

man had been captured. The motor was so silent that it might flash upon him at any moment out of the mist. Any other machine would have given warning of its approach, and the low throb of the engines would have been heard two miles away. But this black monster moved like a ghost, and till its lights flashed suddenly out of the darkness, no man could know how near it was to him.

Jerry had, however, to take his chance, and he set off along the route to Gorehaven. It was the only route open to him. In all directions he was cut off by winding creeks, full almost to the banks, for a spring tide was running up from the sea, and it was nearly high water.

On either side of the road lay two tall banks; beyond them were two strips of marsh land intersected by a thousand tiny channels and gullies. At low tide these were merely narrow ravines of mud, some more than six feet in depth, and some but shallow little gutters, tapering off into a point, losing themselves in thick masses of purple sea lavender. But on this night they were full to the brim with water.

Jerry decided that the open road was too perilous for his purpose, so he climbed a steep bank on the left and descended to the marsh land on the other side of it. A rude pathway ran at the foot. In some places it was overgrown with glasswort, now turning to a mass of crimson spears, in others it was a narrow stretch of mud littered with corks, bottles, scraps of wood and sticks, reeds, and a thousand and one pieces of debris that had drifted up the creek with the tide. The bank was over six feet high, and he was well screened from observation, but the walking was difficult, and he moved slowly on his journey. Every now and then he crawled cautiously to the top of the bank, and peering over the edge looked up and down the road.

A faint wind had risen from the south-west, and the mist was gradually being scattered before it. In half an hour's time he could see nearly a mile in every direction. At the end of an hour he had travelled little more than three miles, but his limbs were still stiff from the ropes that had cut into his flesh and muscles, and he was beginning to be tired of his journey. He lay down on the bank to rest, so that his eyes could scan the long road beyond. The bank was wet with a heavy dew, and so steep that he stood almost upright as he leant against it. But it afforded a certain degree of comfort after his weary tramp on the slippery and overgrown path. He pulled out the bread and bacon and ate heartily; then he filled a short clay pipe with black shag and smoked till a sense of peace crept over him, and he saw himself the owner of £5000. He had no doubt that the stupid little Susanson was dead.

His happy meditations were interrupted by a yellow glow in the mist, where the road vanished from sight. A few seconds later three bright sparks glittered in the distance like stars, and every second they increased in size, till he could see the black car behind them. In less than a minute they had flashed past him, and the fan of light receded farther and farther till it died away in the mist beyond.

He sprang to his feet and continued his journey. He had noted that there were only two people in the car. It was quite evident that Susanson had been effectually disposed of, for it was hardly likely that the two men would have returned to the Red House if the little Jew had made good his escape. The reward was in Jerry's hands, if he could only get off the marshland into the open country.

At present, he was bound up among the creeks and inlets on either side of the road, that he could only escape by hiding. He knew well enough that before long the motor would come tearing back along the road, and that the occupants would organise a systematic search on either side of it.

He sprang to his feet and continued his journey. He had nearly three miles to go before he could take to the fields, and strike across country to Gorehaven. He had a few miles start, but this, even with the time that they would occupy in discovering his absence, was not much for a man in a race with a motor that could run 100 miles in the hour.

The wind had cleared away the last remnant of the fog, and the full moon shone clear over the country. The marsh land was richly veined with silver where the light fell on the thousand creeks and gullies. It was a singularly beautiful sight, but Jerry cursed it with a foul mouth. He would have liked a fog so

dense that a man could not see his own feet. In ten minutes time he peeped over the edge of the bank, and again saw three bright eyes in the distance, and a blotch of black on the long white road. He nestled on his way, bending down a little in case they should catch some glimpse of him from the passing car.

When at last he heard the swish of mud, he lay flat on the ground among some tall marsh weed. The car passed, and he rose to his feet. He knew well enough the method of his pursuers. They would go to the end of the marshes where the road joined the old Roman causeway, and then they would beat backwards on foot, one on either side of the road. In the bright moonlight it would scarcely be possible for him to escape their notice. A pair of night glasses would detect a moving figure on that flat surface for miles around. He stopped and hesitated whether to go forward or return. If he proceeded on his way, he would be bound to meet them. If he went back, he would perhaps escape them for the moment, but he was only running further into a trap, and further from safety. If he had been armed, he would have stood his ground and fought, but Jordison had taken good care that there should be only one revolver at the Red House.

He finally decided to go back. He crept as near to the bank as he could, and in a few minutes crossed it, and kept close to it on the other side. If his estimate of his pursuers were correct, he would be hidden from their view.

For a quarter of an hour he trudged homewards. Every now and then he turned back and saw the distant twinkle of the Blériot lamps, motionless at the far end of the road. Then, as he looked, they seemed larger, and a minute later he realised that the motor was moving rapidly towards him. He saw now what had happened. He was discovered.

He crawled over the edge of the bank again and leant against it, sweating at every pore. Once, twice, three times he saw a figure stand on the edge of the bank, and each time nearer to him. They were reconnoitering as they proceeded along the road. When the figures had disappeared for the third time he turned swiftly aside towards the creek, and looked sharply round for some place of concealment. The water was flush to the edge, and the banks afforded no shelter. He was unable to swim, and dared not risk the crossing.

