

Celebrity, the — Volume 03 eBook

Celebrity, the — Volume 03 by Winston Churchill

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CHAPTER IX

That evening I lighted a cigar and went down to sit on the outermost pile of the Asquith dock to commune with myself. To say that I was disappointed in Miss Thorn would be to set a mild value on my feelings. I was angry, even aggressive, over her defence of the Celebrity. I had gone over to Mohair that day with a hope that some good reason was at the bottom of her tolerance for him, and had come back without any hope. She not only tolerated him, but, wonderful to be said, plainly liked him. Had she not praised him, and defended him, and become indignant when I spoke my mind about him? And I would have taken my oath, two weeks before, that nothing short of hypnotic influence could have changed her. By her own confession she had come to Asquith with her eyes opened, and, what was more, seen another girl wrecked on the same reef.

Farrar followed me out presently, and I had an impulse to submit the problem as it stood to him. But it was a long story, and I did not believe that if he were in my boots he would have consulted me. Again, I sometimes thought Farrar yearned for confidences, though it was impossible for him to confide. And he wore an inviting air to-night. Then, as everybody knows, there is that about twilight and an after-dinner cigar which leads to communication. They are excellent solvents. My friend seated himself on the pile next to mine, and said,

"It strikes me you have been behaving rather queer lately, Crocker."

This was clearly an invitation from Farrar, and I melted.

"I admit," said I, "that I am a good deal perplexed over the contradictions of the human mind."

"Oh, is that all?" he replied dryly. "I supposed it was worse. Narrower, I mean. Didn't know you ever bothered yourself with abstract philosophy."

"See here, Farrar," said I, "what is your opinion of Miss Thorn?"

He stopped kicking his feet against the pile and looked up.

"Miss Thorn?"

"Yes, Miss Thorn," I repeated with emphasis. I knew he had in mind that abominable twaddle about the canoe excursions.

"Why, to tell the truth," said he, "I never had any opinion of Miss Thorn."

"You mean you never formed any, I suppose," I returned with some tartness.

“Yes, that is it. How darned precise you are getting, Crocker! One would think you were going to write a rhetoric. What put Miss Thorn into your head?”

“I have been coaching beside her this afternoon.”

“Oh!” said Farrar.

“Do you remember the night she came,” I asked, “and we sat with her on the Florentine porch, and Charles Wrexell recognized her and came up?”

“Yes,” he replied with awakened interest, “and I meant to ask you about that.”

“Miss Thorn had met him in the East. And I gathered from what she told me that he has followed her out here.”

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"Shouldn't wonder," said Farrar. "Don't much blame him, do you? Is that what troubles you?" he asked, in surprise.

"Not precisely," I answered vaguely; "but from what she has said then and since, she made it pretty clear that she hadn't any use for him; saw through him, you know."

"Pity her if she didn't. But what did she say?"

I repeated the conversations I had had with Miss Thorn, without revealing Mr. Allen's identity with the celebrated author.

"That is rather severe," he assented.

"He decamped for Mohair, as you know, and since that time she has gone back on every word of it. She is with him morning and evening, and, to crown all, stood up for him through thick and thin to-day, and praised him. What do you think of that?"

"What I should have expected in a woman," said he, nonchalantly.

"They aren't all alike," I retorted.

He shook out his pipe, and getting down from his high seat laid his hand on my knee.

"I thought so once, old fellow," he whispered, and went off down the dock.

This was the nearest Farrar ever came to a confidence.

I have now to chronicle a curious friendship which had its beginning at this time. The friendships of the other sex are quickly made, and sometimes as quickly dissolved. This one interested me more than I care to own. The next morning Judge Short, looking somewhat dejected after the overnight conference he had had with his wife, was innocently and somewhat ostentatiously engaged in tossing quoits with me in front of the inn, when Miss Thorn drove up in a basket cart. She gave me a bow which proved that she bore no ill-will for that which I had said about her hero. Then Miss Trevor appeared, and away they went together. This was the commencement. Soon the acquaintance became an intimacy, and their lives a series of visits to each other. Although this new state of affairs did not seem to decrease the number of Miss Thorn's 'tete-a-tetes' with the Celebrity, it put a stop to the canoe expeditions I had been in the habit of taking with Miss Trevor, which I thought just as well under the circumstances. More than once Miss Thorn partook of the inn fare at our table, and when this happened I would make my escape before the coffee. For such was the nature of my feelings regarding the Celebrity that I could not bring myself into cordial relations with one who professed to admire him. I realize how ridiculous such a sentiment must appear, but it existed nevertheless, and most strongly.

I tried hard to throw Miss Thorn out of my thoughts, and very nearly succeeded. I took to spending more and more of my time at the county-seat, where I remained for days at a stretch, inventing business when there was none. And in the meanwhile I lost all respect for myself as a sensible man, and cursed the day the Celebrity came into the state. It seemed strange that this acquaintance of my early days

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should have come back into my life, transformed, to make it more or less miserable. The county-seat being several miles inland, and lying in the midst of hills, could get intolerably hot in September. At last I was driven out in spite of myself, and I arrived at Asquith cross and dusty. As Simpson was brushing me off, Miss Trevor came up the path looking cool and pretty in a summer gown, and her face expressed sympathy. I have never denied that sympathy was a good thing.

"Oh, Mr. Crocker," she cried, "I am so glad you are back again! We have missed you dreadfully. And you look tired, poor man, quite worn out. It is a shame you have to go over to that hot place to work."

I agreed with her.

"And I never have any one to take me canoeing any more."

"Let's go now," I suggested, "before dinner."

So we went. It was a keen pleasure to be on the lake again after the sultry court-rooms and offices, and the wind and exercise quickly brought back my appetite and spirits. I paddled hither and thither, stopping now and then to lie under the pines at the mouth of some stream, while Miss Trevor talked. She was almost a child in her eagerness to amuse me with the happenings since my departure. This was always her manner with me, in curious contrast to her habit of fencing and playing with words when in company. Presently she burst out:

"Mr. Crocker, why is it that you avoid Miss Thorn? I was talking of you to her only to-day, and she says you go miles out of your way to get out of speaking to her; that you seemed to like her quite well at first. She couldn't understand the change."

"Did she say that?" I exclaimed.

"Indeed, she did; and I have noticed it, too. I saw you leave before coffee more than once when she was here. I don't believe you know what a fine girl she is."

"Why, then, does she accept and return the attentions of the Celebrity?" I inquired, with a touch of acidity. "She knows what he is as well, if not better, than you or I. I own I can't understand it," I said, the subject getting ahead of me. "I believe she is in love with him."

Miss Trevor began to laugh; quietly at first, and, as her merriment increased, heartily.

"Shouldn't we be getting back?" I asked, looking at my watch. "It lacks but half an hour of dinner."

“Please don’t be angry, Mr. Crocker,” she pleaded. “I really couldn’t help laughing.”

“I was unaware I had said anything funny, Miss Trevor,” I replied.

“Of course you didn’t,” she said more soberly; “that is, you didn’t intend to. But the very notion of Miss Thorn in love with the Celebrity is funny.”

“Evidence is stronger than argument,” said I. “And now she has even convicted herself.”

I started to paddle homeward, rather furiously, and my companion said nothing until we came in sight of the inn. As the canoe glided into the smooth surface behind the breakwater, she broke the silence.

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"I heard you went fishing the other day," said she.

"Yes."

"And the judge told me about a big bass you hooked, and how you played him longer than was necessary for the mere fun of the thing."

"Yes."

"Perhaps you will find in the feeling that prompted you to do that a clue to the character of our sex."

CHAPTER X

Mr. Cooke had had a sloop yacht built at Far Harbor, the completion of which had been delayed, and which was but just delivered. She was, painted white, with brass fittings, and under her stern, in big, black letters, was the word Maria, intended as a surprise and delicate conjugal compliment to Mrs. Cooke. The Maria had a cabin, which was finished in hard wood and yellow plush, and accommodations for keeping things cold. This last Mr. Cooke had insisted upon.

The skipper Mr. Cooke had hired at Far Harbor was a God-fearing man with a luke warm interest in his new billet and employer, and had only been prevailed upon to take charge of the yacht for the month after the offer of an emolument equal to half a year's sea pay of an ensign in the navy. His son and helper was to receive a sum proportionally exorbitant. This worthy man sighted Mohair on a Sunday morning, and at nine o'clock dropped his anchor with a salute which caused Mr. Cooke to say unpleasant things in his sleep. After making things ship-shape and hoisting the jack, both father and son rowed ashore to the little church at Asquith.

