

"A good sailing breeze," Marsden replied. "We might try a whiff as we come back, perhaps. By the way, the kuaiks are beginning to arrive."

"Yes, Miss Marsden called my attention to them to-night."

"That means that you also will migrate shortly."

"Before the end of the month."

"I shall miss you, Mr Haslett. Permit me to say your companionship has been very pleasant to me."

"Thank you. I am by no means glad to go."

"It is 20 years since I looked my last upon England, and 15 of those years have been spent here. You have gathered, perhaps, that I am an educated man."

"Assuredly."

"I gained the highest degrees of my year. I am a Doctor of Science, Senior Wrangler, a Fellow of — College."

The scientist paused with a feeling of shock and amazement, yet he recognized the statements were true. "It has always seemed to me that the light of your daughter's understanding was gathered from no mean source," he said.

"She would be considered an educated girl in any station, I suppose, Mr Haslett?" the elder man said, his step arrested.

"Indoubtedly."

"And with regard to her manners—pardon my continuation of the topic—is there anything of a wild and outlandish nature about them?"

"Not to my eyes. Miss Marsden is in every respect completely charming."

"Was that your first impression?"

"Yes and my last."

The elder man sighed as though some weight had been lifted from his mind and continued on his way in silence. Arrived at the beach, he began an apparently aimless ramble from point to point, Haslett following idly behind. Now and again he paused, looking intently into the shadows, his hand in the pocket of his short coat.

"Why do you carry a revolver, Mr Marsden?" the scientist asked suddenly, in matter-of-fact tones.

The other paused and withdrew his hand guiltily. "I have enemies, Mr Haslett," he replied uneasily.

"Would you use firearms on them?"

"In self-defence—yes."

"May I exhibit the interest of a friend in so surprising a statement?"

It was a long while before any reply came. "I feel moved to tell you the story, Mr Haslett, but I ask myself what good end would be served—unless it were my own momentarily relief in the telling."

"That is a good argument, sir."

"Perhaps."

Neither of the men spoke again, and Mr Marsden, almost immediately, led the way back to the house. Near the door he paused. "I am going to the shed for a few minutes," he said, "but perhaps your walk has been sufficiently extended."

Haslett chose to interpret this into a desire for his company, and joined him.

The shed was a rough building some fourteen feet square, fitted with bunks and sleeping mats. A fire of charcoal smouldered in native fashion in a brazier, and a couple of candles guttered on a small table in the centre. There was a smell of cooking in the air, but the men had finished their meal and were lying down.

Mr Marsden advanced into the building followed by his guest. "Well, gentlemen," he said cheerfully, "is there anything you are in need of? If so, say the word."

The Doctor raised himself and stood up. "Nothing, sir, thank you," he said. "But I am glad you looked in, because there is a matter—a private matter," he added with a glance at Haslett—on which I desire to ask your advice."

Billy Jones coughed and sat up with a look of expectant interest.

"Don't go, Haslett," said his host, as the scientist made a motion to withdraw. "I would rather you remained. This is my friend, Mr Haslett. Doctor; you need have no hesitation in speaking before him. What is the subject?"

"We want to know what is the proper course to pursue in the case of a man who has died while in our company. He was a feeble creature, in the last stage of consumption, but the immediate cause of his death was a sand storm. We were unable to transport his body, but we buried him at a spot which can be found again, and now we desire to know what it is incumbent on us to do in the matter to avert any suspicion which might fall on us on account of his sudden death."

Haslett noticed that the face and hands of his host were twitching nervously.

"What was the man's name?"

"Briggs."

"His appearance?"

"He was a man of about your height, if you will excuse the comparison, not unlike you in feature. But for the effects of a wasting disease he might be said to resemble you."

Marsden seated himself on the edge of a bunk, trembling violently, and for awhile the occupants of the shed regarded one another in silence.

"Dead!" said Marsden at last, in a strained, unnatural voice. "Dead! Where is the evidence?"

"There is no immediate proof, of course; merely my word that it is so. We took nothing from him; we buried him as he was."

