



A TALE OF BRAVE DEEDS AND PERILOUS VENTURES.

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SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PUBLISHED.

Lord Charles Wheatley, having taken leave in London (in a parting not overcharged with emotion) of Miss Beatrice Hipgrave, to whom he is to be married in a year; of her mother, Mrs. Kennett Hipgrave, and of Mr. Bennett Hamlyn, a rich young man who gives promise of seeing that Miss Hipgrave does not wholly lack a man's attentions in the absence of her lover,—sets out to enter possession of a remote Greek island, Neopalia, which he has purchased of the hereditary lord, Stefanopoulos. But on arriving he finds himself anything but welcome. He and his companions,—namely, his cousin, Denny Swinton; his factotum, Hogvardt; and his servant, Watkins,—are at once locked up; and though released soon, it is with a warning from the populace, headed by Vlacho, the innkeeper, that if found on the island after six o'clock the next morning, their lives will not be worth much. Toward midnight, little disposed to sleep, and curious to look about somewhat before leaving the island, they stroll inland, and come by chance upon the manor-house, still and apparently deserted. Curiosity drives them to enter. They find Lord Stefanopoulos, whom Vlacho had reported to them as recently dead of a fever, not dead, but on the point of dying—from a dagger wound. And the wound, they learn from his own lips, was given him by his nephew, Constantine, in a tumult that arose a few hours before when the people came up to protest against the sale of the island, and to persuade the lord to send the strangers away. Constantine, it further

appears, is making them all their trouble, having come to the island just ahead of them to that end, after learning their plans by overhearing Wheatley talking in a London restaurant. In the darkness, on their way up, they have met a man and a woman going toward the village. The man, by his voice, they knew to be Constantine. The woman, they now learn, was the Lady Euphrosyne, cousin of Constantine and heiress to the island. From talk overheard between her and Constantine, she had seemed to be, while desirous of their departure, also anxious to spare them harm. In full possession of the house, they decide to stand siege, though scant of provisions and ammunition, and armed only with their own revolvers and a rifle left behind by Constantine. Soon Stefanopoulos dies, and by an old serving-woman they send warning to Constantine that he shall be brought to justice for his crime. Thus passes the night. Next morning Wheatley's attention is engaged by a woman studying them through a field-glass from before a small bungalow, higher up the mountain. Then Vlacho, the innkeeper, presents himself for a parley, of which nothing comes but the disclosure that Constantine is pledged to marry Euphrosyne, while already secretly married to another woman. The evening falls with the "death-chant" sounding in the air—a chant made by Alexander the Bard when an earlier Lord Stefanopoulos was killed by the people for having tried to sell the island. Lord Wheatley himself tells the story.

CHAPTER IV.

A RAID AND A RAIDER.

IT was between eight and nine o'clock when the first of the enemy appeared on the road, in the persons of two smart fellows in gleaming kilts and braided jackets. It was no more than just dusk, and I saw that they were strangers to me. One was tall and broad, the other shorter, and of very slight build. They came on towards us confidently enough. I was looking over Denny's shoulder; he held Constantine's rifle, and I knew that he was impatient to try it. But inasmuch as might was certainly not on our side, I was determined that right should abide with us,

and was resolute not to begin hostilities. Constantine had at least one powerful motive for wishing our destruction; I would not furnish him with any plausible excuse for indulging his desire. So we stood, Denny and I at one window, Hogvardt and Watkins at the other, and watched the approaching figures. No more appeared; the main body did not show itself, and the sound of the fierce chant had suddenly died away. But all at once a third man appeared, running rapidly after the first two. He caught the shorter by the arm, and seemed to argue or expostulate with him. For a while the three stood thus talking; then I saw the last comer make a gesture of protest, and they all came on together.

"Push the barrel of that rifle a little farther out," said I to Denny. "It may be useful to them to know it's there."

Denny obeyed. The result was a sudden pause in our friends' advance; but they were near enough now for me to distinguish the last comer, and I discerned in him, although he wore the native costume, and had discarded his tweed suit, Constantine Stefanopoulos himself.

"Here's an exercise of self-control," I groaned, laying a detaining hand on Denny's shoulder.

As I spoke, Constantine put a whistle to his lips and blew loudly. The blast was followed by the appearance of five more fellows. In three of them I recognized old acquaintances—Vlacho, Demetri, and Spiro. These three all carried guns; and the whole eight came forward again, till they were within a hundred yards of us. There they halted, and, with a sudden, swift movement, three barrels were levelled at the window where Denny and I were looking out. Well, we ducked. There is no use in denying it. For we thought that the fusillade had really begun. Yet no shot followed, and, after an instant, holding Denny down, I peered out cautiously myself. The three stood motionless, their aim full on us. The other five were advancing cautiously, well under the shelter of the rock, two on one side of the road and three on the other. The slim, boyish fellow was with Constantine, on our right hand; a moment later the other three dashed across the road and joined them. Suddenly what military men call "the objective," the aim of these manœuvres, flashed across me. It was simple almost to ludicrousness; yet it was very serious, for it showed a reasoned plan of campaign, with which we were very ill prepared to cope. While the three held us in check, the five were going to carry off our cows. And without our cows we should soon be hard put to it for food. For the cows had formed in our plans a most important *pièce de résistance*.