Now the butler at Mohair was a servant who had learned, from long experience, to anticipate every wish and whim of his master, and from the moment he descried the white sails of the yacht out of the windows of the butler's pantry his duty was clear as daylight. Such was the comprehension and despatch with which he gave his commands that the captain returned from divine worship to find the Maria in profane hands, her immaculate deck littered with straw and sawdust, and covered to the coamings with bottles and cases. This decided the captain, he packed his kit in high dudgeon, and took the first train back to Far Harbor, leaving the yacht to her fate.

This sudden and inconsiderate departure was a severe blow to Mr. Cooke' who was so constituted that he cared but little about anything until there was danger of not getting it. My client had planned a trip to Bear Island for the following Tuesday, which was to last a week, the party to bring tents with them and rough it, with the Maria as headquarters. It was out of the question to send to Far Harbor for another skipper, if,

indeed, one could be found at that late period. And as luck would have it, six of Mr. Cooke's ten guests had left but a day or so since, and among them had been the only yacht-owner. None of the four that remained could do more than haul aft and belay a sheet. But the Celebrity, who chanced along as Mr. Cooke was ruefully gazing at the graceful lines of the Maria from the wharf and cursing the fate that kept him ashore with a stiff wind blowing, proposed a way out of the difficulty. He, the Celebrity, would gladly sail the Maria over to Bear Island provided another man could be found to relieve him occasionally at the wheel, and the like. He had noticed that Farrar was a capable hand in a boat, and suggested that he be sent for.

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This suggestion Mr. Cooke thought so well of that he hurried over to Asquith to consult Farrar at once, and incidentally to consult me. We can hardly be blamed for receiving his overtures with a moderate enthusiasm. In fact, we were of one mind not to go when the subject was first broached. But my client had a persuasive way about him that was irresistible, and the mere mention of the favors he had conferred upon both of us at different periods of our lives was sufficient. We consented.

Thus it came to pass that Tuesday morning found the party assembled on the wharf at Mohair, the Four and the Celebrity, as well as Mr. Cooke, having produced yachting suits from their inexhaustible wardrobes. Mr. Trevor and his daughter, Mrs. Cooke and Miss Thorn, and Farrar and myself completed the party. We were to adhere strictly to primeval principles: the ladies were not permitted a maid, while the Celebrity was forced to leave his manservant, and Mr. Cooke his chef. I had, however, thrust into my pocket the Minneapolis papers, which had been handed me by the clerk on their arrival at the inn, which happened just as I was leaving. 'Quod bene notandum!'

Thereby hangs a tale!

For the northern lakes the day was rather dead: a little wind lay in the southeast, scarcely enough to break the water, with the sky an intense blue. But the Maria was hardly cast and under way before it became painfully apparent that the Celebrity was much better fitted to lead a cotillon than to sail a boat. He gave his orders, nevertheless, in a firm, seamanlike fashion, though with no great pertinence, and thus managed to establish the confidence of Mr. Cooke. Farrar, after setting things to rights, joined Mrs. Cooke and me over the cabin.

"How about hoisting the spinnaker, mate?" the Celebrity shouted after him.

Farrar did not deign to answer: his eye was on the wind. And the boom, which had been acting uneasily, finally decided to gybe, and swept majestically over, carrying two of the Four in front of it, and all but dropped them into the water.

"A common occurrence in a light breeze," we heard the Celebrity reassure Mr. Cooke and Miss Thorn.

"The Maria has vindicated her sex," remarked Farrar.

We laughed.

"Why don't you sail, Mr. Farrar?" asked Mrs. Cooke.

"He can't do any harm in this breeze," Farrar replied; "it isn't strong enough to get anywhere with."

He was right. The boom gybed twenty times that morning, and the Celebrity offered an equal number of apologies. Mr. Cooke and the Four vanished, and from the uproarious laughter which arose from the cabin transoms I judged they were telling stories. While Miss Thorn spent the time profitably in learning how to conn a yacht. At one, when we had luncheon, Mohair was still in the distance. At two it began to cloud over, the wind fell flat, and an ominous black bank came up from the south. Without more ado, Farrar, calling on me to give him a hand, eased down the halliards and began to close reef the mainsail.

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"Hold on," said the Celebrity, "who told you to do that?"

"I am very sure you didn't," Farrar returned, as he hauled out a reef earring.

Here a few drops of rain on the deck warned the ladies to retire to the cabin.

"Take the helm until I get my mackintosh, will you, Farrar?" said the Celebrity, "and be careful what you do."

Farrar took the helm and hauled in the sheet, while the Celebrity, Mr. Cooke, and the guests donned their rain-clothes. The water ahead was now like blue velvet, and the rain pelting. The Maria was heeling to the squall by the time the Celebrity appeared at the cabin door, enveloped in an ample waterproof, a rubber cover on his yachting cap. A fool despises a danger he has never experienced, and our author, with a remark about a spanking breeze, made a motion to take the wheel. But Farrar, the flannel of his shirt clinging to the muscular outline of his shoulders, gave him a push which sent him sprawling against the lee refrigerator. Well Miss Thorn was not there to see.

"You will have to answer for this," he cried, as he scrambled to his feet and clutched the weather wash-board with one hand, while he shook the other in Farrar's face.

"Crocker," said Farrar to me, coolly, "keep that idiot out of the way for a while, or we'll all be drowned. Tie him up, if necessary."

I was relieved from this somewhat unpleasant task. Mr. Cooke, with his back to the rain, sat an amused witness to the mutiny, as blissfully ignorant as the Celebrity of the character of a lake squall.

"I appeal to you, as the owner of this yacht, Mr. Cooke," the Celebrity shouted, "whether, as the person delegated by you to take charge of it, I am to suffer indignity and insult. I have sailed larger yachts than this time and again on the coast, at—" here he swallowed a portion of a wave and was mercifully prevented from being specific.

But Mr. Cooke was looking a trifle bewildered. It was hardly possible for him to cling to the refrigerator, much less quell a mutiny. One who has sailed the lakes well knows how rapidly they can be lashed to fury by a storm, and the wind was now spinning the tops of the waves into a blinding spray. Although the Maria proved a stiff boat and a seaworthy, she was not altogether without motion; and the set expression on Farrar's face would have told me, had I not known it, that our situation at that moment was no joke. Repeatedly, as she was held up to it, a precocious roller would sweep from bow to stern, until we without coats were wet and shivering.

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The close and crowded cabin of a small yacht is not an attractive place in rough weather; and one by one the Four emerged and distributed themselves about the deck, wherever they could obtain a hold. Some of them began to act peculiarly. Upon Mr. Cooke's unwillingness or inability to interfere in his behalf, the Celebrity had assumed an aggrieved demeanor, but soon the motion of the Maria became more and more pronounced, and the difficulty of maintaining his decorum likewise increased. The ruddy color left his face, which grew pale with effort. I will do him the justice to say that the effort was heroic: he whistled popular airs, and snatches of the grand opera; he relieved Mr. Cooke of his glasses (of which Mr. Cooke had neglected to relieve himself), and scanned the sea line busily. But the inevitable deferred is frequently more violent than the inevitable taken gracefully, and the confusion which at length overtook the Celebrity was utter as his humiliation was complete. We laid him beside Mr. Cooke in the cockpit.

The rain presently ceased, and the wind hauled, as is often the case, to the northwest, which began to clear, while Bear Island rose from the northern horizon. Both Farrar and I were surprised to see Miss Trevor come out; she hooked back the cabin doors and surveyed the prostrate forms with amusement.

We asked her about those inside.

"Mrs. Cooke has really been very ill," she said, "and Miss Thorn is doing all she can for her. My father and I were more fortunate. But you will both catch your deaths," she exclaimed, noticing our condition. "Tell me where I can find your coats."

I suppose it is natural for a man to enjoy being looked after in this way; it was certainly a new sensation to Farrar and myself. We assured her we were drying out and did not need the coats, but nevertheless she went back into the cabin and found them.

"Miss Thorn says you should both be whipped," she remarked.

When we had put on our coats Miss Trevor sat down and began to talk.

"I once heard of a man," she began complacently, "a man that was buried alive, and who contrived to dig himself up and then read his own epitaph. It did not please him, but he was wise and amended his life. I have often thought how much it might help some people if they could read their own epitaphs."

Farrar was very quick at this sort of thing; and now that the steering had become easier was only too glad to join her in worrying the Celebrity. But he, if he were conscious, gave no sign of it.

"They ought to be buried so that they could not dig themselves up," he said. "The epitaphs would only strengthen their belief that they had lived in an unappreciative age."

“One I happen to have in mind, however, lives in an appreciative age. Most appreciative.”

“And women are often epitaph-makers.”

“You are hard on the sex, Mr. Farrar,” she answered, “but perhaps justly so. And yet there are some women I know of who would not write an epitaph to his taste.”

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Farrar looked at her curiously.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"Do not imagine I am touchy on the subject," she replied quickly; "some of us are fortunate enough to have had our eyes opened."