"What?" exclaimed Marsden violently, springing to his feet. "You buried him as he was! Man alive, I would have paid you in gold for one atom of evidence that he was dead at last!"

Billy Jones let his feet down to the ground. "Wot would yer give, gurnor?" he asked.

"What not. Fifty, a hundred pounds."

"Then shell out," said the little man, eagerly, "for I've got the blimey evidence in my pocket. Now, you keep your hands off me, Doctor. I'm goin' to wind up this 'ere little affair meself. You've had your eye, now I'm goin' to 'ave mine. I see as Pasty 'ad these 'ere pipers in his pocket, and while you wasn't lookin' I nabbed 'em. Cos w'y? I knoo that they'd be wanted, and there was no sense in buryin' 'em. Dockments with a corp. Pasty set great store by these pipers, gent; many's the time I've seen 'im sortin' of 'em over, like as you mye eye a labour of love. So 'and over the shinies, gurnor, and they're yours."

"I have not such a sum in the house," said Marsden, "but I pledge myself, in the presence of these others, to find you the money, or give you a cheque on my bankers in Auckland. Hand me the documents, I have a right to them. I can establish that right. The man Briggs was my brother."

Billy looked at the impassioned countenance, and covered as though he saw a ghost, but he still clung fast to the little faded bundle, secured with an elastic strap, in his hand.

"Give them up," said the Doctor, sharply.

Billy looked from face to face, and read determination in all of them. "Ere

you are, then, gurnor. I like your word."

"You are safe in doing so," said Marsden, and, taking the packet, walked straight out into the night.

Haslett following, found him waiting at the door of the house. "Pardon my forgetfulness," the elder man said. "The news I have just heard has agitated me greatly, and until it is confirmed I must continue to be a prey to doubts and fears. If you can conceive what freedom must be to one who has been a prisoner, and worse than a prisoner, for twenty long, weary years, you can form an idea of the state of mind with which I receive the first intimation that the evil thing has at length passed from me for ever. Put come inside, and I will tell you what is known to no living soul, saving only my wife and myself."

He led the way into a small room, and, lighting the lamp, invited his visitor to a seat. One end of the apartment was lined with shelves, thickly crowded with books, and towards this the host immediately turned, the scientist watching his movements with curiosity.

First, from the centre of the middle shelf he removed an armful of volumes, disclosing the wooden lining at the back. Next he inserted a knife between the cracks of the boards, until a small portion fell forward, revealing a yellow stained envelope in the receptacle between the lining and the workwood of the house. With this he returned, and, seating himself at the table, drew forth from the unsealed cover an oblong of crisp, white paper, which, after a glance, he passed in silence to his guest.

In silence Haslett examined it. That it was a genuine document he had no doubt, even though the large sum for which the Bank of England note was

drawn, and the necessary rarity of notes for £10,000 might well have aroused suspicion.

"Waste paper, Mr Haslett."

"Yes, I am not highly conversant with commercial matters, but I presume that the absence of these two or three inches at the right-hand bottom corner renders the document entirely valueless."

Marsden inclined his head, and, lifting the soiled packet given him by the cockney, slipped off the elastic band and spread its contents before him. There was one article, a fat packet, carefully secured in a waterproof covering, on which his attention was immediately fixed. With trembling fingers he removed the wrappers and separated the two squares of pasteboard which enclosed the precious content, and from the corner of an old envelope finally drew forth a triangular scrap. For a moment his feelings appeared to overpower him. He put his hand to his throat as though to still some nervous disturbance. Anticipating the finale, the scientist had arisen, and now, with firm finger tips, bending over the seated man, he brought the two portions of the divided note into juxtaposition.

"And now?" asked Marsden, hoarsely.

"The integrity of the Bank of England is beyond question. They received value for that note. They will pay value for it."

"And God is my witness," said Marsden, rising to his feet, "that it is not the wealth which this man's death brings to me which counts with me now. No doubt it must seem to you an awful thing that a man should rejoice in the death of his only brother, but before you charge me, even in thought, with inhumanity, hear my reasons."

He took a few steps up and down the room and continued. "The story, strange

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