

THIS STORY BEGAN IN NO. 29.

# THE MYSTERY —OF— A HANSOM CAB

BY FERGUS W. HUME.

### CHAPTER XXX.

But it was too late: Madge had caught sight of the names on the paper—"Marriage—Rosanna Moore—Mark Frettlby"—and the whole awful truth flashed upon her. These were the papers Rosanna Moore had handed to Whyte. Whyte had been murdered by the man to whom the papers were of value—

"God! My father!"

She staggered blindly forward, and then, with one piercing shriek, fell to the ground. In doing so, she struck against her father, who was still standing beside the table. Awakened suddenly, with that wild cry in his ears, he opened his eyes wide, put out feeble hands, as if to keep something back, and with a strangled cry fell dead on the floor beside his daughter. Sal, horror-struck, did not lose her presence of mind, but snatching the papers, off the table, thrust them into her pocket, and then shrieked aloud for the servants. But they, already attracted by Madge's wild cry, came hurrying in, to find Mark Frettlby, the millionaire, lying dead, and his daughter lying in a faint beside her father's corpse.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

As soon as Brian received the telegram which announced the death of Mark Frettlby, he put on his hat, stepped into Calton's trap, and drove along to the St. Kilda station in Flinders Street with that gentleman. There Calton dismissed his trap, sending a note to his clerk with the groom, and went down to St. Kilda with Fitzgerald. On arrival they found the whole house perfectly quiet and orderly, owing to the excellent management of Sal Rawlins. She had taken the command in everything and although the servants, knowing her antecedents, were disposed to resent her doing so, yet such was her administrative powers and strong will, that they obeyed her implicitly. Mark Frettlby's body had been taken up to his bedroom, Madge had been put to bed, and Dr. Chinston and Brian sent for. When they arrived they could not help expressing their admiration at the capital way in which Sal Rawlins had managed things.

"She's a clever girl that," whispered Calton to Fitzgerald. "Curious thing she should have taken up her proper position in her father's house. Fate is a deal cleverer than we mortals think her."

Brian was about to reply when Dr. Chinston entered the room. His face was very grave, and Fitzgerald looked at him in alarm.

"Madge—Miss Frettlby," he faltered.

"Is very ill," replied the doctor; "has an attack of brain fever. I can't answer for the consequences yet."

Brian sat down on the sofa, and stared at the doctor in a dazed sort of way. Madge dangerously ill—perhaps dying. What if she did die, and he lost the true-hearted woman who stood so nobly by him in his trouble?

"Cheer up," said Chinston, patting him on the shoulder; "while there's life there's hope, and whatever human aid can do to save her will be done."

Brian grasped the doctor's hand in silence, his heart being too full to speak.

"How did Frettlby die?" asked Calton.

"Heart disease," said Chinston. "His heart was very much affected, as I discovered a week or so ago. It appears he was walking in his sleep, and entering the drawing-room, he alarmed Miss Frettlby, who screamed, and must have touched him. He awoke suddenly, and the natural consequences followed—he dropped down dead."

"What alarmed Miss Frettlby?" asked Brian, in a low voice, covering his face with his hand.

"The sight of her father walking in his sleep, I suppose," said Chinston, buttoning his glove; "and the shock of his death which took place indirectly through her, accounts for the brain fever."

"Madge Frettlby is not the woman to scream and waken a somnambulist," and Calton, decidedly "knowing as she did the danger. There must be some other reason."

"This young woman will tell you all about it," said Chinston, nodding toward Sal, who entered the room at this moment. "She was present, and since then has managed things admirably; and now I must go," he said, shaking hands with Calton and Fitzgerald. "Keep up your heart, my boy; I'll pull her through yet."

After the doctor had gone, Calton turned sharply to Sal Rawlins, who stood waiting to be addressed.

"Well," he said briskly, "can you tell us what startled Miss Frettlby?"

"I can, sir," she answered quietly. "I was in the drawing-room when Mr. Frettlby died—but—we had better go up to the study."

"Why?" asked Calton, in surprise, as he and Fitzgerald followed her up stairs.

"Because, sir," she said, when they had entered the study and she had locked the door, "I don't want any one but yourselves to know what I tell you."

"More mystery," muttered Calton, as he glanced at Brian, and took his seat at the esecutoire.

"Mr. Frettlby went to bed early last night," said Sal, calmly, "and Miss Madge and I were talking together in the drawing-room, when he entered, walking in his sleep, and carrying some papers—"

Both Calton and Fitzgerald started, and the latter grew pale.

"He came down to the room, and spread out a paper on the table where the lamp was. Miss Madge bent forward to see what it was. I tried to stop her, but it was too late. She gave a scream, and fell on the floor. In doing so she happened to touch her father. He awoke, and fell down dead."

"And the papers?" asked Calton, uneasily.

Sal did not answer, but producing

them from her pocket, laid them in his hands.

Brian bent forward, as Calton opened the envelope in silence, but both gave vent to exclamation of horror at seeing the certificate of marriage which they knew Rosanna Moore had given to Whyte. Their worst suspicion were confirmed, and Brian turned away his head, afraid to meet the barrister's eye. The latter folded up the papers thoughtfully, and put them in his pocket.

"You know what these are?" he asked Sal, eyeing her keenly.

"I could hardly help knowing," she answered; "It proves that Rosanna Moore was Mr. Frettlby's wife, and —" she hesitated.

"Go on," said Brian, in a harsh tone, looking up.

"And they were the papers she gave Mr. Whyte."

"Well!"

Sal was silent for a moment, and then looked up with a flush.