I thought the Celebrity stirred uneasily.

"Have you read The Sybarites?" she asked.

Farrar was puzzled.

"No," said he sententiously, "and I don't want to."

"I know the average man thinks it a disgrace to have read it. And you may not believe me when I say that it is a strong story of its kind, with a strong moral. There are men who might read that book and be a great deal better for it. And, if they took the moral to heart, it would prove every bit as effectual as their own epitaphs."

He was not quite sure of her drift, but he perceived that she was still making fun of Mr. Allen.

"And the moral?" he inquired.

"Well," she said, "the best I can do is to give you a synopsis of the story, and then you can judge of its fitness. The hero is called Victor Desmond. He is a young man of a sterling though undeveloped character, who has been hampered by an indulgent parent with a large fortune. Desmond is a butterfly, and sips life after the approved manner of his kind,—now from Bohemian glass, now from vessels of gold and silver. He chats with stage lights in their dressing-rooms, and attends a ball in the Bowery or a supper at Sherry's with a ready versatility. The book, apart from its intention, really gives the middle classes an excellent idea of what is called 'high-life.'

"It is some time before Desmond discovers that he possesses the gift of Paris,—a deliberation proving his lack of conceit,—that wherever he goes he unwittingly breaks a heart, and sometimes two or three. This discovery is naturally so painful that he comes home to his chambers and throws himself on a lounge before his fire in a fit of self-deprecation, and reflects on a misspent and foolish life. This, mind you, is where his character starts to develop. And he makes a heroic resolve, not to cut off his nose or to grow a beard, nor get married, but henceforth to live a life of usefulness and seclusion, which was certainly considerate. And furthermore, if by any accident he ever again involved the affections of another girl he would marry her, be she as ugly as sin or as poor as poverty. Then the heroine comes in. Her name is Rosamond, which sounds well and may be euphoniously coupled with Desmond; and, with the single exception of

a boarding-school girl, she is the only young woman he ever thought of twice. In order to save her and himself he goes away, but the temptation to write to her overpowers him, and of course she answers his letter. This brings on a correspondence. His letters take the form of confessions, and are the fruits of much philosophical reflection. 'Inconstancy in woman,' he says, because of the present social conditions, is often pardonable. In a man, nothing is more despicable.' This is his cardinal principle, and he sticks to it nobly. For, though he tires of Rosamond, who is quite attractive, however, he marries her and lives a life of self-denial. There are men who might take that story to heart."

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I was amused that she should give the passage quoted by the Celebrity himself. Her double meaning was, naturally, lost on Farrar, but he enjoyed the thing hugely, nevertheless, as more or less applicable to Mr. Allen. I made sure that gentleman was sensible of what was being said, though he scarcely moved a muscle. And Miss Trevor, with a mirthful glance at me that was not without a tinge of triumph, jumped lightly to the deck and went in to see the invalids.

We were now working up into the lee of the island, whose tall pines stood clean and black against the red glow of the evening sky. Mr. Cooke began to give evidences of life, and finally got up and overhauled one of the ice-chests for a restorative. Farrar put into the little cove, where we dropped anchor, and soon had the chief sufferers ashore; and a delicate supper, in the preparation of which Miss Thorn showed her ability as a cook, soon restored them. For my part, I much preferred Miss Thorn's dishes to those of the Mohair chef, and so did Farrar. And the Four, surprising as it may seem, made themselves generally useful about the camp in pitching the tents under Farrar's supervision. But the Celebrity remained apart and silent.

CHAPTER XI

Our first, night in the Bear Island camp passed without incident, and we all slept profoundly, tired out by the labors of the day before. After breakfast, the Four set out to explore, with trout-rods and shot-guns. Bear Island is, with the exception of the cove into which we had put, as nearly round as an island can be, and perhaps three miles in diameter. It has two clear brooks which, owing to the comparative inaccessibility of the place, still contain trout and grayling, though there are few spots where a fly can be cast on account of the dense underbrush. The woods contain partridge, or ruffed grouse, and other game in smaller quantities. I believe my client entertained some notion of establishing a preserve here.

The insults which had been heaped upon the Celebrity on the yacht seemed to have raised rather than lowered him in Miss Thorn's esteem, for these two ensconced themselves among the pines above the camp with an edition de luxe of one of his works which she had brought along. They were soon absorbed in one of those famous short stories of his with the ending left open to discussion. Mr. Cooke was indisposed. He had not yet recovered from the shaking up his system had sustained, and he took to a canvas easy chair he had brought with him and placed a decanter of Scotch and a tumbler of ice at his side. The efficacy of this remedy was assured. And he demanded the bunch of newspapers he spied protruding from my pocket.

The rest of us were engaged in various occupations: Mr. Trevor relating experiences of steamboat days on the Ohio to Mrs. Cooke; Miss Trevor buried in a serial in the Century; and Farrar and I taking an inventory of fishing-tackle, when we were startled by

aloud and profane ejaculation. Mr. Cooke had hastily put down his glass and was staring at the newspaper before him with eyes as large as after-dinner coffee-cups.

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"Come here," he shouted over at us. "Come here, Crocker," he repeated, seeing we were slow to move. "For God's sake, come here!"

In obedience to this emphatic summons I crossed the stream and drew near to Mr. Cooke, who was busily pouring out another glass of whiskey to tide him over this strange excitement. But, as Mr. Cooke was easily excited and on such occasions always drank whiskey to quiet his nerves, I thought nothing of it. He was sitting bolt upright and held out the paper to me with a shaking hand, while he pointed to some headlines on the first page. And this is what I read:

Treasurer takes A trip.

Charles Wrexell Allen, of the miles Standish bicycle company, gets off with 100,000 dollars.

Detectives baffled.

The absconder A back bay social Leader.

Half way down the column was a picture of Mr. Allen, a cut made from a photograph, and, allowing for the crudities of newspaper reproduction, it was a striking likeness of the Celebrity. Underneath was a short description. Mr. Allen was five feet eleven (the Celebrity's height), had a straight nose, square chin, dark hair and eyes, broad shoulders, was dressed elaborately; in brief, tallied in every particular with the Celebrity with the exception of the slight scar which Allen was thought to have on his forehead.

The situation and all its ludicrous possibilities came over me with a jump. It was too good to be true. Had Mr. Charles Wrexell Allen arrived at Asquith and created a sensation with the man who stole his name I should have been amply satisfied. But that Mr. Allen had been obliging enough to abscond with a large sum of money was beyond dreaming!

I glanced at the rest of it: a history of the well-established company followed, with all that Mr. Allen had done for it. The picture, by the way, had been obtained from the St. Paul agent of the bicycle. After doing due credit to the treasurer's abilities as a hustler there followed a summary of his character, hitherto without reproach; but his tastes were expensive ones. Mr. Allen's tendency to extravagance had been noticed by the members of the Miles Standish Company, and some of the older directors had on occasions remonstrated with him. But he had been too valuable a man to let go, and it seems as treasurer he was trusted implicitly. He was said to have more clothes than any man in Boston.

I am used to thinking quickly, and by the time I had read this I had an idea.

“What in hell do you make of that, Crocker?” cried my client, eyeing me closely and repeating the question again and again, as was his wont when agitated.

“It is certainly plain enough,” I replied, “but I should like to talk to you before you decide to hand him over to the authorities.”

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I thought I knew Mr. Cooke, and I was not mistaken.

“Authorities!” he roared. “Damn the authorities! There’s my yacht, and there’s the Canadian border.” And he pointed to the north.

The others were pressing around us by this time, and had caught the significant words which Mr. Cooke had uttered. I imagine that if my client had stopped to think twice, which of course is a preposterous condition, he would have confided his discovery only to Farrar and to me. It was now out of the question to keep it from the rest of the party, and Mr. Trevor got the headlines over my shoulder. I handed him the sheet.

“Read it, Mr. Trevor,” said Mrs. Cooke.

Mr. Trevor, in a somewhat unsteady voice, read the headlines and began the column, and they followed breathless with astonishment and agitation. Once or twice the senator paused to frown upon the Celebrity with a terrible sternness, thus directing all other eyes to him. His demeanor was a study in itself. It may be surmised, from what I have said of him, that there was a strain of the actor in his composition; and I am prepared to make an affidavit that, secure in the knowledge that he had witnesses present to attest his identity, he hugely enjoyed the sensation he was creating. That he looked forward with a profound pleasure to the stir which the disclosure that he was the author of *The Sybarites* would make. His face wore a beatific smile.