"This won't do," said I. "They're after the cows." And I took the rifle from Denny's hand, cautioning him not to show his face at the window. Then I stood in the shelter of the wall, so that I could not be hit by the three, and levelled the rifle, not at any human enemies, but at the unoffending cows.

"A dead cow," I remarked, "is a great deal harder to move than a live one."

The five had now come quite near the pen of rude hurdles in which the cows

were. As I spoke, Constantine appeared to give some order; and while he and the boy stood looking on, Constantine leaning on his gun, the boy's hand resting with jaunty elegance on the handle of the knife in his girdle, the others leaped over the hurdles. Crack, went the rifle! A cow fell! I reloaded hastily. Crack! And the second cow fell. It was very fair shooting in such a bad light, for I hit both mortally; and my skill was rewarded by a shout of anger from the robbers (for robbers they were; I had bought the live stock).

"Carry them off now!" I cried, carelessly showing myself at the window. But I did not stay there long, for three shots rang out, and the bullets pattered on the masonry above me. Luckily the covering party had aimed a trifle too high.

"No more milk, my lord," observed Watkins, in a regretful tone. He had seen the catastrophe from the other window.

The besiegers were checked. They leaped out of the pen with alacrity. I suppose they realized that they were exposed to my fire, while at that particular angle I was protected from the attack of their friends. They withdrew to the middle of the road, selecting a spot at which I could not take aim without showing myself at the window. I dared not look out to see what they were doing. But presently Hogvardt risked a glance, and called out that they were in retreat, and had rejoined the three, and that the whole body stood together in consultation, and were no longer covering my window. So I looked out, and saw the boy standing in an easy, graceful attitude, while Constantine and Vlacho talked a little apart. It was growing considerably darker now, and the figures became dim and indistinct.

"I think the fun's over for to-night," said I, glad to have it over so cheaply.

Indeed, what I said seemed to be true, for the next moment the group turned, and began to retreat along the road, moving briskly out of our sight. We were left in the thick gloom of a moonless evening and the peaceful silence of still air.

"They'll come back and fetch the cows," said Hogvardt. "Could we not drag one in, my lord, and put it where the goat is, behind the house?"

I approved of this suggestion, and Watkins having found a rope, I armed Denny with the rifle, took from the wall a large, keen hunting-knife, opened the door, and stole out, accompanied by Hogvardt and Watkins, who carried their revolvers. We reached the pen without interruption,

tied our rope firmly round the horns of one of the dead beasts, and set to work to drag it along. It was no child's play, and our progress was very slow; but the carcass moved, and I gave a shout of encouragement as we got it down to the smoother ground of the road and hauled it along with a will. Alas! that shout was a great indiscretion. I had been too hasty in assuming that our enemy was quite gone. We heard suddenly the rush of feet; shots whistled over our heads; we had but just time to drop the rope and turn round when Denny's rifle rang out, and then—somebody was at us! I really do not know exactly how many there were. I had two at me, but by great good luck I drove my big knife into one fellow's arm at the first hazard, and I think that was enough for him. In my other assailant I recognized Vlacho. The fat innkeeper had got rid of his gun, and had a knife much like the one I carried myself. I knew him more by his voice, as he cried fiercely, "Come on," than by his appearance, for the darkness was thick now. Parrying his fierce thrusts—he was very active for so stout a man—I called out to our people to fall back as quickly as they could, for I did not know but that we might be taken in the rear also.

But discipline is hard to maintain in such a force as mine.

"Bosh!" cried Denny's voice.

"Mein Gott, no!" exclaimed Hogvardt.

Watkins said nothing, but for once in his life he also disobeyed me.

Well, if they would not do as I said, I must do as they did. The line advanced—the whole line, as at Waterloo. We pressed them hard. I heard a revolver fired and a cry follow. Fat Vlacho slackened in his attack, wavered, halted, turned and ran. A shout of triumph from Denny told me that the battle was going well there. Fired with victory, I set myself for a chase. But, alas! my pride was checked. Before I had gone two yards I fell headlong over the body for which we had been fighting (as Greeks and Trojans fought for the body of Hector), and came to an abrupt stop, sprawling most ignominiously over the cow's broad back.

"Stop! stop!" I cried. "Wait a bit, Denny. I'm down over this infernal cow!" It was an inglorious ending to the exploits of the evening.

Prudence, or my cry, stopped them. The enemy were in full retreat; their steps pattered quick along the rocky road, and Denny observed in a tone of immense satisfaction:

"I think that's our trick, Charlie."

"Are you hurt?" I asked, scrambling to my feet.

Watkins owned to a crack from the stock of a gun on his right shoulder; Hogvardt to a graze of a knife on the arm. Denny was unhurt. We had reason to suppose that we had left our mark on at least two of the enemy. For so great a victory it was cheaply bought.

"We'll just drag in the cow," said I—I like to stick to my point—"and then we might see if there's anything in the cellar."

