arrest two Russians, due to arrive at Plymouth from New York upon a day in mid-December; and having identified them and testified to their previous activities in England, he was free for a while. Without sending any

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warning, he proceeded to Dartmouth, put up there that night, and started, at nine o'clock on the following morning, to walk to "Crow's Nest."

His heart beat hard and two thoughts moved together in it, for not only did he intensely desire to see the widow, but also had a wish to surprise the little community on the cliff for another reason. Still some vague suspicion held his mind that Bendigo Redmayne might be assisting his brother. The idea was shadowy, yet he had never wholly lost it and more than once contemplated such a surprise visit as he was now about to pay.

Suspicion, however, seemed to diminish as he ascended great heights west of the river estuary; and when within the space of two hours he had reached a place from which "Crow's Nest" could be seen, perched between the cliff heights and a grey, wintry sea, nothing but the anticipated vision of the woman held his mind.

He came ignorant of the startling events awaiting him, little guessing how both the story of his secret dream and the chronicle of the quarry crime were destined to be advanced by great incidents before the day was done.

His road ran over the cliffs and about him swept brown and naked fields under the winter sky. Here and there a mewing gull flew overhead and the only sign of other life was a ploughman crawling behind his horses with more sea fowl fluttering in his wake. Brendon came at last to a white gate facing on the highway and found that he had reached his destination. Upon the gate "Crow's

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Nest'' was written in letters stamped upon a bronze plate, and above it rose a post with a receptacle for holding a lamp at night. The road to the house fell steeply down and, far beneath, he saw the flagstaff and the tower room rising above the dwelling. A bleakness and melancholy seemed to encompass the spot on this sombre day. The wind sighed and sent a tremor of light through the dead grass; the horizon was invisible, for mist concealed it; and from the low and ash-coloured vapour the sea crept out with its monotonous, myriad wavelets flecked here and there by a feather of foam.

As he descended Brendon saw a man at work in the garden setting up a two-foot barrier of woven wire. It was evidently intended to keep the rabbits from the cultivated flower beds which had been dug from the green slope of the coomb.

He heard a singing voice and perceived that it was Doria, the motor boatman. Fifty yards from him Mark stood still, and the gardener abandoned his work and came forward. He was bare-headed and smoking a thin, black, Tuscan cigar with the colours of Italy on a band round the middle of it. Giuseppe recognized him and spoke first.

"It is Mr. Brendon, the sleuth! He has come with news for my master?"

"No, Doria—no news, worse luck; but I was this way—down at Plymouth again—and thought I'd look up Mrs. Pendean and her uncle. Why d'you call me sleuth'?"

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"I read story-books of crime in which the detectives are 'sleuths.' It is American. Italians say 'sbirro,' England says 'police officer.'"

"How is everybody?"

"Everybody very well. Time passes; tears dry; Providence watches."

"And you are still looking for the rich woman to restore the last of the Dorias to his castle?"

Giuseppe laughed, then he shut his eyes and sucked his evil-smelling cigar.

"We shall see as to that. Man proposes, God disposes. There is a god called Cupid, Mr. Brendon, who overturns our plans as yonder ploughshare overturns the secret homes of beetle and worm."

Mark's pulses quickened. He guessed to what Doria possibly referred and felt concern but no surprise. The other continued.

"Ambition may succumb before beauty. Ancestral castles may crumble before the tide of love, as a child's sand building before the sea. Too true!"

Doria sighed and looked at Brendon closely. The Italian stood in a tight-fitting jersey of brown wool, a very picturesque figure against his dark background. The other had nothing to say and prepared to descend. He guessed what had happened and was concerned rather with Jenny Pendean than the romantic personality before him. But that the stranger could still be here, exiled in this lonely spot, told him quite as much as the man's words. He was not chained to "Crow's Nest" with his great ambitions in abey-

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ance for nothing. Mark, however, pretended to miss the significance of Giuseppe's confession.

"A good master—eh? I expect the old sea wolf is an excellent friend when you know his little ways."

Doria admitted it.

"He is all that I could wish and he likes me, because I understand him and make much of him. Every dog is a lion in his own kennel. Redmayne rules; but what is the good of a home to a man if he does not rule? We are friends. Yet, alas, we may not be for long—when——"

He broke off abruptly, puffed a villainous cloud of smoke, and went back to his wire netting. But he turned a moment and spoke again as Brendon proceeded.

"Madonna is at home," he shouted and Mark understood to whom he referred.

He had reached "Crow's Nest" in five minutes and it was Jenny Pendean who welcomed him.

"Uncle's in his tower," she said. "I'll call him in a minute. But tell me first if there is anything to tell. I am glad to see you—very!"

She was excited and her great, misty blue eyes shone. She seemed more lovely than ever.

"Nothing to report, Mrs. Pendean. At least—no, nothing at all. I've exhausted every possibility. And you—you have nothing, or you would have let me hear it?"

"There is nothing," she said. "Uncle Ben would most certainly have told me if any news had reached him. I am sure that he is dead—Robert Redmayne."

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"I think so too. Tell me a little about yourself, if I may venture to ask?"

"You have been so thoughtful for me. And I appreciated it. I'm all right, Mr. Brendon. There is still my life to live and I find ways of being useful here."

"You are contented, then?"

"Yes. Contentment is a poor substitute for happiness; but I am contented."

He longed to speak intimately, yet had no excuse for doing so.

"How much I wish it was in my power to brighten your content into happiness again," he said.

She smiled at him.