As Mr. Trevor continued, his voice became firmer and his manner more majestic. It was a task distinctly to his taste, and one might have thought he was reading the sentence of a Hastings. I was standing next to his daughter. The look of astonishment, perhaps of horror, which I had seen on her face when her father first began to read had now faded into something akin to wickedness. Did she wink? I can’t say, never before having had a young woman wink at me. But the next moment her vinaigrette was rolling down the bank towards the brook, and I was after it. I heard her close behind me. She must have read my intentions by a kind of mental telepathy.

“Are you going to do it?” she whispered.

“Of course,” I answered. “To miss such a chance would be a downright sin.”

There was a little awe in her laugh.

“Miss Thorn is the only obstacle,” I added, “and Mr. Cooke is our hope. I think he will go by me.”

“Don’t let Miss Thorn worry you,” she said as we climbed back.

“What do you mean?” I demanded. But she only shook her head. We were at the top again, and Mr. Trevor was reading an appended despatch from Buffalo, stating that Mr.

Allen had been recognized there, in the latter part of June, walking up and down the platform of the station, in a smoking-jacket, and that he had climbed on the Chicago limited as it pulled out. This may have caused the Celebrity to feel a trifle uncomfortable.

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr. Trevor, as he put down the paper. “Mr. Cooke, do you happen to have any handcuffs on the Maria?”

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But my client was pouring out a stiff helping from the decanter, which he still held in his hand. Then he approached the Celebrity.

"Don't let it worry you, old man," said he, with intense earnestness. "Don't let it worry you. You're my guest, and I'll see you safe out of it, or bust."

"Fenelon," said Mrs. Cooke, gravely, "do you realize what you are saying?"

"You're a clever one, Allen," my client continued, and he backed away the better to look him over; "you had nerve to stay as long as you did."

The Celebrity laughed confidently.

"Cooke," he replied, "I appreciate your generosity,—I really do. I know no offence is meant. The mistake is, in fact, most pardonable."

In Mr. Cooke amazement and admiration were clamoring for utterance.

"Damn me," he sputtered, "if you're not the coolest embezzler I ever saw."

The Celebrity laughed again. Then he surveyed the circle.

"My friends," he said, "this is certainly a most amazing coincidence; one which, I assure you, surprises me no less than it does you. You have no doubt remarked that I have my peculiarities. We all have.

"I flatter myself I am not entirely unknown. And the annoyances imposed upon me by a certain fame I have achieved had become such that some months ago I began to crave the pleasures of the life of a private man. I determined to go to some sequestered resort where my face was unfamiliar. The possibility of being recognized at Asquith did not occur to me. Fortunately I was. And a singular chance led me to take the name of the man who has committed this crime, and who has the misfortune to resemble me. I suppose that now," he added impressively, "I shall have to tell you who I am."

He paused until these words should have gained their full effect. Then he held up the edition de luxe from which he and Miss Thorn had been reading.

"You may have heard, Mrs. Cooke," said he, addressing himself to our hostess, "you may perhaps have heard of the author of this book."

Mrs. Cooke was a calm woman, and she read the name on the cover.

"Yes," she said, "I have. And you claim to be he?"

“Ask my friend Crocker here,” he answered carelessly, no doubt exulting that the scene was going off so dramatically. “I should indeed be in a tight box,” he went on, “if there were not friends of mine here to help me out.”

They turned to me.

“I am afraid I cannot,” I said with what soberness I could.

“What!” says he with a start. “What! you deny me?”

Miss Trevor had her tongue in her cheek. I bowed.

“I am powerless to speak, Mr. Allen,” I replied.

During this colloquy my client stood between us, looking from one to the other. I well knew that his way of thinking would be with my testimony, and that the gilt name on the edition de luxe had done little towards convincing him of Mr. Allen’s innocence. To his mind there was nothing horrible or incongruous in the idea that a well-known author should be a defaulter. It was perfectly possible. He shoved the glass of Scotch towards the Celebrity, with a smile.

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"Take this, old man," he kindly insisted, "and you'll feel better. What's the use of bucking when you're saddled with a thing like that?" And he pointed to the paper. "Besides, they haven't caught you yet, by a damned sight."

The Celebrity waved aside the proffered tumbler.

"This is an infamous charge, and you know it, Crocker," he cried. "If you don't, you ought to, as a lawyer. This isn't any time to have fun with a fellow."

"My dear sir," I said, "I have charged you with nothing whatever."

He turned his back on me in complete disgust. And he came face to face with Miss Trevor.

"Miss Trevor, too, knows something of me," he said.

"You forget, Mr. Allen," she answered sweetly, "you forget that I have given you my promise not to reveal what I know."

The Celebrity chafed, for this was as damaging a statement as could well be uttered against him. But Miss Thorn was his trump card, and she now came forward.

"This is ridiculous, Mr. Crocker, simply ridiculous," said she.

"I agree with you most heartily, Miss Thorn," I replied.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Miss Thorn, and she drew her lips together, "pure nonsense!"

"Nonsense or not, Marian," Mr. Cooke interposed, "we are wasting valuable time. The police are already on the scent, I'll bet my hat."

"Fenelon!" Mrs. Cooke remonstrated.

"And do you mean to say in soberness, Uncle Fenelon, that you believe the author of The Sybarites to be a defaulter?" said Miss Thorn.

"It is indeed hard to believe Mr. Allen a criminal," Mr. Trevor broke in for the first time. "I think it only right that he should be allowed to clear himself before he is put to further inconvenience, and perhaps injustice, by any action we may take in the matter."

Mr. Cooke sniffed suspiciously at the word "action."

"What action do you mean?" he demanded.

"Well," replied Mr. Trevor, with some hesitation, "before we take any steps, that is, notify the police."

“Notify the police!” cried my client, his face red with a generous anger. “I have never yet turned a guest over to the police,” he said proudly, “and won’t, not if I know it. I’m not that kind.”

Who shall criticise Mr. Cooke’s code of morality?

“Fenelon,” said his wife, “you must remember you have never yet entertained a guest of a larcenous character. No embezzlers up to the present. Marian,” she continued, turning to Miss Thorn, “you spoke as if you might, be able to throw some light upon this matter. Do you know whether this gentleman is Charles Wrexell Allen, or whether he is the author? In short, do you know who he is?”

The Celebrity lighted a cigarette. Miss Thorn said indignantly, “Upon my word, Aunt Maria, I thought that you, at least, would know better than to credit this silly accusation. He has been a guest at your house, and I am astonished that you should doubt his word.”

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Mrs. Cooke looked at her niece perplexedly.

"You must remember, Marian," she said gently, "that I know nothing about him, where he came from, or who he is. Nor does any one at Asquith, except perhaps Miss Trevor, by her own confession. And you do not seem inclined to tell what you know, if indeed you know anything."

Upon this Miss Thorn became more indignant still, and Mrs. Cooke went on "Gentlemen, as a rule, do not assume names, especially other people's. They are usually proud of their own. Mr. Allen appears among us, from the clouds, as it were, and in due time we learn from a newspaper that he has committed a defalcation. And, furthermore, the paper contains a portrait and an accurate description which put the thing beyond doubt. I ask you, is it reasonable for him to state coolly after all this that he is another man? That he is a well-known author? It's an absurdity. I was not born yesterday, my dear."

"It is most reasonable under the circumstances," replied Miss Thorn, warmly. "Extraordinary? Of course it's extraordinary. And too long to explain to a prejudiced audience, who can't be expected to comprehend the character of a genius, to understand the yearning of a famous man for a little quiet."

Mrs. Cooke looked grave.

"Marian, you forget yourself," she said.

"Oh, I am tired of it, Aunt Maria," cried Miss Thorn; "if he takes my advice, he will refuse to discuss it farther."

She did not seem to be aware that she had put forth no argument whatever, save a woman's argument. And I was intensely surprised that her indignation should have got the better of her in this way, having always supposed her clear-headed in the extreme. A few words from her, such as I supposed she would have spoken, had set the Celebrity right with all except Mr. Cooke. To me it was a clear proof that the Celebrity had turned her head, and her mind with it.

The silence was broken by an uncontrollable burst of laughter from Miss Trevor. She was quickly frowned down by her father, who reminded her that this was not a comedy.

"And, Mr. Allen," he said, "if you have anything to say, or any evidence to bring forward, now is the time to do it."

He appeared to forget that I was the district attorney.

The Celebrity had seated himself on the trunk of a tree, and was blowing out the smoke in clouds. He was inclined to take Miss Thorn's advice, for he made a gesture of weariness with his cigarette, in the use of which he was singularly eloquent.

"Tell me, Mr. Trevor," said he, "why I should sit before you as a tribunal? Why I should take the trouble to clear myself of a senseless charge? My respect for you inclines me to the belief that you are laboring under a momentary excitement; for when you reflect that I am a prominent, not to say famous, author, you will realize how absurd it is that I should be an embezzler, and why I decline to lower myself by an explanation."

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Mr. Trevor picked up the paper and struck it.

