

THE MYSTERY —OF— A HANSOM CAB.

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

CHAPTER VI.—CONTINUED.

Moreland arose and going to a side table, brought Whyte's album, which he laid on the table and opened in silence. The contents were very much the same as the photographs in the room, burlesque actresses and ladies of the ballet predominating; but Mr. Moreland turned over the pages till nearly the end, when he stopped at a large cabinet photograph, and pushed the album toward Mr. Gorby.

"That was the cause," he said. "It was the figure of a charmingly pretty girl, dressed in white, with a sailor hat on her fair hair, and holding a lawn-tennis racket. She was bending half forward, with a winning smile, and in the background was a mass of some tropical plants. Mrs. Hableton gave a cry of surprise at seeing this.

"Why, it's Miss Frettlby," she said. "How did he know her?"

"Knew her father—letters of introduction, and all that sort of thing," said Mr. Moreland, glibly.

"Ah, indeed?" said Mr. Gorby, slowly. "So Mr. Whyte knew Mark Frettlby, the millionaire; but how did he obtain a photograph of the daughter?"

"She gave it to him," said Moreland. "The fact is, Whyte was very much in love with her."

"And she—"

"Was in love with some one else," finished Moreland.

"Exactly!"

"Yes, she loved a Mr. Brian Fitzgerald, to whom she is now engaged. He was mad on her, and Whyte and he used to quarrel over the young lady desperately."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Gorby. "And do you know this Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Oh, dear, no!" answered the other, coolly. "Whyte's friends were not mine. He was a rich young man who had good introductions. I am only a poor devil on the outskirts of society, trying to push my way in the world."

"You know his personal appearance, of course?" observed Mr. Gorby.

"Oh, yes, I can tell you that," said Moreland. "In fact, he's not at all unlike me, which I take to be rather a compliment, as he is said to be good looking. He is tall, rather fair, talks in a bored sort of manner, and is altogether what one would call a heavy swell; but you must have seen him," he went on, turning to Mrs. Hableton, "he was here three or four weeks ago, Whyte told me."

"Oh, that was Mr. Fitzgerald, was it?" said Mrs. Hableton, in surprise. "Yes, he was rather like you; and so the lady they quarrelled over must have been Miss Frettlby."

"Very likely," said Moreland, rising, "putting a card in Gorby's hand. "I'm glad to be of any use to you in this matter, as Whyte was my dearest friend, and I'll do all in my power to help you to find out the murderer."

"I don't think that is a very difficult matter," said Mr. Gorby, slowly.

"Oh, you have suspicion?" said Moreland, looking at him.

"I have."

"Then who do you think murdered Whyte?"

Mr. Gorby paused a moment, and then said deliberately:

"I have an idea—but I'm not certain—when I am certain, I'll speak"

"You think Fitzgerald killed my friend," said Moreland. "I see it in your face."

Mr. Gorby smiled. "Perhaps," he said, ambiguously. "Wait till I am certain."

CHAPTER VII.

A WOOL KING.

Mark Frettlby was one of those fortunate individuals who turned everything he touched into gold. His luck was proverbial throughout Australia. If there was any speculation for which Mark Frettlby went in, other men would be sure to follow, and in every case the result turned out as well, and in many cases than they expected. He had come out in the early days of the colony with comparatively little money, but his great perseverance and never-failing luck had soon changed his hundreds into thousands, and now at the age of 55 he did not himself know the extent of his income. He had large stations scattered all over the colony of Victoria, which brought him in a splendid income; a charming country house, where at certain seasons of the year he dispensed hospitality to his friends, like the lord of an English manor, and a magnificent town house down in St. Kilda, which would not have been unworthy of Park lane.

Nor were his domestic relations less happy. He had a charming wife, who was one of the best known and most popular ladies of Melbourne, and an equally charming daughter, who, being both pretty and an heiress, naturally attracted crowds of suitors. But Madge Frettlby was capricious, and refused innumerable offers. Being an extremely independent young person, with a mind of her own, as she had not yet seen any one she could love, she decided to remain single, and with her mother continued to dispense the hospitality of the mansion at St. Kilda. But the fairy prince comes to every woman, even if she has to wait a hundred years like the Sleeping Beauty, and in this case he arrived at the appointed time. Ah! what a delightful prince he was, tall, handsome and fair haired, who came from Ireland, and answered to the name of Brian Fitzgerald. He had left behind him in the old country a ruined castle and a few acres of barren land, inhabited by discontented tenants who refused to pay the rent, and talked darkly about the Land League and other disagreeable things. Under these circumstances, with no rent coming in, and no prospect of doing anything in the future, Brian had left the castle of his forefathers to the rats and the family banshee, and came out to Australia to make his fortune. He brought letters of introduction to Mark Frettlby, and that gentleman, having taken a fancy to him, assisted him by every means in his power. Under Frettlby's advice, Brian bought a station, and, to his astonishment, in a few years found himself growing rich. The Fitzgeralds had always been more famous for spending than for saving, and it was an agreeable surprise to their latest representative to find the money rolling in instead of out. He began to indulge in castles in the air concerning that other castle in Ireland, with the barren acres and discontented tenants. In his mind's eye he saw the old place rise up in all its pristine splendor out of its ruins; he saw the barren acres well cultivated, and the tenants happy and content—he was rather doubtful on this latter point, but, with the rash confidence of eight-and-twenty, determined to do his best to perform even the impossible. Having built and furnished his castle in the air, Brian naturally thought of giving it a mistress, and this time actual appearance took the place of vision. He fell in love with Madge Frettlby, and having decided in his own mind that she and none other was fitted to grace the visionary