"Thank you for such a friendly wish. I am sure you mean it."

"Indeed I do."

"Perhaps I shall come to London some day, and then you would befriend me a little."

"How much I hope you will—soon."

"But I am dull and stupid still. I have great relapses and sometimes cannot even endure my uncle's voice. Then I shut myself up. I chain myself like a savage thing, for a time, till I am patient again."

"You should have distractions."

"There are plenty—even here, though you might not guess it. Giuseppe Doria sings to me and I go out in the launch now and then. I always travel to and fro that way when I have to visit Dartmouth for Uncle Ben and for the house-

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hold provisions. And I am to have chickens to rear in the spring."

"The Italian——"

"He is a gentleman, Mr. Brendon—a great gentleman, you might say. I do not understand him very well. But I am safe with him. He would do nothing base or small. He confided in me when first I came. He then had a dream to find a rich wife, who would love him and enable him to restore the castle of the Doria in Italy and build up the family again. He is full of romance and has such energy and queer, magnetic power that I can quite believe he will achieve his hopes some day."

"Does he still possess this ambition?"

Jenny was silent for a moment. Her eyes looked out of the window over the restless sea.

"Why not?" she asked.

"He is, I should think, a man that women might fall in love with."

"Oh, yes—he is amazingly handsome and there are fine thoughts in him."

Mark felt disposed to warn her but felt that any counsel from him would be an impertinence. She seemed to read his mind, however.

"I shall never marry again," she said.

"Nobody would dare to ask you to do so—nobody who knows all that you have been called to suffer. Not for many a long day yet, I mean," he answered awkwardly.

"You understand," she replied and took his hand impulsively. "There is a great gulf I think

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fixed between us Anglo-Saxons and the Latins. Their minds move far more swiftly than ours. They are more hungry to get everything possible out of life. Doria is a child in many ways; but a delightful, poetical child. I think England rather chills him; yet he vows there are no rich women in Italy. He longs for Italy all the same. I expect he will go home again presently. He will leave Uncle Ben in the spring—so he confides to me; but do not whisper it, for my uncle thinks highly of him and would hate to lose him. He can do everything and anticipates our wishes and whims in the most magical way."

"Well, I must not keep you any longer."

"Indeed you are not doing that. I am very, very glad to see you, Mr. Brendon. You are going to stop for dinner? We always dine in the middle of the day."

"May I?"

"You must. And tea also. Come up to Uncle Bendigo now. I'll leave you with him for an hour. Then dinner will be ready. Giuseppe always joins us. You won't mind?"

"The last of the Doria! I've probably never shared a meal with such high company!"

She led him up the flight of stairs to the old sailor's sanctum.

"Mr. Brendon to see us, Uncle Ben," she said, and Mr. Redmayne took his eye from the big telescope.

"A blow's coming," he announced. "Wind's shifted a point to southward. Dirty weather already in the Channel."

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He shook hands and Jenny disappeared. Bendigo was pleased to see Brendon, but his interest in his brother had apparently waned. He avoided the subject of Robert Redmayne, though he revealed other matters in his mind which he approached with a directness that rather astonished the detective.

"I'm a rough bird," he said, "but I keep my weather peeper open, and I didn't find it difficult to see, when you were here in the summer, that my fine niece took your fancy. She's the sort, apparently, that makes men lose their balance a bit. For my part I never had any use for a woman since I was weaned, and have always mistrusted the creatures, seeing how many of my messmates ran on the rocks over 'em. But I'm free to grant that Jenny has made my house very comfortable and appears to feel kindly to me."

"Of course she does, Mr. Redmayne."

"Hold on till I've done. At this minute I'm in sight of a very vexatious problem; because my right hand—Giuseppe Doria—has got his eyes on Jenny; and though he's priceless as a single man and she's invaluable as a single woman, if the beggar gets round her and makes her fall in love with him presently, then they'll be married next year and that's good-bye to both of 'em!"

Mark found himself a good deal embarrassed by this confidence.

"In your place," he said, "I should certainly drop Dloria a pretty clear hint. What is good form in Italy he knows better than we do, or ought to, seeing he's a gentleman; but you can

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tell him it's damned bad form to court a newly made widow—especially one who loved her husband as your niece did, and who has been separated from him under such tragic circumstances."

"That's all right; and if there was only one in it I might do so; though for that matter I'm afraid Doria isn't going to stop here much longer in any case. He doesn't say so, but I can see it's only Jenny who is keeping him. You've got to consider her too. I'm not going to say she encourages the man or anything like that. Of course she doesn't. But, as I tell you, I'm pretty wide awake and it's no good denying that she can endure his company without hurting herself. He's a handsome creature and he's got a way with him, and she's young."

"I rather thought he was out for money—enough money to reëstablish the vanished glories of his race."

"So he was and, of course, he knows he can't do that with Jenny's twenty thousand; but love casts out a good many things besides fear. It blights ambition—for the time being anyway—and handicaps a man on every side in the race for life. All Doria wants now is Jenny Pendean, and he'll get her if I'm a judge. I wouldn't mind too much either, if they could stop along with me and go on as we're going; but of course that wouldn't happen. As it is Doria has come to be a friend. He does all he's paid to do and a lot more; but he's more a guest than a servant and I shall miss him like the devil when he goes."

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"It's hard to see what you can do, Mr. Redmayne."