“Do you refuse to say anything in the face of such evidence as that?” he cried.

“It is not a matter for refusal, Mr. Trevor. It is simply that I cannot admit the possibility of having committed the crime.”

“Well, sir,” said the senator, his black necktie working out of place as his anger got the better of him, “I am to believe, then, because you claim to be the author of a few society novels, that you are infallible? Let me tell you that the President of the United States himself is liable to impeachment, and bound to disprove any charge he may be accused of. What in Halifax do I care for your divine-right-of-authors theory? I’ll continue to think you guilty until you are shown to be innocent.”

Suddenly the full significance of the Celebrity’s tactics struck Mr. Cooke, and he reached out and caught hold of Mr. Trevor’s coattails. “Hold on, old man,” said he; “Allen isn’t going to be ass enough to own up to it. Don’t you see we’d all be jugged and fined for assisting a criminal over the border? It’s out of consideration for us.”

Mr. Trevor looked sternly over his shoulder at Mr. Cooke.

“Do you mean to say, sir, seriously,” he asked, “that, for the sake of a misplaced friendship for this man, and a misplaced sense of honor, you are bound to shield a guest, though a criminal? That you intend to assist him to escape from justice? I insist, for my own protection and that of my daughter, as well as for that of the others present that, since he refuses to speak, we must presume him guilty and turn him over.”

Mr. Trevor turned to Mrs. Cooke, as if relying on her support.

“Fenelon,” said she, “I have never sought to influence your actions when your friends were concerned, and I shall not begin now. All I ask of you is to consider the consequences of your intention.”

These words from Mrs. Cooke had much more weight with my client than Mr. Trevor’s blustering demands.

“Maria, my dear,” he said, with a deferential urbanity, “Mr. Allen is my guest, and a gentleman. When a gentleman gives his word that he is not a criminal, it is sufficient.”

The force of this, for some reason, did not overwhelm his wife; and her lip curled a little, half in contempt, half in risibility.

“Pshaw, Fenelon,” said she, “what a fraud you are. Why is it you wish to get Mr. Allen over the border, then?” A question which might well have staggered a worthier intellect.



"Why, my dear," answered my client, "I wish to save Mr. Allen the inconvenience, not to say the humiliation, of being brought East in custody and strapped with a pair of handcuffs. Let him take a shooting trip to the great Northwest until the real criminal is caught."

"Well, Fenelon," replied Mrs. Cooke, unable to repress a smile, "one might as well try to argue with a turn-stile or a weather-vane. I wash my hands of it."

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But Mr. Trevor, who was both a self-made man and a Western politician, was far from being satisfied. He turned to me with a sweep of the arm he had doubtless learned in the Ohio State Senate.

“Mr. Crocker,” he cried, “are you, as attorney of this district, going to aid and abet in the escape of a fugitive from justice?”

“Mr. Trevor,” said I, “I will take the course in this matter which seems fit to me, and without advice from any one.”

He wheeled on Farrar, repeated the question, and got a like answer.

Brought to bay for a time, he glared savagely around him while groping for further arguments.

But at this point the Four appeared on the scene, much the worse for thickets, and clamoring for luncheon. They had five small fish between them which they wanted Miss Thorn to cook.

CHAPTER XII

The Four received Mr. Cooke’s plan for the Celebrity’s escape to Canada with enthusiastic acclamation, and as the one thing lacking to make the Bear Island trip a complete success. The Celebrity was hailed with the reverence due to the man who puts up the ring-money in a prize-fight. He was accorded, too, a certain amount of respect as a defaulter, which the Four would have denied him as an author, for I am inclined to the belief that the discovery of his literary profession would have lowered him rather than otherwise in their eyes. My client was naturally anxious to get under way at once for the Canadian border, but was overruled in this by his henchmen, who demanded something to eat. We sat down to an impromptu meal, which was an odd affair indeed. Mrs. Cooke maintained her usual serenity, but said little, while Miss Trevor and I had many a mirthful encounter at the thought of the turn matters had taken.

At the other end of the cloth were Mr. Cooke and the Four, in wonderful spirits and unimpaired appetite, and in their midst sat the Celebrity, likewise in wonderful spirits. His behavior now and again elicited a loud grunt of disapproval from Mr. Trevor, who was plying his knife and fork in a manner emblematic of his state of mind. Mr. Allen was laughing and joking airily with Mr. Cooke and the guests, denying, but not resenting, their accusations with all the sang froid of a hardened criminal. He did not care particularly to go to Canada, he said. Why should he, when he was innocent? But, if Mr. Cooke insisted, he would enjoy seeing that part of the lake and the Canadian side.

Afterwards I perceived Miss Thorn down by the brookside, washing dishes. Her sleeves were drawn back to the elbow, and a dainty white apron covered her blue skirt, while the

wind from the lake had disentangled errant wisps of her hair. I stood on the brink above, secure, as I thought, from observation, when she chanced to look up and spied me.

“Mr. Crocker,” she called, “would you like to make yourself useful?”

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I was decidedly embarrassed. Her manner was as frank and unconstrained as though I had not been shunning her for weeks past.

"If such a thing is possible," I replied.

"Do you know a dish-cloth when you see one?"

I was doubtful. But I procured the cloth from Miss Trevor and returned. There was an air about Miss Thorn that was new to me.

"What an uncompromising man you are, Mr. Crocker," she said to me. "Once a person is unfortunate enough to come under the ban of your disapproval you have nothing whatever to do with them. Now it seems that I have given you offence in some way. Is it not so?"

"You magnify my importance," I said.

"No temporizing, Mr. Crocker," she went on, as though she meant to be obeyed; "sit down there, and let's have it out. I like you too well to quarrel with you."

There was no resisting such a command, and I threw myself on the pebbles at her feet.

"I thought we were going to be great friends," she said. "You and Mr. Farrar were so kind to me on the night of my arrival, and we had such fun watching the dance together."

"I confess I thought so, too. But you expressed opinions then that I shared. You have since changed your mind, for some unaccountable reason."

She paused in her polishing, a shining dish in her hand, and looked down at me with something between a laugh and a frown.

"I suppose you have never regretted speaking hastily," she said.

"Many a time," I returned, warming; "but if I ever thought a judgment measured and distilled, it was your judgment of the Celebrity."

"Does the study of law eliminate humanity?" she asked, with a mock curtsy. "The deliberate sentences are sometimes the unjust ones, and men who are hung by weighed wisdom are often the innocent."

"That is all very well in cases of doubt. But here you have the evidences of wrong-doing directly before you."

Three dishes were taken up, dried, and put down before she answered me. I threw pebbles into the brook, and wished I had held my tongue.

"What evidence?" inquired she. "Well," said I, "I must finish, I suppose. I had a notion you knew of what I inferred. First, let me say that I have no desire to prejudice you against a person whom you admire."

"Impossible."

Something in her tone made me look up.

"Very good, then," I answered. "I, for one, can have no use for a man who devotes himself to a girl long enough to win her affections, and then deserts her with as little compunction as a dog does a rat it has shaken. And that is how your Celebrity treated Miss Trevor."

"But Miss Trevor has recovered, I believe," said Miss Thorn.

I began to feel a deep, but helpless, insecurity.

"Happily, yes," I assented.

"Thanks to an excellent physician."

A smile twitched the corners of her mouth, as though she enjoyed my discomfiture. I remarked for the fiftieth time how strong her face was, with its generous lines and clearly moulded features. And a suspicion entered my soul.

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"At any rate," I said, with a laugh, "the Celebrity has got himself into no end of a predicament now. He may go back to New York in custody."

"I thought you incapable of resentment, Mr. Crocker. How mean of you to deny him!"

"It can do no harm," I answered; "a little lesson in the dangers of incognito may be salutary. I wish it were a little lesson in the dangers of something else."

The color mounted to her face as she resumed her occupation.

"I am afraid you are a very wicked man," she said.

Before I could reply there came a scuffling sound from the bank above us, and the snapping of branches and twigs. It was Mr. Cooke. His descent, the personal conduction of which he lost half-way down, was irregular and spasmodic, and a rude concussion at the bottom knocked off a choice bit of profanity which was balanced on the tip of his tongue.

"Tobogganing is a little out of season," said his niece, laughing heartily.

Mr. Cooke brushed himself off, picked up the glasses which he had dropped in his flight and pushed them into my hands. Then he pointed lakeward with bulging eyes.

"Crocker, old man," he said in a loud whisper, "they tell me that is an Asquith cat-boat."

I followed his finger and saw for the first time a sail-boat headed for the island, then about two miles off shore. I raised the glasses.

"Yes," I said, "the Scimitar."

"That's what Farrar said," cried he.

"And what about it?" I asked.

