



[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER XIII.

After all, it is true that the unexpected always happens. In my unravelling of the Fen inn mystery I never for a moment expected to find that Francis was alive. I was even ignorant that Felix had been to the inn on that night. He had ridden round the back way of the house, and as my room was over the front door I had not heard his arrival. Under these circumstances it was easy for me to make the mistake and think the dead man was Francis, particularly as I was misled by the marvelous resemblance between the brothers, and, moreover, saw the pearl ring on the finger of the corpse. My mistake was a perfectly excusable one, and I had been confirmed in such erroneous belief by the adroit fashion in which Francis, for his own safety, kept up the deception.

"Yes, there is. I'll take the risk of all that. Before Rose Gernon leaves this room she has to confess the truth. It's your only chance of safety." "But you don't believe I killed Felix?" "I don't, but the police may. You forget how highly suspicious all your actions have been. Rose knows you have been passing as your brother and will be sure to make capital out of it." "You'll see me through, Denham?" he said, taking my hand. "You can be sure of that," I answered, shaking it heartily. "I won't rest till you are safe and the murderer of your brother is in jail."

Besides I could not account for my presence in that house without suspicion, so I put on my hat and cloak and fled to Marshminster. "How did you fly?" "There were a trap and horse in which Strent and I had brought provisions to the inn. I harnessed the horse and drove back to Marshminster. There I returned it to the owners and went back to London by the early train." "What became of Strent?" "I don't know. I have never set eyes on him since." "Do you think he killed Felix?" "Yes, I believe they had a row, and he killed him. But he did not admit it." Francis and I looked at one another. The whole business was so queer as to be hardly believable. Nevertheless we saw Rose Gernon had told the truth. "What made you come to me?" asked Francis. "I thought you had escaped from the inn and wished to ask you what had be-



Felix was lying dead by the table.

man, where my brother was staying, and seen him before Olivia." "It's a pity you did not go there," said Merrick thoughtfully. "All this trouble might have then been avoided. Well, how did you get to the Fen inn?" "I took the train from London to Starby, hired a horse there and rode to the Fen inn." "How far is it from Starby to the Fen inn?" "About 12 miles." "And from the Fen inn to Marshminster?" "Ten miles." "Much about a muchness," said Merrick. "Did you tell Strent you had ridden from Starby?" "Yes, I had no reason to conceal my movements." "Quite so. Well, according to Rose Gernon, it was your horse Strent took to escape?" "It was. I wonder he did not take the horse of Felix." "For a very simple reason. He knew when the alarm was given that you and Denham would go to Marshminster. Therefore, to hide his trail the better, he went back with your horse to Starby." "Do you think so?" "I am sure of it. Go to the livery stable at Starby where you hired your horse, and I am certain you will find it there, restored by Strent." "Well," said I, in no wise satisfied, "suppose we trace him to Starby. That will be of no use. No doubt he took the train there for London." "Very probably," said Merrick coolly, "and waited there for Rose Gernon."

"But she has not seen him since he fled from the inn." "So she says, but it is not true, for all that. When he killed Felix, and the evidence seems to point to him as the murderer, he told Rose to take the gig and go to Marshminster. Then he rode off to Starby and rejoined her in London." "But why should she conceal his movements?" "Because he knows too much about the crime," said Merrick decisively. "Either she did it herself and is afraid of his speaking, or he did it, and she wishes to screen him." "Why should she wish to screen a man who killed her lover?" "I can't answer all questions," said Merrick irritably, "finding himself at a loss. All this is pure theory, but I think it is so. I am certain there is an understanding between Rose and Strent. If that detective watching Rose only knew Strent, I am certain he would catch him paying her a visit." "Why not give the detective a picture of the man?" suggested Francis. "Why not indeed?" I retorted derisively. "Because we haven't got a picture." "I have one at my rooms," said Francis. "Where did you get it?" "I drew it while waiting for Felix at the Fen inn. You know, Denham, I have some skill in catching expressions and watching faces. The fellow struck me as such a smug scoundrel that I penciled a caricature of him while he moved about the dining room. It is not a photograph certainly. Still I think it is sufficiently like him." "Capital," said the doctor, rubbing his hands. "It's a good thing you employed your leisure in that way, Mr. Briarfield. It may do you a great service."