"So it is. I don't wish to come between my niece and her happiness, and I can't honestly say that Doria wouldn't be a good husband, though good husbands are rare everywhere and never rarer than in Italy, I believe. He might change his mind after they'd been wed a year and hanker for his ambitions again and money to carry them out. Jenny will have plenty some day, for there's poor Bob's money sooner or late, I suppose, and there'll be mine and her Uncle Albert's so far as I know. But, taking it by and large, I'd a good bit sooner it didn't happen. I'll tell you these things because you're a famous man, with plenty of credit for good sense."

"I appreciate the confidence and can return a confidence," answered Brendon after a moment's reflection. "I do admire Mrs. Pendean. She is, of course, amazingly beautiful, and she has a gracious and charming nature. With such distinction of character you may rest assured that nothing will happen yet a while. Your niece will be faithful to her late husband's memory for many a long month, if not forever."

"I believe that," answered Bendigo. "We can mark time, I don't doubt, till the turn of the year or maybe longer. But there it is: they are thrown together every day of their lives and, though Jenny would hide it very carefully from me, and probably from herself also as far as she could, I guess he's going to win out."

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Brendon said no more. He was cast down and did not hide the fact.

"Mind you, I'd much prefer an Englishman," admitted the sailor; "but there's nobody to make any running in these parts. Giuseppe's got it all his own way." Then he left the subject. "No news, I suppose, of my poor brother?"

"None, Mr. Redmayne."

"I'd pinned my faith that the whole horrid thing might be capable of explanation along some other lines. But the blood was proved to be human?"

"Yes."

"Another secret for the sea, then, as far as Pendean is concerned. And as for Robert, only doomsday will tell where his bones lie."

"I also feel very little doubt indeed that he is dead."

A few minutes later a gong sounded from beneath and the two men descended to their meal. It was Giuseppe Doria who did the talking while they ate a substantial dinner. He proved a great egotist and delighted to relate his own picturesque ambitions, though he had already confessed that these ambitions were modified.

"We are a race that once lorded it over western Italy," he declared. "Midway inland, between Ventimiglia and Bordighera, is our old fastness beneath the mountains and beside the river. An ancient bridge like a rainbow still spans Nervia, and the houses climb up the hills among the vines and olives, while frowning down upon all things is the mighty ruin of the Doria's

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castle—a great ghost from the past. In the midst of all the human business and bustle, removed by a century from the concerns of men, it stands, hollow and empty, with life surging round about, like the sea on the precipices below us. The folk throng everywhere—the sort of humble people who of old knelt hatless to my ancestors. The base born wander in our chambers of state, the villagers dry their linen on our marble floors, children play in the closets of great counsellors, bats flutter through the casements where princesses have sat and hoped and feared!

"My people," he continued, "have sunk through many a stage and very swiftly of late. My grandfather was only a woodman, who brought charcoal from the mountains on two mules; my uncle grew lemons at Mentone and saved a few thousand francs for his wife to squander. Now I alone remain—the last of the line—and the home of the Doria has long stood in the open market.

"With the fortress also goes the title—that is our grotesque Italian way. A pork butcher or butter merchant might become Count Doria to-morrow if he would put his hand deep enough in his pocket. But salvation lies this way: that though the property and title are cheap, to restore the ruin and make all magnificent again would demand a millionaire."

He chattered on and after dinner lighted another of his Tuscan cigars, drank a liqueur of some special brandy Mr. Redmayne produced in honour of Brendon, and then left them.

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They spoke of him, and Mark was specially interested to learn Jenny's attitude; but she gave no sign and praised Giuseppe only for his voice, his versatility, and good nature.

"He can turn his hand to anything," she said. "He was going fishing this afternoon; but it is too rough, so he will work in the garden again."

She hoped presently that Doria would find a rich wife and reach the summit of his ambitions. It was clear enough that he did not enter into any of Mrs. Pendean's calculations for her own future. But Jenny said one thing to surprise her listener while still speaking of the Italian.

"He doesn't like my sex," she declared. "In fact he makes me cross sometimes with his scornful attitude to us. He's as bad as Uncle Ben, who is a very hard-hearted old bachelor. He says, 'Women, priests, and poultry never have enough.' But I say that men are far greedier than women, and always were."

The sailor laughed and they went out upon the terrace for a time where soon the early dusk began to fall. The storm had not yet developed and there was a fierce and fiery light over the west at sunset while a tremendous wind blew the sky almost clear for a time. When the Start lighthouse opened a white, starry eye over the deepening purple of the sea, and heavy waves beat below them in hollow thunder, they returned to the house and Mr. Redmayne showed Brendon curiosities. They drank tea at five o'clock and an hour later the detective went on his way. A general invitation had been extended to him and

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the old sailor expressly declared that it would give him pleasure to receive Mark as a guest at any time. It was a suggestion that tempted Brendon not a little.

"You've done a wonderful thing," said Jenny, as she saw him to the outer gate. "You've quite won my uncle, and really that's a feat."

"Would it bore you if I fell in with his proposal and came down for a few days after Christmas?" he asked, and she assured him that it would give her pleasure.

Heartened a little he went his way, but the wave of cheerfulness set flowing by her presence soon ebbed again. He felt full of suspicion and half believed her indifference regarding Doria to be assumed. He guessed that she would be jealous to give no sign until the days of her mourning were numbered, but he felt a melancholy conviction that when another summer was passed, Jenny Pendean would take a second husband.

He debated the wisdom of presently returning to "Crow's Nest" and felt a strong inclination to do so. Little guessing that he would be there again on the morrow, he determined to remind Bendigo Redmayne of his invitation in early spring. By that time much might have happened, for he intended to correspond with Jenny, or at any rate take the first step in a correspondence.