"What about it?" he ejaculated. "Why, it's a detective come for Allen. I knew sure as hell if they got as far as Asquith they wouldn't stop there. And that's the fastest sail-boat he could hire there, isn't it?"

I replied that it was. He seized me by the shoulder and began dragging me up the bank.

"What are you going to do?" I cried, shaking myself loose.

"We've got to get on the Maria and run for it," he panted. "There is no time to be lost."

He had reached the top of the bank and was running towards the group at the tents. And he actually infused me with some of his red-hot enthusiasm, for I hastened after him.

"But you can't begin to get the Maria out before they will be in here," I shouted.

He stopped short, gazed at the approaching boat, and then at me.

"Is that so?"

"Yes, of course," said I, "they will be here in ten minutes."

The Celebrity stood in the midst of the excited Four. His hair was parted precisely, and he had induced a monocle to remain in his eye long enough to examine the Scimitar, his nose at the critical elevation. This unruffled exterior made a deep impression on the Four. Was the Celebrity not undergoing the crucial test of a true sport? He was an example alike to criminals and philosophers.

Mr. Cooke hurried into the group, which divided respectfully for him, and grasped the Celebrity by the hand.

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"Something else has got to be done, old man," he said, in a voice which shook with emotion; "they'll be on us before we can get the Maria out."

Farrar, who was nailing a rustic bench near by, straightened up at this, his lip curling with a desire to laugh.

The Celebrity laid his hand on my client's shoulder.

"Cooke," said he, "I'm deeply grateful for all the trouble you wish to take, and for the solicitude you have shown. But let things be. I'll come out of it all right."

"Never," cried Cooke, looking proudly around the Four as some Highland chief might have surveyed a faithful clan. "I'd a damned sight rather go to jail myself."

"A damned sight," echoed the Four in unison.

"I insist, Cooke," said the Celebrity, taking out his eyeglass and tapping Mr. Cooke's purple necktie, "I insist that you drop this business. I repeat my thanks to you and these gentlemen for the friendship they have shown, but say again that I am as innocent of this crime as a baby."

Mr. Cooke paid no attention to this speech. His face became radiant.

"Didn't any of you fellows strike a cave, or a hollow tree, or something of that sort, knocking around this morning?"

One man slapped his knee.

"The very place," he cried. "I fell into it," and he showed a rent in his trousers corroboratively. "It's big enough to hold twenty of Allen, and the detective doesn't live that could find it."

"Hustle him off, quick," said Mr. Cooke.

The mandate was obeyed as literally as though Robin Hood himself had given it. The Celebrity disappeared into the forest, carried rather than urged towards his destined place of confinement.

The commotion had brought Mr. Trevor to the spot. He caught sight of the Celebrity's back between the trees, then he looked at the cat-boat entering the cove, a man in the stern preparing to pull in the tender.

He intercepted Mr. Cooke on his way to the beach.

"What have you done with Mr. Allen?" he asked, in a menacing voice.

“Good God,” said Mr. Cooke, whose contempt for Mr. Trevor was now infinite, “you talk as if I were the governor of the state. What the devil could I do with him?”

“I will have no evasion,” replied Mr. Trevor, taking an imposing posture in front of him. “You are trying to defeat the ends of justice by assisting a dangerous criminal to escape. I have warned you, sir, and warn you again of the consequences of your meditated crime, and I give you my word I will do all in my power to frustrate it.”

Mr. Cooke dug his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets. Here was a complication he had not looked for. The Scimitar lay at anchor with her sail down, and two men were coming ashore in the tender. Mr. Cooke’s attitude being that of a man who reconsiders a rash resolve, Mr. Trevor was emboldened to say in a moderated tone:

“You were carried away by your generosity, Mr. Cooke. I was sure when you took time to think you would see it in another light.”

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Mr. Cooke started off for the place where the boat had grounded. I did not catch his reply, and probably should not have written it here if I had. The senator looked as if he had been sand-bagged.

The two men jumped out of the boat and hauled it up. Mr. Cooke waved an easy salute to one, whom I recognized as the big boatman from Asquith, familiarly known as Captain Jay. He owned the Scimitar and several smaller boats. The captain went through the pantomime of an introduction between Mr. Cooke and the other, whom my client shook warmly by the hand, and presently all three came towards us.

Mr. Cooke led them to a bar he had improvised by the brook. A pool served the office of refrigerator, and Mr. Cooke had devised an ingenious but complicated arrangement of strings and labels which enabled him to extract any bottle or set of bottles without having to bare his arm and pull out the lot. Farrar and I responded to the call he had given, and went down to assist in the entertainment. My client, with his back to us, was busy manipulating the strings.

"Gentlemen," he said, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Drew. You all know the captain."

Had I not suspected Mr. Drew's profession, I think I should not have remarked that he gave each of us a keen look as he raised his head. He had reddish-brown hair, and a pair of bushy red whiskers, each of which tapered to a long point. He was broad in the shoulders, and the clothes he wore rather enhanced this breadth. His suit was gray and almost new, the trousers perceptibly bagging at the knee, and he had a felt hat, a necktie of the white and flowery pattern, and square-toed "Congress" boots. In short, he was a decidedly ordinary looking person; you would meet a hundred like him in the streets of Far Harbor and Beaverton. He might have been a prosperous business man in either of those towns,—a comfortable lumber merchant or mine owner. And he had chosen just the get-up I should have picked for detective work in that region. He had a pleasant eye and a very fetching and hearty manner. But his long whiskers troubled me especially. I kept wondering if they were real.

"The captain is sailing Mr. Drew over to Far Harbor," explained Mr. Cooke, "and they have put in here for the night."

Mr. Drew was plainly not an amateur, for he volunteered nothing further than this. The necessary bottles having been produced, Mr. Cooke held up his glass and turned to the stranger.

"Welcome to our party, old man," said he.

Mr. Drew drained his glass and complimented Mr. Cooke on the brand,—a sure key to my client's heart. Whereupon he seated himself between Mr. Drew and the captain and

began a discourse on the subject of his own cellar, on which he talked for nearly an hour. His only pauses were for the worthy purpose of filling the detective's or the captain's glass, and these he watched with a hospitable solicitude.

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The captain had the advantage, three to one, and I made no doubt his employer bitterly regretted not having a boatman whose principles were more strict. At the end of the hour Captain Jay, who by nature was inclined to be taciturn and crabbed, waxed loquacious and even jovial. He sang us the songs he had learned in the winter lumber-camps, which Mr. Cooke never failed to encore to the echo. My client vowed he had not spent a pleasanter afternoon for years. He plied the captain with cigars, and explained to him the mystery of the strings and labels; and the captain experimented until he had broken some of the bottles.

Mr. Cooke was not a person who made any great distinction between the three degrees, acquaintance, friendship, and intimacy. When a stranger pleased him, he went from one to the other with such comparative ease that a hardhearted man, and no other, could have resented his advances. Mr. Drew was anything but a hard-hearted man, and he did not object to my client's familiarity. Mr. Cooke made no secret of his admiration for Mr. Drew, and there were just two things about him that Mr. Cooke admired and wondered at, above all else,—the bushy red whiskers. But it appeared that these were the only things that Mr. Drew was really touchy about. I noticed that the detective, without being impolite, did his best to discourage these remarks; but my client knew no such word as discouragement. He was continually saying: "I think I'll grow some like that, old man," or "Have those cut," and the like,—a kind of humor in which the captain took an incredible delight. And finally, when a certain pitch of good feeling had been arrived at, Mr. Cooke reached out and playfully grabbed hold of the one near him. The detective drew back. "Mr. Cooke," said he, with dignity, "I'll have to ask you to let my whiskers alone."

"Certainly, old man," replied my client, anything but abashed. "You'll pardon me, but they seemed too good to be true. I congratulate you on them."

I was amused as well as alarmed at this piece of boldness, but the incident passed off without any disagreeable results, except, perhaps, a slight nervousness noticeable in the detective; and this soon disappeared. As the sun grew low, the Celebrity's conductors straggled in with fishing-rods and told of an afternoon's sport, and we left the captain peacefully but sonorously slumbering on the bank.

"Crocker," said my client to me, afterwards, "they didn't feel like the real, home-grown article. But aren't they damned handsome?"

CHAPTER XIII

After supper, Captain Jay was rowed out and put to bed in his own bunk on the Scimitar. Then we heaped together a huge pile of the driftwood on the beach and

raised a blazing beacon, the red light of which I doubt not could be seen from the mainland. The men made prongs from the soft wood, while Miss Thorn produced from the stores some large tins of marshmallows.