"You think I am in danger?" "I think you stand in a perilous position," replied the doctor gravely. "Your very efforts to preserve your secret and baffle Denham will score against you with the police. And you must tell them all, seeing you know where the body was to be found." "I'll tell them all and do the best I can," said Francis, turning pale, "but Rose can prove I was never out of my room." "No, she can't. Rose went to bed, and for aught she knows you might have come down and quarreled with your brother afterward. Your only chance, Mr. Briarfield, of proving your innocence is to find Strent. If you give that portrait to the detective watching Rose Gernon, I believe you'll lay hands on him, but it's a mere chance." "There is another means of identification," said I. "Strent is lame, so if a lame man calls on Miss Gernon my detective, aided by the picture, will know it is Strent." "Well, go and try my plan," said Merrick, shaking Francis by the hand. "I hope for your sake, Mr. Briarfield, it will be successful." When we left the doctor, Francis looked pale and upset. He was just beginning to realize the predicament in which he stood. I was afraid myself that when all was known he would be arrested. His own actions looked black, though I knew they were done out of pure foolishness. Had he only trusted me at the time, all the trouble would have been averted. As it was, I determined to stand by him to the end. "Cheer up, Briarfield," said I, clapping him on the back. "If Merrick and I solved so much of the mystery, you may be sure we'll find out the rest." "It's the newspapers I'm thinking of," he said ruefully. "If all this foolishness gets into the press, Mrs. Bellin will never let me marry Olivia." "I don't think Mrs. Bellin will have much say in the matter," I answered dryly. "Olivia is not the kind of woman to give up her lover so easily, particularly when she knows the truth. She'll stick to you, as I intend to do. As to the press, you forget that the inquest is at Marshminster, which only possesses a weekly paper. I know the editor and can keep all details out of it. Cheer up."



We saw the detective and gave him the picture drawn by Francis.

- Question. What is politics? Answer. A dirty scramble for office. Q. What is statesmanship? A. Selling interest-bearing bonds for gold to be piled up, not to be used. Q. What is office? A. A position with little work and large salary. Q. What is political economy? A. Tradition handed down by men who believed that the world was flat and that the sun, moon and stars revolved around it. Q. What is a political campaign? A. A wild rush for the hog trough to see who will get the most swill. Q. What is money? A. A tool of oppression. Q. What is law? A. An equal distribution of justice. Q. What is a trust? A. A legalized band of robbers. Q. What is a corporation? A. A legalized institution that makes you pay the freight—that tickles your little finger and squeezes your whole body—a manufacturer of millionaires. Q. What is a railroad? A. A corporation that serves you one day and charges you for ten days. Q. What is a bank? A. Corporation that lives on the interest of what it owes. Q. What is a millionaire? A. A man who has the world by the tail and a down hill pull. Q. What is a poor man? A. A servant of the rich man's dog. Q. What is poverty? A. Hell on earth. Q. What is riches? A. Accumulated plunder. Q. What is society? A. Good clothes and plenty of money. Q. What is anarchy? A. Good laws for the rich and bad ones for the poor. Q. What is civilization? A. An agreement among the rich and strong to rob the poor and weak by legislation, instead of physical force. Q. What is a crank? A. One with a new idea. Q. What is a plutocrat? A. A wealthy thief. Q. What is a politician? A. A man who has the office itch. Q. What is government? A. A lemon squeezer—squeezes the poor for the benefit of the rich. Q. What is "the people"? A. A fellow who consents to be robbed. Q. What is a fool? A. The fellow who votes to be robbed. Q. What is a financier? A. One who can steal without getting the penitentiary. Q. What is a thief? A. A person who steals bread for his starving children. Q. What is an honorable man? A. The fellow who steals a million. Q. What is a pauper? A. One who has to be supported by others. Q. How many kinds of paupers are there? A. Two. Rich and poor. —National Reformer.

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