

THIS STORY BEGAN IN No. 25.

THE MYSTERY —OF— A HANSOM CAB

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

CHAPTER XXIX.

There was not much sleep for Brian that night. He left Madge almost immediately, and went home, but did not go to bed. He felt too anxious and ill at ease to sleep, and passed the greater part of the night walking up and down his room, occupied with his own sad thoughts. He was wondering in his own mind as to what could be the meaning of Roger Moreland's visit to Mark Frettlby. All the evidence that he had given at the trial was that he had met Whyte, and had been drinking with him during the evening. Whyte then went out, and that was the last Moreland had seen of him. Now, the question was, "What did he go to see Mark Frettlby for?" He had no acquaintance with him, and yet he called by appointment. It is true he might have been in poverty, and the millionaire being wellknown as an extremely generous man, Moreland might have called on him to get money. But then the cry which Frettlby had given after the interview had lasted a short time proved that he had been startled. Madge had gone upstairs and found the doors locked, her father refusing her admission. Now, why was he so anxious Moreland should not be seen by any one? That he had made some startling revelation was certain, and Fitzgerald felt sure that it was in connection with the hansom cab murder case. He wearied himself with conjectures about the matter, and towards daybreak threw himself, dressed as he was, on the bed, and slept heavily till twelve o'clock the next day. When he arose and looked at himself in the glass, he was startled at the haggard and worn appearance of his face. The moment he was awake his mind went back to Mark Frettlby and the visit of Roger Moreland.

"The next is closing round him," he murmured to himself. "I don't see how he can escape. Oh! Madge! Madge! if I could only spare you the bitterness of knowing what you must know, sooner or later, and that other, unhappy girl—the sins of the fathers will be visited on the children—God help them."

He had his bath, and, after dressing himself, went into his sitting-room, where he had a cup of tea, which refreshed him considerably. Mrs. Sampson came crackling merrily upstairs with a letter, and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise, on seeing his altered appearance.

"Lor, sir!" she exclaimed. "What 'ave you bin a-doin'—me knowin' your 'abits know'd as you'd gone to bed, not to say as it's very temptin' in this 'ot weather, but with excuses, sir, you looks as you 'adn't slept a blessed wink."

"No more I have," said Brian, listlessly holding out his hand for the letter. "I was walking up and

down my room all last night—I must have walked miles."

"Ah! 'ow that puts me in mind of my pore 'usband," chirped the cricket; "bein' a printer, and accustomed like a howl to the darkness, when 'e was 'ome for the night 'e walked up and down till 'e wore out the carpet, bein' an expensive one, as I 'ad on my marriage, an' the only way I could stop 'im was by givin' 'im something soothin', which you, sir, ought to try—whisky 'ot, with lemon and sugar—but I've 'eard tell as chloroform——"

"No, d——it," said Brian, hastily, startled out of his politeness. "I've had enough of that."

"Achin' teeth, no doubt," said the landlady, going to the door, "which I'm of often taken that way myself, decayen teeth runnin' in the family, 'tbo, to be sure, mine are stronger than former, a lodger of mine 'avin' bin a dentist, an' doin' them beautiful, instead of payin' rent, not 'avin' ready cash, his boxes bein' filled with bricks on 'is departure from the 'ouse."

As Brian did not appear particularly interested in these domestic reminiscences, and seemed as if he wanted to be left alone, Mrs. Sampson, with a final crackle, went down stairs and talked with a neighbor in the kitchen, as to the desirability of drawing her money out of the savings bank, in case the Russians should surprise and capture Melbourne.

Brian, left alone, stared out of the window at the dusty road and the black shadows cast by the tall poplars in front of the house.

"I must leave this place," he said to himself; "every chance remark seems to bear on the murder, and I'm not going to have it constantly by my side like the skeleton at the feast."

He suddenly recollected the letter which he held in his hand, and which he now looked at for the first time. It proved to be from Madge, and tearing it hastily open, he read it.

"I cannot understand what is the matter with papa," she wrote. "Ever since that man Moreland left last night, he shut himself up in his study, and is writing there hour after hour. I went up this morning, but he would not let me in. He did not come down to breakfast, and I am getting seriously alarmed. Come down to-morrow and see me, for I am anxious about his state of health and I am sure that Moreland told him something which has upset him."

"Writing," said Brian as he put the letter in his pocket, "what about, I wonder? Perhaps he is thinking of committing suicide! if so, I for one will not stop him. It is a horrible thing to do, but it would be acting for the best under the circumstances."

In spite of his determination to see Calton and tell all, Fitzgerald did not go near him that day. He felt ill and weary, the want of sleep and mental worry, telling on him fearfully, and he looked ten years older than he did before the murder of Whyte. It is trouble which draws lines on the smooth forehead and furrows round the mouth. If a man has any mental worry, his life becomes a positive agony to him. Mental tortures are quite as bad as physical ones, if not worse. The

last thing before dropping off to sleep is the thought of trouble, and with the first faint light of dawn, it returns and hammers all day at the weary brain. But while a man can sleep, life is rendered at least endurable; and of all the blessings which Providence has bestowed, there is none so precious as that same sleep, which, as wise Sancho Panza says, "Wraps every man like a cloak." Brian felt the need of rest, so sending a telegram to Calton to call on him in the morning, and another to Madge, that he would be down to luncheon next day, he stayed inside all day, and amused himself with smoking and reading. He went to bed early, and succeeded in having a sound sleep, so when he awoke next morning, he felt considerably refreshed and reinvigorated.