The moon had risen as he pursued his lonely road and it shone clear through a gathering scud that threatened soon to overwhelm the silver light. Clouds flew fast and, above Brendon's

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head, telegraph wires hummed the song of a gathering storm. The man's thoughts proceeded as irregularly as the fitful and shouting wind. He weighed each word that Jenny had said and strove to understand each look that she had given him.

He tried to convince himself that Bendigo Redmayne's theory must, after all, be false, and he assured himself that by no possibility could the widow of Michael Pendean ever lose her sad heart to this stranger from Italy. The idea was out of the question, for surely a woman of such fine mould, so suddenly and tragically bereaved, would never find in this handsome chatterbox, throbbing with egotism, any solace for sorrow, or promise for future contentment. In theory his view seemed sound. Yet he knew, even while he reflected, that love in its season may shatter all theories and upset even the most consistent of characters.

Still deep in thought Brendon tramped on; and then, where the road fell between a high bank to the windward side and a pine wood on the other, he experienced one of the greatest surprises that life had yet brought him.

At a gate, which hung parallel with the road and opened into the depth of a copse behind, there stood Robert Redmayne.

The five-barred gate alone separated them and the big man lolled over it with his arms crossed on the topmost bar. The moonlight beat full into his face, and overhead the pines uttered a harsh and sullen roar as the wind surged over them; while from far below the shout of an angry

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sea upon the cliffs was carried upward. The red man stood motionless, watchful. He wore the tweed clothes, cap and red waistcoat that Brendon well remembered at Foggintor; the moonlight flashed on his startled eyes and showed his great mustache and white teeth visible beneath it. There was dread upon his face and haggard misery, yet no madness.

It seemed that he kept a tryst there; but it had not been Mark Brendon that he expected. For a moment he stared as the detective stopped and confronted him. He appeared to recognize Mark, or at any rate regard him as an enemy, for instantly he turned, plunged into the woods behind him, and disappeared. In a moment he had vanished and the riot of the storm hid all sounds of his panic flight.

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CHAPTER VI

ROBERT REDMAYNE IS HEARD

For some moments Mark stood motionless with his eyes on the moonlit gate and the forest gloom behind it. There rhododendron and laurel made dense evergreen cover beneath the pines and offered inviolable shelter. To follow Robert Redmayne was vain and also dangerous, for in such a spot it might easily happen that the hunter would lie at the mercy of the hunted.

This sudden apparition bewildered Brendon, for it argued much beyond itself. Surely it indicated treachery and falsehood among those he had just left at "Crow's Nest," for it was a coincidence almost inconceivable that on this day of his chance visit, the wanted man should suddenly reappear in the neighbourhood of his brother's house. Yet collusion seemed impossible, for Mark had given no notice to Bendigo Redmayne of his coming.

Brendon asked himself if he had suffered a hallucination, but he knew that his rational mind was not constituted to create ghosts from within. Imagination he had, but therein was a source of strength, not weakness, and no grain of superstition weakened his mental endowment. He knew also that no one had been farther from his

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thoughts than Robert Redmayne at the moment of his sudden appearance. No, he had seen a living man and one who certainly would not willingly have revealed himself.

He had not the least intention of ignoring his discovery and was quite prepared to arrest Robert Redmayne, even under his brother's roof if necessary; but he desired first to hear Jenny Pendean upon the subject before seeking the assistance of the Dartmouth police. He felt that she would not deceive him, or answer a direct appeal with a lie. And then there flashed upon him the painful conviction that she must already have lied to him; for if Redmayne were living concealed at "Crow's Nest," all the household, including Doria and the solitary woman servant, would assuredly be in the secret.

Supposing Jenny begged him to hold his hand and spare Robert Redmayne, would he then be justified in keeping his discovery to himself? Some men might have built up a personal hope upon this possibility and seen themselves winning to the summit of their ambition by bending to the widow's will; but Mark did not confound the thoughts of duty and love nor did he even dream that success in one might depend upon neglect of the other. He had only to raise the question to answer it, and he swiftly determined that not Jenny, or her Uncle Bendigo, or anybody on earth should prevent him from securing Robert Redmayne on the following day if it came within his power to do so. Indeed he felt little doubt that this would happen. For that night there

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was no hurry. He slept well after an unusual amount of exercise and emotion; and he rose late. He was dressing at half past eight when there came a chambermaid to the door.

"There's a gentleman must see you this instant moment, please, sir," she said. "He's by the name of Mr. Doria and he comes from Captain Redmayne out over at 'Crow's Nest.'

Not sorry that his day's work might now be simplified, Mark bade the girl summon his visitor, and in two minutes Giuseppe Doria appeared.

"I was clever to find you," he said, "for we only knew that you were stopping in Dartmouth to-night, but we did not know where. Yet I guessed you would choose the best hotel and I guessed rightly. I will eat my breakfast with you, if you please, and tell you why I am here. The thing was to catch you if we could before you went away. I am glad that I was in time."

"So Robert Redmayne, the murderer of Michael Pendean, has turned up?" asked Brendon, finishing his shaving; and Doria showed astonishment.

"Corpo di Bacco! How did you know that?" he asked.

"I saw him on my way home," replied Mark. "I had already seen him, before the tragedy on Dartmoor, and I remembered him. What is more, I'm not sure that he didn't remember me."

"We are in fear," continued Doria. "He has not been yet to his brother, but he is near."