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The memory of that evening lingers with me yet. The fire colored everything. The waves dashed in ruby foam at our feet, and even the tall, frowning pines at our backs were softened; the sting was gone out of the keen night wind from the north. I found a place beside the gray cape I had seen for the first time the night of the cotillon. I no longer felt any great dislike for Miss Thorn, let it be known. Resentment was easier when the distance between Mohair and Asquith separated us,—impossible on a yachting excursion. But why should I be justifying myself?

Mr. Cooke and the Four, in addition to other accomplishments, possessed excellent voices, and Mr. Drew sang a bass which added much to the melody. One of the Four played a banjo. It is only justice to Mr. Drew to say that he seemed less like a detective than any man I have ever met. He told a good story and was quick at repartee, and after a while the music, by tacit consent, was abandoned for the sake of hearing him talk. He related how he had worked up the lake, point by point, from Beaverton to Asquith, and lightened his narrative with snappy accounts of the different boatmen he had run across and of the different predicaments into which he had fallen. His sketches were so vivid that Mr. Cooke forgot to wink at me after a while and sat spellbound, while I marvelled at the imaginative faculty he displayed. He had us in roars of laughter. His stories were far from incredible, and he looked less like a liar than a detective. He showed, too, an accurate and astonishing knowledge of the lake which could hardly have been acquired in any other way than the long-shore trip he had described. Not once did he hint of a special purpose which had brought him to the island, and it was growing late. The fire died down upon the stones, and the thought of the Celebrity, alone in a dark cave in the middle of the island, began to prey upon me. I was not designed for a practical joker, and I take it that pity is a part of every self-respecting man's composition. In the cool of the night season the ludicrous side of the matter did not appeal to me quite as strongly as in the glare of day. A joke should never be pushed to cruelty. It was in vain that I argued I had no direct hand in the concealing of him; I felt my responsibility quite as heavy upon me. Perhaps bears still remained in these woods. And if a bear should devour the author of *The Sybarites*, would the world ever forgive me? Could I ever repay the debt to the young women of these United States? To speak truth, I expected every moment to see him appear. Why, in the name of all his works, did he stay there? Nothing worse could befall him than to go to Far Harbor with Drew, where our words concerning his identity would be taken. And what an advertisement this would be for the great author. *The Sybarites*, now selling by thousands, would increase its sales to ten thousands. Ah, there was the rub. The clue to his remaining in the cave was this very

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kink in the Celebrity's character. There was nothing Bohemian in that character; it yearned after the eminently respectable. Its very eccentricities were within the limits of good form. The Celebrity shunned the biscuits and beer of the literary clubs, and his books were bound for the boudoir. To have it proclaimed in the sensational journals that the hands of this choice being had been locked for grand larceny was a thought too horrible to entertain. His very manservant would have cried aloud against it. Better a hundred nights in a cave than one such experience!

Miss Trevor's behavior that evening was so unrestful as to lead me to believe that she, too, was going through qualms of sympathy for the victim. As we were breaking up for the evening she pulled my sleeve.

"Don't you think we have carried our joke a little too far, Mr. Crocker?" she whispered uneasily. "I can't bear to think of him in that terrible place."

"It will do him a world of good," I replied, assuming a gayety I did not feel. It is not pleasant to reflect that some day one's own folly might place one in alike situation. And the night was dimly cool and windy, now that the fire had gone out. Miss Trevor began to philosophize.

"Such practical pleasantries as this," she said, "are like infernal machines: they often blow up the people that start them. And they are next to impossible to steer."

"Perhaps it is just as well not to assume we are the instruments of Providence," I said.

Here we ran into Miss Thorn, who was carrying a lantern.

"I have been searching everywhere for you two mischief-makers," said she. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Heaven only knows how this little experiment will end. Here is Aunt Maria, usually serene, on the verge of hysterics: she says he shouldn't stay in that damp cave another minute. Here is your father, Irene, organizing relief parties and walking the floor of his tent like a madman. And here is Uncle Fenelon insane over the idea of getting the poor, innocent man into Canada. And here is a detective saddled upon us, perhaps for days, and Uncle Fenelon has gotten his boatman drunk. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," she repeated.

Miss Trevor laughed, in spite of the gravity of these things, and so did I.

"Oh, come, Marian," said she, "it isn't as bad as all that. And you talk as if you hadn't anything to be reproached for. Your own defence of the Celebrity wasn't as strong as it might have been."

By the light of the lantern I saw Miss Thorn cast one meaning look at Miss Trevor.

“What are you going to do about it?” asked Miss Thorn, addressing me. “Think of that unhappy man, without a bed, without blankets, without even a tooth-brush.”

“He hasn’t been wholly off my mind,” I answered truthfully. “But there isn’t anything we can do to-night, with that beastly detective to notice it.”

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"Then you must go very early to-morrow morning, before the detective gets up."

I couldn't help smiling at the notion of getting up before a detective.

"I am only too willing," I said.

"It must be by four o'clock," Miss Thorn went on energetically, "and we must have a guide we can trust. Arrange it with one of Uncle Fenelon's friends."

"We?" I repeated.

"You certainly don't imagine that I am going to be left behind?" said Miss Thorn.

I made haste to invite for the expedition one of the Four, who was quite willing to go; and we got together all the bodily comforts we could think of and put them in a hamper, the Fraction not forgetting to add a few bottles from Mr. Cooke's immersed bar.

Long after the camp had gone to bed, I lay on the pine-needles above the brook, shielded from the wind by a break in the slope, and thought of the strange happenings of that day. Presently the waning moon climbed reluctantly from the waters, and the stream became mottled, black and white, the trees tall blurs. The lake rose and fell with a mighty rhythm, and the little brook hurried madly over the stones to join it. One thought chased another from my brain.

At such times, when one's consciousness of outer things is dormant, an earthquake might continue for some minutes without one realizing it. I did not observe, though I might have seen from where I lay, the flap of one of the tents drawn back and two figures emerge. They came and stood on the bank above, under the tree which sheltered me. And I experienced a curious phenomenon. I heard, and understood, and remembered the first part of the conversation which passed between them, and did not know it.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said one.

"Not at all," said the other, whose tone, I thought afterwards, betokened surprise, and no great cheerfulness.

"But I have had no other opportunity to speak with you."

"No," said the other, rather uneasily.

Suddenly my senses were alert, and I knew that Mr. Trevor had pulled the detective out of bed. The senator had no doubt anticipated an easier time, and he now began feeling for an opening. More than once he cleared his throat to commence, while Mr. Drew pulled his scant clothing closer about him, his whiskers playing in the breeze.

"In Cincinnati, Mr. Drew," said Mr. Trevor, at length, "I am a known, if not an influential, citizen; and I have served my state for three terms in its Senate."

"I have visited your city, Mr. Trevor," answered Mr. Drew, his teeth chattering audibly, "and I know you by reputation."

"Then, sir," Mr. Trevor continued, with a flourish which appeared absolutely grotesque in his attenuated costume, "it must be clear to you that I cannot give my consent to a flagrant attempt by an unscrupulous person to violate the laws of this country."

"Your feelings are to be respected, sir."

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Mr. Trevor cleared his throat again.

"Discretion is always to be observed, Mr. Drew. And I, who have been in the public service, know the full value of it."

Mr. Trevor leaned forward, at the same time glancing anxiously up at the tree, for fear, perhaps, that Mr. Cooke might be concealed therein. He said in a stage whisper:

"A criminal is concealed on this island."

Drew started perceptibly.

"Yes," said Mr. Trevor, with a glance of triumph at having produced an impression on a detective, "I thought it my duty to inform you. He has been hidden by the followers of the unscrupulous person I referred to, in a cave, I believe. I repeat, sir, as a man of unimpeachable standing, I considered it my duty to tell you."

"You have my sincere thanks, Mr. Trevor," said Drew, holding out his hand, "and I shall act on the suggestion."

Mr. Trevor clasped the hand of the detective, and they returned quietly to their respective tents. And in course of time I followed them, wondering how this incident might affect our morning's expedition.

CHAPTER XIV

My first thought on rising was to look for the detective. The touch of the coming day was on the lake, and I made out the two boats dimly, riding on the dead swell and tugging idly at their chains. The detective had been assigned to a tent which was occupied by Mr. Cooke and the Four, and they were sleeping soundly at my entrance. But Drew's blankets were empty. I hurried to the beach, but the Scimitar's boat was still drawn up there near the Maria's tender, proving that he was still on the island.

Outside of the ladies' tent I came upon Miss Thorn, stowing a large basket. I told her that we had taken that precaution the night before.

"What did you put in?" she demanded.

I enumerated the articles as best I could. And when I had finished, she said,

"And I am filling this with the things you have forgotten."

I lost no time in telling her what I had overheard the night before, and that the detective was gone from his tent. She stopped her packing and looked at me in concern.

“He is probably watching us,” she said. “Do you think we had better go?”

I thought it could do no harm. “If we are followed,” said I, “all we have to do is to turn back.”