Then a few yards away he saw that one of the little gulleys narrowed up till it almost disappeared under the tall weeds on either side. He did not hesitate for a moment, but flung himself into it. From its narrowness he had estimated its depth at about two feet, but to his surprise he sank down and down until his head was under water and he felt the soft mud banks press into his shoulders. With a stupendous effort he dug his feet and hands into the mud and raised himself up to the surface, spluttering and gasping for breath. One of his hands had caught something hard, and he brought it up with him. As he held it above the water in the moonlight he saw that it was a gold watch and chain. He thrust it into his pocket. It represented an additional item in his small exchequer. He found he could just touch the bottom with his feet, and his head was concealed by a bunch of weeds overhead. As he felt himself sinking into the mud, he moved up a little towards the road in the hope of finding a better footing. His feet encountered something firm, but elastic, like a pillow stuffed with straw. He put one toe under it and gave it a lift.

And then a horrible thing happened. He felt the object rise from the bed of the gully, and a few seconds later a white face rose from the water. He moved aside the weeds and let the moon fall on it. It was ghastly, distorted, and streaming with black mud. A small crab was hanging to one of the ears. It was the face of Susanson.

Jerry forgot all caution in his terror and shrieked aloud. And looking up at that moment he saw two figures on the bank against the sky. He knew he was discovered for they had descended and came hurriedly towards him. He struggled out of the gully and was on his feet to meet them before they reached the spot. He was a powerful man, and had no intention of dying like a rat in a sewer. As he rose from the water the white face of Susanson sank slowly back into its muddy resting place.

The two men came to within five feet of him, and he saw that Jordison held

a revolver in his hand. They then stopped.

"What are you doing here, Jerry?" Jordison asked in a quiet voice.

The man did not answer, but braced every muscle in his body. He had an idea that Jordison would not fire, and that it would come to a physical combat.

"Well," Jordison repeated. "Yer bloomin' sannaik!" Lipp growled, "Yer thought yer'd got the 4000, eh?" and he laughed horribly.

Jordison raised his revolver, but Lipp had a hand on his arm and muttered in his ear. The next second they were upon their victim, and the three rolled over on the spongy ground. The contest was short but decisive. Jerry drove his teeth into Lipp's face with such force that nail of the water's front teeth went down his throat, and the next second he had bitten a piece out of Jordison's ear. But he was overpowered, and Lipp began to choke the life out of him, while Jordison held down his legs and arms. With a stupendous effort he freed one of his hands, and thrust it into his pocket. He had a confused idea that there was a weapon there.

Quick as thought Jordison gripped his wrist, and as he inserted his hand into the pocket, the fingers touched the gold watch. He drew it out. Now Jordison knew that Jerry had no gold watch, and he gave a quick glance of curiosity at it, before flinging it aside. In that brief moment he caught sight of a name engraved on the back of the case, and for the time being he forgot everything else. He loosed Jerry, and slipping the watch into his pocket, sprang to his feet.

"Let the man go, Lipp," he cried. "I want to speak to him. I can shoot him if he runs."

Lipp loosed the throat, but stood over the fellow like a cat watching a mouse. Jerry did not move. He was nearly black in the face, and struggling to get his breath.

"Where did you get this watch?" asked Jordison. A faint hope flickered in Jerry's breast. He noted the look on his master's face as he asked the question. Here was something that was required of him, and he knew that no answer could be got out of a dead man. He regained his wits—the wits of a professional scoundrel.

"I'll tell yer if ye'll take me 'ome," he replied, gasping for breath, "and swear you won't try this game again."

"If you'll swear you won't peach on us, and tell me what I want," Jordison replied, "I'll give you my word of honour as a gentleman, that we will not harm you."

Jerry swore the oath in picturesque language, and Jordison gave him the required assurance. Then Jordison and Lipp grasped the man by the arms and led him to the motor car. In a few minutes they were in the Red House.

Then over a substantial supper Jerry told his comrades how he had found the gold watch, but he said nothing of the body in the mud. Jordison's face fell, and there was an ugly look on it, but he remembered his promise. He felt that he had been tricked, for the news was quite valueless.

Yet that night in his bedroom he turned the watch over and over in his hand, looking at it as though he expected it to speak to him. But it only

spoke the five words engraved on the back of it:

"Arthur Sterious, from his mother."

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE'S BITTERNESS.

Arthur Holmes was dining at Heatherstone Hall the night that young Lord Overcliffe was killed. This fact, unimportant in itself, formed a close bond between him and the grief-stricken family. It was he who carried the dead boy from the garden to the smoking room. He saw Lady Agnes turn white as death, stagger, and fall in a heap to the ground. He heard the shrieks of the distracted mother crying out for vengeance on the murderers of her only son. He accompanied Lord Heatherstone in the midnight hunt, and through all the vain hue and cry of that wild night, he and Lord Harry Quay supported the old man in his hour of sorrow.

To be with people in an hour like this counts for many days of ordinary intercourse, and so it came to pass that Arthur Holmes became very intimate with the Heatherstone folk, and found his way into the heart of at least one person in the family.

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