"How can you tell that he is near, if he has not yet been to his brother?"

"Thus we know it. I go every morning early

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to Strete Farm on the hills above us for milk and butter. I go this morning and they have an ugly story. Last night a man entered Strete Farm and took food and drink. The farmer hears him and comes upon him sitting eating in the kitchen —a big man with a red head and a red mustache and a red waistcoat. The man, when he sees Mr. Brook—that is the farmer—he bolts through the back kitchen by which he has come. Mr. Brook knows nothing of the man and he tells me of his adventure, and then I go home to tell padron mio—my master.

"When I describe this man, Mr. Redmayne and Madonna nearly have a fit between them. They recognize him—he is the assassin! They think instantly of you and bid me take my bicycle and ride here at my best speed to catch you, if it may be done before you go. I succeed, but I cannot stay with you; I must return to keep guard. I do not like to feel there is nobody there. My old sea wolf is not frightened of the sea, but I think he is a little frightened of his brother. And Mrs. Jenny—she is very frightened indeed."

"Come to breakfast," said Mark, whose toilet was now completed. "I'll get a motor in a quarter of an hour and run out as quick as may be."

They swallowed a hasty meal and Giuseppe displayed growing excitement. He begged Brendon to bring other policemen with him, but this Mark declined to do.

"Plenty of time for that," he said. "We may catch him easy enough. I shall do nothing until I have seen Mr. Bendigo at 'Crow's Nest' and

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heard his views. If Robert Redmayne is breaking into houses for food he must be at the end of his tether.''

By nine o'clock the Italian had started homeward, and as soon as he was gone, Brendon went to the police station, borrowed a revolver and a pair of handcuffs, hinted at his business, and ordered a police car to be ready as quickly as possible. A constable drove him and before setting out he told the local chief of police, one Inspector Damarell, to await a message over the telephone in the course of the morning. He enjoined strictest secrecy for the present.

Mark overtook and passed Doria on his way home. The storm had nearly blown itself out and the morning was clear and cold. Beneath the cliffs a big sea rolled, but it was fast going down.

Any suspicion that the inhabitants of Bendigo's home were seeking to create false impressions left Brendon's mind, when he stood before Jenny and her uncle. The former was nervous and the latter beyond measure puzzled. There was now little doubt that Robert Redmayne must be the man who broke into Strete Farm for food, since Mark's experience of the previous night tended to confirm the fact. He had seen Redmayne some hours before the fugitive alarmed the household at Strete. Where was he now and why had he come hither? All suspected that the unfortunate man had probably returned from France or Spain, and now lay hid close at hand, waiting for a safe opportunity to see the old sailor.

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"Your brother has probably got his eye on the house," said Brendon, "and is considering how to approach you, Mr. Redmayne, without risking his own safety."

"There's only one he'll trust, I reckon, and that's me," declared Bendigo. "If he knew that Jenny means him no harm, he might trust her, too, but he may not believe that she's good Christian enough to forgive him. And anyway I guess he don't know she's with me. I'm talking as though he was sane, but I doubt it."

Mark, who had studied Mr. Redmayne's large government survey map of the district, suggested an immediate search over the most likely regions in the neighbourhood.

"I think of you and Mrs. Pendean," he explained. "You don't want hue and cry again and all the past brought up once more. If we can get to him without calling in the police, then so much the better. The man must be in extreme want. His face, as I saw it, was harrowed and tormented. He has probably reached a mental condition of tension and torture in which he will not be sorry to find himself among friendly and understanding fellow creatures. There are two districts which especially suggest themselves to me to search in: the shore, where there are many caves and crevices above sea level safe from observation; and the dense woods into which he plunged when I came suddenly upon him last night. I examined them on my way out this morning. They appear to be very extensive, but they are traversed by drives for sportsmen and

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you can look up and down these drives for many hundred yards.''

Mr. Redmayne summoned Doria who had now reached home again.

"Can the launch go to sea?'' he asked. Giuseppe considered that she might. Bendigo then submitted a proposition.

"I'm asking that you'll let this search go on quietly and privately for another twenty-four hours,'' he said. "Then, if we fail to round him up in a friendly way, so to say, you must, of course, turn the constabulary out and hunt him down. To-day we can go over the places you name and I reckon you've hit the most likely burrows for the poor man. I dare say, if we sat tight and did nothing at all, we might find him creeping here to me after dark pretty soon; but we'll act as you advise and see if the shore or the woods show any sign.

"There's us three who know who he is—Jenny and me and you; and I'd propose that my niece goes down the coast in the motor boat with Giuseppe. They can cruise away to the west, where there's an easy landing here and there at little coves, and they may sight my brother poking about, or hid in some hole down that way. There are caves with tunnels aft that give on the rough lands and coombs behind. It's a pretty lone region and he couldn't hang on long there or find food for his belly. They can try that for a few hours and we'll go up aloft. Or else I'll take you in the boat and they can hunt round Black Woods —whichever you like.''

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Brendon considered. He inclined to the belief that the hunted man might sooner trust the woods than the coast. Moreover he knew himself an indifferent sailor and perceived that the motor boat could not promise a very even keel in the great swell that followed the storm.

"If Mrs. Pendean doesn't mind the weather and there is no shadow of danger to the launch, then I advise that your niece goes down the coast and has a look into the caves as you propose," he said. "No doubt Doria can be trusted to see sharply after her. Meantime we will quarter the wood. If we could only get into touch with the man, it might be possible to secure him without making any noise."