He was having his breakfast at half past eight, when he heard the sound of wheels, and immediately afterwards a ring at the bell. He went to the window, and saw Calton's trap was at the door, while the owner was shortly afterwards shown into the room.

"Well, you are a nice fellow," cried Calton, after greetings were over. "Here I've been waiting for you with all the patience of Job, thinking you were still up country."

"Will you have some breakfast?" asked Brian, laughing at his indignation.

"What have you got?" said Calton, looking over the table. "Hum and eggs. Humph! Your landlady's culinary ideas are very limited."

"Most landladies' ideas are," retorted Fitzgerald, resuming his breakfast. "Unless Heaven invents some new animal, lodgers will go on getting beef and mutton, alternated with hash, until the end of the world."

"When one is in Rome, one mustn't speak ill of the Pope," answered Calton with a grimace. "Do you think your landlady could supply me with some brandy and soda?"

"I think so," answered Fitzgerald, rising and ringing the bell; but isn't it rather early for that sort of thing?"

"There's a proverb about glass houses," said Calton, severely, "which applies to you in this particular instance."

Whereupon Fitzgerald laughed, and Calton having been supplied with what he required, prepared to talk business.

"I need hardly tell you how anxious I am to hear what you've got to say," he said, leaning back in his chair, "but I may as well tell you that I am satisfied that I know half your secret already."

"Indeed!" Fitzgerald looked astonished. "In that case, I need not——"

"Yes you need," retorted Calton. "I told you I only know half."

"Which half?"

"Hum—rather difficult to answer—however, I'll tell you what I know and you can supply all deficiencies. I am quite ready—go on—stop—" he arose and closed the door carefully. "Well," resuming his seat, "Mother Guttersnipe died the other night."

"Is she dead?"

"As a door nail," answered Calton calmly. "And a horrible death-bed it was—her screams ring in my ears yet—but before she died she sent for me, and said——"

"What?"

"That she was the mother of Rosanna Moore."

"Yes!"

"And that Sal Rawlins was Rosanna's child."

"And the father?" said Brian, in a low voice.

"Was Mark Frettlby."

"Ah!"

"And now what have you to tell me?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing," echoed Calton, surprised, "then this is what Rosanna Moore told you when she died?"

"Yes!"

"Then why have you made such a mystery about it?"

"You ask that," said Fitzgerald, looking up in surprise. "If I had told it, don't you see what difference it would have made to Madge?"

"I'm sure I don't," retorted the barrister, completely mystified. "I suppose you mean Frettlby's connection with Rosanna Moore; well, of course, it was not a very creditable thing for her to have been Frettlby's mistress, but still——"

"His mistress?" said Fitzgerald, looking up sharply; "then you don't know all?"

"What do you mean—was she not his mistress?"

"No—his wife!"

Calton sprang to his feet, and gave a cry of surprise.

"His wife!"

Fitzgerald nodded.

"Why, Mother Guttersnipe did not know this—she thought Rosanna was his mistress."

"He kept his marriage secret," answered Brian, "and as his wife ran away with someone else shortly afterwards he never revealed it."

"I understand now," said the barrister, slowly. For if Mark Frettlby was lawfully married to Rosanna Moore—Madge is illegitimate."

"Yes, and she now occupies the place which Sal Rawlins—or Sal Frettlby—ought to."

"Poor girl," said Calton, a little sadly. "But all this does not explain the mystery of Whyte's murder."

"I will tell you that," said Fitzgerald, quickly. "When Rosanna left her husband, she ran away to England with some young fellow, and when he got tired of her, she returned to the stage, and became famous as a burlesque actress, under the name of Musette. There she met Whyte, as your friend found out, and they came out here for the purpose of extorting money from Frettlby. When they arrived in Melbourne, Rosanna let Whyte do all the business, and kept herself quiet. She gave her marriage certificate to Whyte and he had it on him the night he was murdered."

"Then Gorby was right," interposed Calton, eagerly. "The man to whom those papers were valued did murder Whyte?"

"Can you doubt it? And that man was——"

"Not Mark Frettlby?" burst out Calton. "In God's name, not Mark Frettlby?"

Brian nodded. "Yes, Mark Frettlby!"

There was a silence for a few moments, Calton being too much startled by the revelation to say anything. "When did you discover this?"

he asked, after a pause.

"At the time you first came to see me in prison," said Brian. "I had no suspicion till then; but when you said Whyte was murdered for the sake of certain papers—knowing what they were and to whom they were valuable—I immediately guessed that Mark Frettlby had killed Whyte in order to obtain them, and keep his secret."

"There can be no doubt of it," said the barrister, with a sigh. "So this is the reason Frettlby wanted Madge to marry Whyte—her hand was to be the price of his silence. When he withdrew his consent, Whyte threatened him with the exposure. I remember he left the house in a very excited state on the night he was murdered. Frettlby must have followed him up to town, got into the cab with him, and after killing him with chloroform, took the marriage certificate from his secret pocket, and escaped."

Brian rose to his feet, and walked rapidly up and down the room.

"Now you can understand what a hell my life has been for the last few months," he said, "knowing that he had committed the crime; and yet I had to sit with him, eat with him, and drink with him, with the knowledge that he was a murderer, and Madge—good God—Madge, his daughter!"

Just then a knock came to his door, and Mrs. Sampson entered with a telegram, which she handed to Brian. He tore it open as she withdrew, and, glancing over it, gave a cry of horror and left it flutter to his feet.

Calton turned rapidly on hearing his cry, and, seeing him fall into a chair with a ghastly white face, snatched up the telegram and read it. When he did so his face grew as pale and started as Fitzgerald's, and, lifting his hand, he said solemnly:

"It is the judgment of God!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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