balls of his renovated castle, he watched his opportunity and declared himself. She, woman like, coquetted with him for some time, but at last, unable to withstand the impetuosity of her Irish lover, confessed in a low voice, with a pretty smile on her face, that she could not live without him. Whereupon—well—lovers being of a conservative turn of mind, and accustomed to observe the traditional forms of wooing, the result can easily be guessed. Brian hunted all over the jewelers' shops in Melbourne with love-like assiduity, and having obtained a ring wherein were set some tourquois stones as blue as his own eyes, he placed it on her slender finger, and at last felt that his engagement was an accomplished fact. This being satisfactorily arranged, he next proceeded to interview the father, and had just screwed his courage up to the awful ordeal, when something occurred which postponed the interview indefinitely. Mrs. Frettlby was out driving, when the horses took fright and bolted. The coachman and groom both escaped unhurt, but Mrs. Frettlby was thrown out and killed instantaneously. This was the first really great trouble that had fallen on Mark Frettlby, and he seemed to be stunned by it. Shutting himself up in his room he refused to see any one, even his daughter, and appeared at the funeral with a white and haggard face, which shocked every one. When everything was over and the body of the late Mrs. Frettlby was consigned to the earth with all the pomp and ceremony which money could give, the bereaved husband rode home and resumed his old life. But he was never the same again. His face, which had always been so genial and bright, became stern and sad. He seldom smiled, and when he did it was a faint, wintry smile, which seemed mechanical. His whole heart seemed centered in his daughter. She became the sole mistress of the St. Kilda mansion, and her father idolized her. She seemed to be the one thing left to him which gave him an interest in life, and had it not been for her bright presence constantly near him, Mark Frettlby would have wished himself lying beside his dead wife in the quiet graveyard, where there is no trouble or care. After a time had elapsed Brian again resolved to ask Mr. Frettlby for the hand of his daughter when for the second time fate interposed. This time it was a rival suitor who made his appearance, and Brian's hot Irish temper rose when he saw another Richmond in the field. The gentleman in question was a Mr. Oliver Whyte, who had come out from England a few months previously, and brought a letter of introduction to Mr. Frettlby, who received him hospitably, as was his custom, and Whyte soon made himself perfectly at home in the St. Kilda mansion.

Brian took a dislike to the new comer the first time he saw him, for Mr. Fitzgerald was a student of Lavater, and prided himself on his reading of character. His opinion of Whyte was anything but flattering to that gentleman, for in spite of his handsome face and suave manners, both Brian and Madge felt the same repulsion toward him as they would have to a snake. Mr. Whyte, however, with true diplomacy, affected not to notice the cold way in which Madge received him, and began to pay marked attention to her, much to Brian's disgust. At last he asked her to be his wife, and notwithstanding her prompt refusal, spoke to Mr. Frettlby on the subject. Much to the daughter's astonishment, that gentleman consented to Whyte's paying his addresses to Madge, and told her that he wished her to consider the young man's proposal favorably. In spite of all Madge could say, he refused to alter his decision, and Whyte, feeling himself safe, began to treat Brian with an insolence which was highly galling to Fitzgerald's

proud nature. He called on Whyte at his lodgings, and after a violent quarrel with him had left the house, vowing to kill Whyte should he marry Madge Frettlby. Fitzgerald went alone to Mr. Frettlby that same night, and had an interview with him. He confessed that he loved Madge, and that his love was returned. So, when Madge added her entreaties to Brian's, Mr. Frettlby found himself unable to withstand the combined forces, and gave his consent to their engagement. Whyte was absent in the country for the next few days after his stormy interview with Brian, and it was only on his return that he learnt that Madge was engaged to his rival. He saw Mr. Frettlby on the subject, and having learnt from his own lips that such was the case, he left the house at once, and swore that he would never enter it again. He little knew how prophetic his words were, for on that same night he met his death in a hansom cab. He had passed out of the life of both the lovers, and they, glad that he troubled them no more, never suspected for a moment that the body of the unknown man found in Rowston's cab was that of Oliver Whyte.