"There must be a noise if we catch him," declared Doria. "He is a famous criminal and who ever runs him to his earth and pulls him out will make a noise and receive great praise."

He prepared for the coming voyage of discovery and, within half an hour, the motor boat danced out from beneath "Crow's Nest"; then she held a course to the westward, rolling indeed, but not enough to trouble Jenny who sat in the stern and kept a pair of strong Zeiss glasses fixed upon the cliffs and shore. They were soon reduced to a white speck under the misty weather; and after they had gone, Bendigo, in a sailor's pea-jacket and cap, lighted a pipe, took a big black-thorn stick, and set off beside Mark. The police car still stood on the road and, both entering it, they soon reached the gate beside which Robert Redmayne had appeared on the previous

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night. There they left the motor and entered Black Woods together.

Bendigo still talked of his niece and continued to do so. It was a subject on which the other proved very willing to listen.

"She's at the parting of the ways now," declared Jenny's uncle. "I can see her mind working. I grant she loved her husband dearly enough and he made a pretty deep mark on her character, for she's different from what she was as a girl. But there's very little doubt that Doria's growing awful fond of her—and when that sort loves a woman he generally finds she's not unwilling to meet him halfway. I believe now that my niece can't help caring for the man, but all the time she's secretly ashamed of herself—yes, heartily ashamed—for finding another in her mind only six months after the death of Pendean."

Mark asked a question.

"When you say that her husband altered his wife's character, in what way did he do so?"

"Well—he taught her sense I reckon. You'd never think now, would you, that she was a red Redmayne—one of us—short of temper, peppery, fiery? But she was, as a youngster. Her father had the Redmayne qualities more developed than any of us and he handed 'em down. She was a wilful thing—plucky and fond of mischief. Her school fellows thought the world of her because she laughed at discipline; and from one school she got expelled for some frolics. That was the girl I remembered when Jenny came back to me

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a widow. And so I see that Michael Pendean, what ever else he was, evidently had the trick character to learn her a bit of sense and patience."

"It may be natural development of years and experience, combined with the sudden, awful shock of her husband's death. These things would unite to tone her down and perhaps break her spirit, if only for a time."

"True. But she's not a sober-sided woman for all her calm. She was too full of the joy of life for Pendean, or any man, to empty it all out of her in four years. He may have been one of the Wesleyan sort, like such a lot of the Cornish; he may have been a kill-joy, too; but whether he was or not, he hadn't quite converted her in the time, and what I'm seeing now, I judge, is the young woman slowly coming back to herself under the influence of this Latin chap. He's cunning, too. He knows how to tickle her vanity, for even she has got a bit of womanly conceit in her, though less vain of her wonderful face no woman could be. But Doria has taken good care to hint his ambition is well lost for love; he's dropped it very cleverly no doubt and already made her see which way he's steering. He's put Jenny before the dollars and the dreams of the castle down south. In a word, if I'm not a greenhorn, he'll ask her to marry him as soon as a year is told and he can touch the subject decently."

"And you think she will accept him, Mr. Redmayne?"

"At present I'd take long odds about it; but

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he's a volatile devil and may change by that time."

Then Bendigo in his turn asked a question.

"We found no will among my poor brother's papers, and of course he's had no access to his money since this bad business. How he's lived all the time only he himself knows. But suppose the worst happens presently and he's found to be a lunatic, what becomes of his stuff?"

"It would ultimately go to you and your brother."

They tramped the wood and fell in with a gamekeeper, who greeted the trespassers none too amiably. But on learning their errand and receiving a description of the fugitive, he bade them go where they pleased and himself promised to keep a sharp watch. He had two mates and would warn them; and he understood the importance of preserving strict silence concerning the fugitive until more should be known.

But it was not to Brendon and Robert Redmayne's brother that any information came. Their hunt produced neither sign nor clue of the man they sought, and after three hours of steady tramping, which covered all the ground and exhausted Bendigo, they returned in the motor car to "Crow's Nest."

News of direct importance awaited them, and Bendigo proved correct in his suspicion that the wanted man might have chosen the coast. Jenny had not only seen Robert Redmayne but had reached him; and she returned very distressed and somewhat hysterical, while Doria, having

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done great things in the matter, was prepared to brag about them. But he begged Mrs. Pendean, as the heroine of a strange adventure, to tell her story.

She was deeply moved and her voice failed on two or three occasions during the narrative; but the interest of the tale was such that Bendigo lost sight of Jenny.in the picture she now painted of his unfortunate brother. They had sighted Robert Redmayne suddenly from the motor boat.

"We saw him," said Jenny, "about two miles down the coast, sitting not fifty yards from the sea, and he, of course, saw us; but he had no glasses and could not recognize me, as we were more than half a mile from shore. Then Giuseppe suggested landing and so approaching him. The thing was to let me reach him, if possible. I felt no fear of him—excepting the fear that, knowing how he had ruined my life, he might shrink from facing me.

"We ran by, as though we had not observed him; then, getting round a little bluff, so that we were hidden, we went ashore, made fast the boat, and regularly stalked him. There was no mistake. I had, of course, recognized Uncle Robert through the glasses; and now Doria went first and crept along, with me behind him, until we had reached to within twenty-five yards. The poor wretch saw us then and leaped up, but it was too late and Giuseppe reached him in a moment and explained that I came as a friend. Doria was prepared to detain him if he endeavoured to escape, but he did not. Robert Redmayne is worn

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out. He has been through terrible times. He shrank at first and nearly collapsed when I came to him. He went on his knees to me. But I was patient and made him understand that I had not come as an enemy."

