pearance, of course—their appearance ——'

'I know,' I agreed soothingly; 'I know. Poor things! I've helped to make them.'

The Bishop looked puzzled.

'The garments,' I explained—'two afternoons a month. I always said there was no fit in them.'

'It is not, perhaps, the lack of fit, so much as—as——'

'Of fitness,' I suggested.

He bowed assent.

'By the way, there is a steamer,' he remarked suddenly, 'which leaves Liverpool—I could have traced it for you—the first week in October. It is always well to seize time by the forelock; it gives greater choice of accommodation.'

'One always likes that,' I agreed, with a deprecating smile to soften my admission of human weakness.

Miss Delf was close now.

'The fare, in the case of ladies ——'

'And what, Dr. Goofulo, do you think of my little blue orchid?'

Miss Delf was before us, complaisant but inquiring. The moment had become critical. The Bishop smiled—a genial, indulgent smile. Looking at him I saw that in that mood his first words would bring about my downfall.

'The way to the little blue orchid,' I ventured, so meekly as to be a tribute to greatness rather than a piece of effrontery, 'led straight towards the tropics.'

The Bishop chuckled, actually chuckled.

'I trust,' he said, with a courtly bow to me, 'that it will eventually reach them.' I wondered if Miss Delf knew what he was talking about.

''Is Lordship's kerridge, as ordered,' announced Barnes with deference. (He's the school gardener dressed up for the day.)

'Dear me! Dear me! Is it indeed so late?' exclaimed the Bishop. 'Trains, alas! will not wait for us.'

We parted hurriedly, but with effusion. Miss Delf accompanied him across the lawn.

'Three minutes to his carriage,' I mused. 'Will he tell? Two days before I start for Switzerland. I wonder ——. It was rather reckless to begin with a Bishop ——'

'Where are you off?' demanded Penlip Challoner (he's Sybil's brother), intercepting me as I moved towards the house, weighing the consequences.

'Off?' I echoed absently. 'To Zarguzesi—I—believe.'

He took me to the deserted library and gave me claret-cup; he said he thought I needed it.

Perhaps.

It was refreshing; but it was not decorum.

From 'West End.'

A PRETTY BURGLAR.

Yes, there was a noise; a distinct and unmistakable noise. It came from the basement. Sluggishly I turned in my bed and listened. I was still half asleep, and the prospect of getting up to see what was happening annoyed me.

The noise was repeated. It grew louder and more distinct. It was as though furniture was being moved about. Ghosts? Absurd. Burglars? More probable. The dog? Extremely likely. Confound the beast.

I got out of bed and lit the gas. Then I dressed, shiveringly. I looked at the clock. It was 3.30 a.m. and still dark as pitch. I opened the door cautiously. Some one was moving below. I still thought it was the dog.

I crept out on the landing. Of course the floor creaked. Floors always do creak at 3.30 a. m. I peered over the balustrade. That creaked. There was a light below. It came from the dining-room. Something else came from the room also. It was the pop of a soda-water cork. Clearly it was not the dog.

I went back into my room, took my revolver out, put on my overcoat, and went down stairs. Every stair creaked. I paused outside the door of the dining-room, and peered through a crack. A villainous draught showed me that there was a window open. A lighted candle on the mantelpiece flickered. At the table, drinking a whisky-and-soda, was a young woman, plainly dressed in black.

It seemed hardly likely that she was alone. There was sure to be a man about somewhere. So I hesitated to go in.

'Hullo, there,' I shouted, just to see how the land lay.

The young woman lowered her glass, and replied, 'Hullo, there.' Then she added, 'Come in, whoever you are. I'm quite alone.'

I went in. She was tall and slender, and might have been pretty, but her veil was thick, and I could only see a pair of bright eyes.

'You didn't expect to see me?' she said interrogatively.

'What are you doing here?'

I answered her question with another.

'Having a drink. Can't you see?' Really, you must change your wine merchant. This whisky is terrible. But, perhaps,' she added, 'you keep it for burglars. I hope it isn't poisoned,' and she laughed again.

'You are not a burglar?' I said, incredulously noting her neat black gown and nicely dressed fair hair.'

'Fact,' she nodded. 'One must do something nowadays, and burglary on real scientific lines is as good as most things and better than a good many. I've been fairly successful,' she added, 'although I'm only a beginner. Is there anything worth taking here?' she asked in a matter-of-fact tone, 'if everything's the quality of this whisky I don't think I shall trouble to look round. Electro-plate and paste diamonds are not much in my line. In fact, they are very much out of it.'

'There is something worth taking here,' I said.

'Really? Now, what's that?'

'You. And I'm going to take you—in charge. I mean to send for a policeman.'

She laughed gaily.

'Oh, everyone means to do that, but they don't. Why trouble? If I had helped myself to anything it would be all right. But I haven't.'

'You have no right to be here.'

'Who says so? I'll swear you brought me here.'

'Oh, that's your little game. Well, we'll see who'll swear the hardest. But there is such a thing as evidence, you know.'

'Evidence of what?' she asked; and then added quickly, 'Oh, yes, of my version of the case. Suppose I am found in your bedroom, for instance——'

Before I had time to say anything she had passed me, flown up the stairs, entered my bedroom, closed the door, and locked it.

If I left the house to call a policeman she'd escape, and I didn't want to wake the servants. They would be sure to get hold of the wrong end of the stick, and there would be a fine crop of scandals. And when a man's on the point of getting married it is advisable to avoid that sort of thing.

I took a chair upstairs, placed it outside the door, lit a cigarette, and prepared to keep guard until the morning.

It was a curious position, to be locked out of one's bedroom by a lady upon whom I had never set eyes before.

It was bitterly cold. I slipped downstairs, got the whisky, and mixed myself a stiff jorum. I am afraid I fell asleep after that. In fact, I know I did. When I awoke it was daylight, and I was blue with the cold. It took me some moments to collect myself. Then the events of the previous evening came back vividly enough. I tried the bed-room door. It was still locked. Good, I said to myself, the bird has not flown.

I went downstairs, opened the front door, and called a policeman who happened to be just outside. The necessary explanation did not occupy many minutes.

We went upstairs and knocked at the door.

There was no response. We knocked again and again, but with like result.

Then we put our shoulders to the door and forced it open.

The room was empty.

"The window,' exclaimed the constable.

'Impossible,' I said, 'it's too far from the ground for one thing; there is a greenhouse beneath it for another.'

The constable eyed the door.

'You said it was locked inside, Sir, but it wasn't. Here's the key on the floor outside.'

'Then she must have got out while I was asleep. Did you see any one leave the house?'

'Certainly I did, Sir. A young man. About an hour ago. He had a bag and a top 'at. Said the confinement had gone off nicely, so I thought he was a doctor. Didn't know there was any ladies here, though, except Mrs. Highbury, and she's getting on, ain't she, Sir?'

'Young man—dark hair—bag!'

I was fairly puzzled.

The policeman opened the door of the wardrobe and raked out a lot of woman's things, a fair wig, a veil, and other details.

From the hooks above had gone a frock-coat and a pair of trousers.

The confinement had not gone off very nicely, but every bit of jewellery in the room had.