About two weeks after Whyte's disappearance, Mr. Frettlby gave a dinner party in honor of his daughter's birthday. It was a delightful evening, and the wide French windows, which led on to the veranda were open, letting in a gentle breeze, blowing with a fresh, salt odor from the ocean. Outside there was a kind of screen of tropical plants, and through the tangle of the boughs the guests, seated at the table, could just see the waters of the bay glittering like silver in the pale moonlight. Brian was seated opposite to Madge, and every now and then he caught a glimpse of her bright face behind the great silver epergne, filled with fruits and flowers, which stood in the centre of the table. Mark Frettlby was at the head of the table, and appeared in very good spirits, for his stern features were somewhat relaxed, and he drank more wine than usual. The soup had just been removed when some one who was late entered with apologies and took his seat. Some one in this case was Mr. Felix Rolleston, one of the best known young men in Melbourne. He had an income of his own, scribbled a little for the papers, was to be seen at every house of any pretensions to fashion in Melbourne, and was always bright, happy and full of news. Whenever any scandal occurred Felix Rolleston was sure to know it first, and could tell more about it than any one else. He knew everything that was going on, both at home and abroad. His knowledge, if not very accurate, was at least extensive, and his conversation was piquant and witty. As Calton, one of the leading lawyers of the city, said, "Rolleston put him in mind of what Beaconsfield said of one of his characters in 'Lothair.' 'He wasn't an intellectual Cæsar, but his pockets were always full of sixpences.'" There was a good deal of truth in Calton's remarks, and Felix always distributed his sixpences freely. The conversation had been dull for the last few minutes at the Frettlby dinner table; consequently when Felix arrived everybody brightened, as they felt certain now that the conversation would be amusing.

"So awfully sorry, don't you know," said Felix, as he slipped into a seat by Madge, "but a fellow like me has got to be careful of his time—so many calls on it."

"So many calls in it, you mean," retorted Madge with a disbelieving smile. "Confess, now, you have been making a round of visits."

"Well, yes," assented Mr. Rolleston, "that's the disadvantage of having a large circle of acquaintances. They give you weak tea and thin bread and butter, whereas—"

"You would rather have a B. and S. and some deviled kidneys," finished Brian.

There was a laugh at this, but Mr. Rolleston disdained to notice the interruption.

"The only advantage of a 5 o'clock tea," he went on, "is that it brings people together, and one hears what's going on."

"Ah, yes, Rolleston," said Mr. Frettlby, who was looking at him with an amused smile, "what news have you?"

"Good news, bad news, and such news as you have never heard of," quoted Rolleston, gravely. "Yes, I have a bit of news. Have you heard it?"

As no one knew what the news was they could not very well say that they had, so Rolleston was happy, having found out that he could make a sensation.

"Well do you know," he said, gravely fixing in his eyeglass, "they found out the name of the fellow that was murdered in the hansom cab?"

"Never!" cried every one eagerly.

"Yes," went on Rolleston, "and what's more you all know him."

"It's never Whyte?" said Brian, in a horrified tone.

"Hang it, how did you know?" said Rolleston, rather annoyed at being forestalled. "Why I just heard it at the St. Kilda station."

"O, easily enough," said Brian, rather confused. "I used to see Whyte constantly, and as I had not set eyes on him for the last two weeks I thought it might be him."

"How did they find out who it was?" asked Mr. Frettlby, idly sipping with his wine glass.

"Oh one of those detective fellows, you know," answered Felix. "They know everything."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Frettlby, referring to the fact that Whyte was murdered. "He had a letter of introduction to me and seemed a clever, pushing young fellow."

"A confounded cad," muttered Felix, under his breath; and Brian, who overheard him, seemed inclined to assent.

For the rest of the meal nothing was talked about but the murder and the mystery in which it was shrouded. When the ladies retired they chatted about it in the drawing room, but finally dropped it for more agreeable subjects. The gentlemen, however, when the cloth had been removed, filled their glasses, and continued their discussion with unabated vigor. Brian alone did not take part in the conversation. He sat moodily staring at his untasted wine, and wrapped in a brown study.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LESSON IV.

"Does the man drive fast?"

"Yes, very fast."

"He may run over and kill somebody?"

"Yes, he may, but he does not seem to care for that. Ah! it is a doctor! That is why he is on the rush."

"Is someone dying?"

"I fear there is. See how he rushes up to that door and pulls the bell. Now he goes in. Now he comes out. I will speak with him."

"What does he say?"

"He says that the man who lives here called and told him that his wife had heart trouble and might not live an hour."

"Poor thing! And he found her dead?"

"Oh, no. He found her down town on a shopping excursion, and she left word that she wouldn't be home until dark."

"And won't she die?"

"Not unless her husband refuses to buy her a new dress, or cuts her short on bonnets."

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