"Is he sane?" asked Bendigo.

"He appears to be sane," she answered. "He made no mention of the past and neither spoke of his crime nor of what he has been doing since; but he has altered. He seems a ghost of his former self; his voice has changed from a boom into a whisper; his eyes are haunted. He is thin and full of terror. He made me send Doria out of earshot and then told me that he had only come here to see you. He has been here some days, hidden in one of the caves down the coast westward. He wouldn't tell me where, but no doubt it is near where we found him. He is ragged and wounded. One of his hands ought to be attended to."

"And still you say he behaved like a sane man, Mrs. Pendean?" asked Brendon.

"Yes—except for what seemed an insane fear. And yet fear was natural enough under the circumstances. He feels, poor creature, that he has reached the end of his tether; and even if he is insane and will escape the extreme penalty, he doesn't know that himself. I implored him to come with me in the boat and see Uncle Bendigo and trust to the mercy of his fellow men. I didn't feel a traitor in asking him to do this; for I imagine, though seemingly sane now, he must in reality be mad, since only madness could ex-

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plain the past, and he will be judged accordingly. But he is very suspicious. He thanked me and grovelled horribly to me; but he would not trust either me or Doria, or think of entering the boat. He is all nerves and soon began to fear we were planning an ambush, or otherwise endangering his freedom.

"I asked him, then, to tell me what he wished and how I could help him. He considered and said that if Uncle Bendigo would see him quite alone and swear, before God, not to hinder his departure in any way after they had met, he would come to 'Crow's Nest' to-night after the household was asleep.

"For the moment he wants food and a lamp to light his hiding-place after dark. But before all else, he begs you, Uncle Ben, to let him come and see you quite alone. Then he told us to be gone if we were honest friends. It is left in this way. If you will see him, he will come any hour you mention after midnight. But first you must give your written oath before God that you will have nobody with you, and that you will neither set a trap for him nor seek to detain him. His hope is that you will give him means and clothes, so that he may leave England safely and get to Uncle Albert in Italy. He made us swear not to say where we had found him, and then he indicated a spot where I was to bring your answer in writing before dark. I am to leave a letter at that spot as soon as I can, and go away at once, and he will come and find your directions."

Mr. Redmayne nodded.

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"And at the same time you had better take the poor wretch some food and drink and the lamp. How he has lived for the last six months I cannot understand."

"He has been in France—so he says."

Bendigo did not take long to determine a course of action and Brendon approved his decisions.

"In the first place," declared Robert Redmayne's brother, "the man must be mad, whatever appears to the contrary. This story points to that, and seeing he is still free and has succeeded in existing and avoiding the police in two countries, one can only say that with his madness he has developed amazing cunning too. But, as Jenny reports, he's on his beam ends at last. He knows this house and he knows the way to it. So I'll do this.

"I'll agree to see him to-night—or rather to-morrow morning. I'll bid him come at one o'clock, and he shall find the door open and a light in the hall. He can walk straight in and mount up to me in the tower, and I'll swear the needful oath that he shall see nobody else and be free to go again when he pleases. That will calm him down and give me a chance to study him and try and see where we stand. We might trap him, of course, but I can't lie even to a lunatic."

"There's no reason why you should," said Brendon. "If you feel no personal fear of the man, then you can see him as you suggest. You understand, however, there must be no question of helping him to evade the law, as he wishes?"

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Bendigo nodded.

"I suppose not. I can't turn him on to my brother, Albert, anyway. Albert's a weak, nervous sort of man and he'd have a fit if he thought Robert was coming to seek asylum with him."

"The State must provide his asylum," said Mark. "His future is no longer any question for his relations. The best that we can hope is that he may soon be in a position of security, both for himself and other people. You will do well to see him, give him succour, and hear what he has to say. After that, Mr. Redmayne, if I may advise, you will leave the rest to me."

Bendigo lost no time in writing the desired letter inviting Robert Redmayne to meet him in secret at one o'clock during the coming night and promising the fugitive, on oath, that he should be safe and free to depart again when he desired to do so. But, none the less, he expressed an earnest hope that his brother would stop at "Crow's Nest," and be advised as to his future actions. Some provisions were put into the launch and, with the letter in her pocket, Jenny again set out. She was prepared to go alone, for she could handle the boat as cleverly as Doria himself; but this her uncle would not permit.

It was already growing dusk before she left and Giuseppe drove the little vessel to its limit of speed.

Then Brendon was much surprised. He had been standing under the flagstaff with the master of "Crow's Nest," watching the launch, and when she had vanished westward into a grey, still even-

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ing, Bendigo challenged the detective with a proposition altogether unexpected.

"See here," he said. "I've got a damned, uneasy feeling about meeting my brother single-handed to-night. I can't tell you what it is. I'm not a coward and never shirked duty yet; but frankly I don't much like facing him for this reason. A madman's a madman, and we can't expect a madman to be any too reasonable if we oppose him, however tactfully. I should be powerless if he got off his head, or resented the advice I should have to give him, or went for me—powerless, I mean, to do anything but stop him with a bullet. But if he's got to be stopped that way, I don't want to be the one to do it.

"I've promised to meet him alone and I shan't be telling the poor man a lie, because, if all's straight and he shows no violence, he needn't know anybody else is there. But if I was put into danger, I might tackle him mercifully with somebody to help, whereas if I was alone and he threatened to do me harm, it would very likely mean something I'd rather not think about."