Miss Trevor came out as I spoke, and our conductor appeared, bending under the hamper. I shouldered some blankets and the basket, and we started. We followed a rough path, evidently cut by a camping party in some past season, but now overgrown. The Fraction marched ahead, and I formed the rear guard. Several times it seemed to me as though someone were pushing after us, and more than once we halted. I put down the basket and went back to reconnoitre. Once I believed I saw a figure flitting in the gray light, but I set it down to my imagination.

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Finally we reached a brook, sneaking along beneath the underbrush as though fearing to show itself, and we followed its course. Branches lashed our faces and brambles tore our clothes. And then, as the sunlight was filtering through and turning the brook from blue to crystal, we came upon the Celebrity. He was seated in a little open space on the bank, apparently careless of capture. He did not even rise at our approach. His face showed the effect of a sleepless night, and wore an expression inimical to all mankind. The conductor threw his bundle on the bank and laid his hand on the Celebrity's shoulder.

"Halloa, old man!" said he, cheerily. "You must have had a hard night of it. But we couldn't make you any sooner, because that hawk of an officer had his eye on us."

The Celebrity shook himself free. And in place of the gratitude for which the Fraction had looked, and which he had every reason to expect, he got something different.

"This outrage has gone far enough," said the Celebrity, with a terrible calmness. The Fraction was a man of the world.

"Come, come, old chap!" he said soothingly, "don't cut up. We'll make things a little more homelike here." And he pulled a bottle from the depths of the hamper. "This will brace you up."

He picked up the hamper and disappeared into the place of retention, while the Celebrity threw the bottle into the brush. And just then (may I be forgiven if I am imaginative!) I heard a human laugh come from that direction. In the casting of that bottle the Celebrity had given vent to some of the feelings he had been collecting overnight, and it must have carried about thirty yards. I dived after it like a retriever puppy for a stone; but the bottle was gone! Perhaps I could say more, but it doesn't do to believe in yourself too thoroughly when you get up early. I had nothing to say when I returned.

"You here, Crocker?" said the author, fixing his eye on me. "Deuced kind of you to get up so early and carry a basket so far for me."

"It has been a real pleasure, I assure you," I protested. And it had. There was a silent space while the two young ladies regarded him, softened by his haggard and dishevelled aspect, and perplexed by his attitude. Nothing, I believe, appeals to a woman so much as this very lack of bodily care. And the rogue knew it!

"How long is this little game of yours to continue,—this bull-baiting?" he inquired. "How long am I to be made a butt of for the amusement of a lot of imbeciles?"

Miss Thorn crossed over and seated herself on the ground beside him. "You must be sensible," she said, in a tone that she might have used to a spoiled child. "I know it is

difficult after the night you have had. But you have always been willing to listen to reason."

A pang of something went through me when I saw them together. "Reason," said the Celebrity, raising his head. "Reason, yes. But where is the reason in all this? Because a man who happens to be my double commits a crime, is it right that I, whose reputation is without a mark, should be made to suffer? And why have I been made a fool of by two people whom I had every cause to suppose my friends?"

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"You will have to ask them," replied Miss Thorn, with a glance at us. "They are mischief-makers, I'll admit; but they are not malicious. See what they have done this morning! And how could they have foreseen that a detective was on his way to the island?"

"Crocker might have known it," said he, melting. "He's so cursed smart!"

"And think," Miss Thorn continued, quick to follow up an advantage, "think what would have happened if they hadn't denied you. This horrid man would have gone off with you to Asquith or somewhere else, with handcuffs on your wrists; for it isn't a detective's place to take evidence, Mr. Crocker says. Perhaps we should all have had to go to Epsom! And I couldn't bear to see you in handcuffs, you know."

"Don't you think we had better leave them alone?" I said to Miss Trevor.

She smiled and shook her head.

"You are blind as a bat, Mr. Crocker," she said.

The Celebrity had weighed Miss Thorn's words and was listening passively now while she talked. There may be talents which she did not possess; I will not pretend to say. But I know there are many professions she might have chosen had she not been a woman. She would have made a name for herself at the bar; as a public speaker she would have excelled. And had I not been so long accustomed to picking holes in arguments I am sure I should not have perceived the fallacies of this she was making for the benefit of the Celebrity. He surely did not. It is strange how a man can turn under such influence from one feeling to another. The Celebrity lost his resentment; apprehension took its place. He became more and more nervous; questioned me from time to time on the law; wished to know whether he would be called upon for testimony at Allen's trial; whether there was any penalty attached to the taking of another man's name; precisely what Drew would do with him if captured; and the tail of his eye was on the thicket as he made this inquiry. It may be surmised that I took an exquisite delight in quenching this new-born thirst for knowledge. And finally we all went into the cave.

Miss Thorn unpacked the things we had brought, while I surveyed the cavern. It was in the solid rock, some ten feet high and irregular in shape, and perfectly dry. It was a marvel to me how cosy she made it. One of the Maria's lanterns was placed in a niche, and the Celebrity's silver toilet-set laid out on a ledge of the rock, which answered perfectly for a dressing-table. Miss Thorn had not forgotten a small mirror. And as a last office, set a dainty breakfast on a linen napkin on the rock, heating the coffee in a chafing-dish.

"There!" she exclaimed, surveying her labors, "I hope you will be more comfortable."

He had already taken the precaution to brush his hair and pull himself together. His thanks, such as they were, he gave to Miss Thorn. It is true that she had done more than any one else.

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“Good-bye, old boy!” said the Fraction. “We’ll come back when we get the chance, and don’t let that hundred thousand keep you awake.”

The Fraction and I covered up the mouth of the cave with brush. He became confidential.

“Lucky dog, Allen!” he said. “They’ll never get him away from Cooke. And he can have any girl he wants for the asking. By George! I believe Miss Thorn will elope with him if he ever reaches Canada.”

I only mention this as a sample of the Fraction’s point of view. I confess the remark annoyed me at the time.

Miss Thorn lingered in the cave for a minute after Miss Trevor came out. Then we retraced our way down the brook, which was dancing now in the sunlight. Miss Trevor stopped now and then to rest, in reality to laugh. I do not know what the Fraction thought of such heartless conduct. He and I were constantly on the alert for Mr. Drew, but we sighted the camp without having encountered him. It was half-past six, and we had trusted to slip in unnoticed by any one. But, as we emerged from the trees, the bustling scene which greeted our eyes filled us with astonishment. Two of the tents were down, and the third in a collapsed condition, while confusion reigned supreme. And in the midst of it all stood Mr. Cooke, an animated central figure pedestalled on a stump, giving emphatic directions in a voice of authority. He spied us from his elevated position before we had crossed the brook.

“Here they come, Maria,” he shouted.

We climbed to the top of the slope, and were there confronted by Mrs. Cooke and Mr. Trevor, with Mr. Cooke close behind them.

“Where the devil is Allen?” my client demanded excitedly of the Fraction.

“Allen?” repeated that gentleman, “why, we made him comfortable and left him, of course. We had sense enough not to bring him here to be pulled.”

“But, you damfool,” cried Mr. Cooke, slightly forgetting himself, “Drew has escaped.”

“Escaped?”

“Yes, escaped,” said Mr. Cooke, as though our conductor were personally responsible; “he got away this morning. Before we know it, we’ll have the whole police force of Far Harbor out here to jug the lot of us.”

The Fraction, being deficient for the moment in language proper to express his appreciation of this new development, simply volunteered to return for the Celebrity, and left in a great hurry.

"Irene," said Mr. Trevor, "can it be possible that you have stolen away for the express purpose of visiting this criminal?"

"If he is a criminal, father, it is no reason that he should starve."

"It is no reason," cried her father, hotly, "why a young girl who has been brought up as you have, should throw every lady-like instinct to the winds. There are men enough in this camp to keep him from starving. I will not have my daughter's name connected with that of a defaulter. Irene, you have set the seal of disgrace upon a name which I have labored for a lifetime to make one of the proudest in the land. And it was my fond hope that I possessed a daughter who—"

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During this speech my anger had been steadily rising.. But it was Mrs. Cooke who interrupted him.

“Mr. Trevor,” said she, “perhaps you are not aware that while you are insulting your daughter, you are also insulting my niece. It may be well for you to know that Miss Trevor still has my respect as a woman and my admiration as a lady. And, since she has been so misjudged by her father, she has my deepest sympathy. But I wish to beg of you, if you have anything of this nature to say to her, you will take her feelings into consideration as well as ours.”

Miss Trevor gave her one expressive look of gratitude. The senator was effectually silenced. He had come, by some inexplicable inference, to believe that Mrs. Cooke, while subservient to the despotic will of her husband, had been miraculously saved from depravity, and had set her face against this last monumental act of outlawry.