"You needn't think I'm going to split," she said, indignantly, recurring to her Bourke-street slang in the excitement of the moment. "I know what you know," but help me G—I'll be as silent as the grave."

"Thank you," said Brian, fervently, taking her hand; "I know you love her too well to betray this terrible secret."

"I would be a nice un', I would," said Sal, with scorn, "after her lifting me out of the gutter, to round on her—a poor girl like me, without a friend or relative, now Gran's dead."

Calton looked up quickly. It was plain Sal was quite ignorant that Rosanna Moore was her mother. So much the better; they would keep her in ignorance, perhaps not altogether, but it would be folly to un deceive her at present.

"I'm goin' to Miss Madge now," she said, going to the door, "and I won't see you again; she's getting light-headed, and might let it out; but I'll not let any one in but myself," and so saying, she left the room.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters," said Calton oracularly. "The kindness of Miss Frettlby to that poor wail is already bearing fruit—gratitude is the rarest of qualities, rarer even than modesty."

Fitzgerald made no answer, but stared out of the window, and thought of his darling lying sick unto death, and he could do nothing to save her.

"Well," said Calton, sharply.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Fitzgerald, turning in confusion. "I suppose the will must be read, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes," answered the barrister, "I am one of the executors."

"And the others?"

"Yourself and Chinston," answered Calton; "so I suppose," turning to the desk, "we can look at his papers, and see that all is straight."

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Brian, mechanically, his thoughts far away, and then he turned again to the window. Suddenly Calton gave vent to an exclamation of surprise, and, turning hastily, Brian saw him holding a thick roll of papers in his hand, which he had taken out of the drawer.

"Look here, Fitzgerald," he said, greatly excited, "here is Frettlby's confession—look!" and he held it

up.

Brian sprang forward in astonishment. So at last the hansom cab mystery was to be cleared up. These sheets, no doubt, contained the whole narration of the crime, and how it was committed.

"We will read it, of course," he said, hesitating, half hoping that Calton would propose to destroy it at once.

"Yes," answered Calton; "the three executors must read it, and then we will burn it."

"That will be the better way," answered Brian, gloomily. "Frettlby is dead, and the law can do nothing in the matter, so it would be best to avoid the scandal of publicity. But why tell Chinston?"

"We must," said Calton, decidedly. "He will be sure to gather the truth from Madge's ravings, and may as well know all. He is quite safe, and will be silent as the grave. But I am more sorry to tell Kilsip."

"The detective! Good God, Calton you will not do so!"

"I must," replied the barrister, quietly. "Kilsip is firmly persuaded that Moreland committed the crime, and I have the same dread of his pertinacity as you had of me. He may find out all."

"What must be, must be," said Fitzgerald, clenching his hands. "But I hope no one else will find out this miserable story. There's Moreland, for instance."

"Ah, true!" said Calton, thoughtfully. "He called and saw Frettlby the other night, you say?"

"Yes. I wonder what for?"

"There is only one answer," said the barrister, slowly. "He must have seen Frettlby following Whyte when he left the hotel, and wanted hush-money."

"I wonder if he got it," observed Fitzgerald.

"Oh, I'll soon find that out," answered Calton, opening the drawer again, and taking out the dead man's cheque-book. "Let me see what cheques have been drawn lately."

Most of the blocks were filled up with small amounts, and one or two for a hundred or so. Calton could find no large sum such as Moreland would have demanded, when, at the very end of the book, he found a cheque torn off, leaving the block-slip quite blank.

"There you are," he said, triumphantly holding out the book to Fitzgerald. "He wasn't such a fool as to write in the amount on the block, but tore the cheque out, and wrote in the sum required."

"And what's to be done about it?"

"Let him keep it of course," answered Calton, shrugging his shoulders. "It's the only way to secure his silence."

"I expect he cashed it yesterday, and is off by this time," said Brian, after a moment's pause.

"So much the better for us," said Calton, grimly. "But I don't think he's off, or Kilsip would have let me know. We must tell him, or he'll get everything out of Moreland, and the consequences would be that all Melbourne will know the story; whereas, by showing him the confession, we get him to leave Moreland alone, and thus secure silence in both cases."

"I suppose we must see Chinston?"

"Yes, of course. I will telegraph

to him and Kilsip to come up to my office this afternoon at three o'clock, and then we will settle the whole matter."

"And Sal Rawlins?"

"Oh! I quite forgot about her," said Calton, in a perplexed voice.

"She knows nothing about her parents, and, of course, Mark Frettlby died in the belief that she was dead."

"We must tell Madge," said Brian, gloomily. "There is no help for it. Sal is by rights the heiress to the money of her dead father."

"That depends upon the will," replied Calton, dryly. "If it specifies that the money is left to 'my daughter, Margaret Frettlby,' Sal Rawlins can have no claim; and if such is the case, it will be no good telling her who she is."

"And what's to be done?"

"Sal Rawlins," went on the barrister, without noticing the interruption, "has evidently never given a thought to her father or mother, as the old hag, no doubt, swore, they were dead. So I think it will be best to keep silent—that is, if no money is left to her, and, as her father thought her dead, I don't think there will be any. In that case, it would be best to settle an income on her. You can easily find a pretext, and let the matter rest."

"But suppose, in accordance with the wording of the will, she is entitled to all the money?"

"In that case," said Calton, gravely, "there is only one course open—she must be told everything, and the dividing of the money left to her generosity. But I don't think you need be alarmed, I'm pretty sure Madge is the heiress."

"It's not the money I think about," said Brian, hastily. "I'd take Madge without a penny."

"My boy," said the barrister, placing his hand kindly on Brian's shoulder, "when you marry Madge Frettlby, you will get what is better than money—a heart of gold."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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