Brendon saw the force of this observation.

"A very reasonable thing indeed," he answered, "and in a case like this, you couldn't blame yourself even if you didn't keep the letter of your promise."

"In the spirit I shall keep it, however. I've sworn to let him come and go again free, and that oath I must keep if he does nothing that forces me to break it."

"You are wise and I quite agree with you,"

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said Mark. "No doubt Doria is a man you can rely upon in every way and he is powerful too."

But Bendigo shook his head.

"No," he answered. "I've left this question until Doria and my niece were out of the way, for a very good reason. I don't want them in this thing more than they are already; and I don't want them, or anybody, to know that I've got a friend hid along with me in the tower when Robert comes. They understand that I am to see him alone; and I've bade them keep out of the way and not show themselves for an instant. What I want up there is you and only you."

Brendon considered.

"I confess the idea occurred to me as soon as we had your brother's offer; but seeing the terms, I couldn't press for it," he said. "Now I agree and, what's more, I think it would be very desirable if nobody—not even the household—knew I was here."

"That can be done. If you send your car away and say you'll report to-morrow, then the police won't trouble us any more till we see what next. You can go up to the tower and get into the big case I keep my flags and odds and ends in. There are holes bored for ventilation at the height of a man's head from the ground, and if you're packed in there, you can see and hear everything and pop out in five seconds if my life is threatened."

Brendon nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "I'm considering what follows. Your brother goes free presently;

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and no doubt Mrs. Pendean will only wait until he is off to come up to you. I can't stop all night in the cupboard."

"It don't matter a button after he's gone," answered Bendigo. "If you tell your car to go, that's all that signifies for the minute. And all anybody but ourselves will believe is that you've gone back to Dartmouth, and won't be here again until to-morrow morning."

Mark fell in with this plan. He dismissed the car and directed that Inspector Damarell should be told to do nothing more until further information reached him. Then, with the old sailor, he climbed to the tower room, inspected the great cupboard, and found that he could follow the course of events very comfortably from within. Holes of the size of a half-penny piece were bored in each door of this erection and, with a three-inch support under his feet, Brendon found his eyes and ears at the needful level.

"The point is to know how I get clear afterward," considered Brendon, returning to the sequel. "As soon as your brother has left the house, it is certain that Mrs. Pendean, probably Doria also, will hasten to know what has happened and what you have determined."

"Afterward nothing matters," repeated Bendigo. "I'll go down to the door with Robert and you can follow me and slip out as soon as he has got clear. Or else you can appear when he has gone and reveal yourself and tell Jenny that it was your own wish to stop without letting anybody know it but myself. That'll be the best way;

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and as soon as she finds you are here, she'll see that you have comfortable quarters for the rest of the night."

Brendon approved of this plan and when the launch returned, her uncle informed Jenny that the detective had left, to make certain inquiries, but would return early on the following morning. She expressed surprise that he had gone but declared that it would in any case have been necessary for him to do so before the fugitive arrived.

"We left the letter, the lamp, and the food and drink exactly where he indicated," she said, "on a forlorn spot, above that ancient, raised beach, where the great boulders are."

Thus the matter was settled. Mark had already taken up his position in the chamber aloft and Bendigo looked to it that he should not be interfered with. It was Mr. Redmayne's custom to keep the tower room locked when not himself in it, and he did so now until the night should come. He supped with Jenny and the Italian, having already provided Brendon with food in his hiding-place. It was understood that the sailor would ascend to his den about eleven o'clock, by which time Mark undertook to be safely hidden in the cupboard.

At the agreed time Doria and his master came up together, the former carrying a light. Jenny also joined them for a short while, but she stayed only ten minutes and then departed to bed. The weather had turned stormy and wet. A shouting wind from the west shook the lantern of the tower room and flung rain heavily against the

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glass, while Bendigo moved restlessly about and bent his brows to look out into the blackness of the night.

"The poor devil will be drowned, or break his neck climbing up from the sea in this darkness," he declared.

Giuseppe had brought up a jug of water, a bottle of spirits, a little keg of tobacco, and two or three clay pipes, for the old sea captain never smoked till after supper and then puffed steadily until he went to bed.

He turned now and asked Doria a question.

"You've cast your peepers over the poor chap to-day," he said, "and you're a clever man and know a bit of human nature. What did you make of my brother?"

"I looked closely and listened also," answered the servant; "and this I think—the man is very sick."

"Not likely to break out again and cut another throat?"

"Never again. I say this. When he killed Madonna's husband, he was mad; now he is not mad—not more mad than anybody else. He craves only one thing—peace."

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CHAPTER VII

BENDIGO lit his pipe and turned to his only book. It was "Moby Dick." Herman Melville's masterpiece had long ago become for the old sailor the one piece of literature in the world. It comprised all that interested him most in this life, and all that he needed to reconcile him to the approach of death and the thought of a future existence beyond the grave. "Moby Dick" also afforded him that ceaseless companionship with great waters which was essential to content.

"Well," he said to Doria, "get you gone. Look round as usual to see that all's snug aloft and below; then turn in. Leave only the light in the hall and the front door on the latch. Did you mark if he had a watch to know the hour?"

"He had no watch, but Mrs. Pendean thought upon that and lent him hers."

Bendigo nodded and pickéd up a clay pipe, while Doria spoke again.

"You feel quite steady in your nerves? You would not like me to lie in readiness to come forward if you want me?"

"No, no—turn in and go to sleep. And no spying, as you're a gentleman. I'll talk reason to

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