We did drag in the cow; we dragged it through the house, and finally bestowed it in the compound behind. Hogvardt suggested that we should fetch the other also; but I had no mind for another surprise, which might not end so happily, and I decided to run the risk of leaving the second animal till the morning. So Watkins went off to seek for some wine, for which we all felt very ready, and I went to the door with the intention of securing it. But before I did so I stood for a moment on the step, looking out into the night, and snuffing the sweet, clear, pure air. It was in quiet moments like this, not in the tumult that had just passed, that I had pictured my beautiful island; and the love of it came on me now, and made me swear that these fellows and their arch ruffian Constantine should not drive me out of it without some more and more serious blows than had been struck that night. If I could get away safely, and return with enough force to keep them quiet, I would pursue that course. If not—well, I believe I had very blood-thirsty thoughts in my mind, as even the most peaceable man will have, when he has been served as I had and his friends roughly handled on his account.

Having registered these determinations, I was about to proceed with my task of securing the door, when I heard a sound that startled me. There was nothing hostile or alarming about it, rather it was pathetic and appealing; and, in spite of my previous truculence of mind, it caused me to exclaim: "Hullo, is that one of those poor beggars mauled?" For the sound was a slight, painful sigh, as of somebody in suffering, and it seemed to come from out of the darkness about a dozen yards ahead of me. My first impulse was to go straight to the spot; but I had begun by now to doubt whether the Neopilians were not unsophisticated in quite as peculiar a sense as that in which they were good-

hearted; so I called Denny and Hogvardt, bidding the latter to bring his lantern with him. Thus protected, I stepped out of the door, in the direction from which the sigh had come. Apparently we were to crown our victory by the capture of a wounded enemy.

An exclamation from Hogvardt told me that he, aided by the lantern, had come upon the quarry; but Hogvardt spoke in disgust rather than triumph.

"Oh, it's only the little one!" said he. "What's wrong with him, I wonder." He stooped down, and examined the prostrate form. "By heaven, I believe he's not touched! Yes, there's a bump on his forehead; but not big enough for any of us to have given it."

By this time Denny and I were with him, and we looked down on the boy's pale face, which seemed almost death-like in the glare of the lantern. The bump was not such a very small one, but it would not have been made by any of our weapons, for the flesh was not cut. A moment's further inspection showed that it must be the result of a fall on the hard, rocky road.

"Perhaps he tripped on the cord, as you did on the cow," suggested Denny, with a grin.

It seemed likely enough, but I gave very little thought to it, for I was busy studying the boy's face.

"No doubt," said Hogvardt, "he fell in running away, and was stunned; and they did not notice it in the dark, or were afraid to stop. But they'll be back, my lord, and soon."

"Carry him inside," said I. "It won't hurt us to have a hostage."

Denny lifted the lad in his long arms—Denny was a tall, powerful fellow—and strode off with him. I followed, wondering who it was that we had got hold of; for the boy was strikingly handsome. I was last in, and barred the door. Denny had set our prisoner down in an armchair, where he sat now, conscious again, but still with a dazed look in his large, dark eyes, as he looked from me to the rest, and back again to me, finally fixing a long glance on my face.

"Well, young man," said I, "you've begun this sort of thing early. Lifting cattle and taking murder in the day's work is pretty good for a youngster like you. Who are you?"

"Where am I?" he cried, in that blurred, indistinct kind of voice that comes with mental bewilderment.

"You're in my house," said I, "and the

rest of your infernal gang's outside, and going to stay there. So you must make the best of it."

The boy turned his head away and closed his eyes. Suddenly I snatched the lantern from Hogvardt. But I paused before I brought it close to the boy's face, as I had meant to do, and I said:

"You fellows go and get something to eat and a snooze, if you like. I'll look after this youngster. I'll call you if anything happens outside."

After a few unselfish protests, they did as I bade them. I was left alone in the hall with the prisoner, and merry voices from the kitchen told me that the battle was being fought again over the wine. I set the lantern close to the boy's face.

"H'm!" said I, after a prolonged scrutiny. Then I sat down on the table, and began to hum softly that wretched chant of One-eyed Alexander's, which had a terrible trick of sticking in a man's head.

For a few minutes I hummed. The lad shivered, stirred uneasily, and opened his eyes. I had never seen such eyes, and I could not conscientiously except even Beatrice Hipgrave's, which were in their way quite fine. I hummed away, and the boy said, still in a dreamy voice, but with an imploring gesture of his hand:

"Ah, no, not that! Not that, Constantine!"

"He's a tender-hearted youth," said I; and I was smiling now. The whole episode was singularly unusual and interesting.

The boy's eyes were on mine again. I met his glance full and square. Then I poured out some water, and gave it to him. He took it with trembling hand—the hand did not escape my notice—and drank it eagerly, setting the glass down with a sigh.

"I am Lord Wheatley," said I, nodding to him. "You came to steal my cattle, and murder me, if it happened to be convenient, you know."

The boy flashed out at me in a minute:

"I didn't. I thought you'd surrender, if we got the cattle away."

"You thought," said I, scornfully. "I suppose you did as you were bid."

"No; I told Constantine that they weren't to—" The boy stopped short, looked round him, and said in a questioning voice: "Where are all the rest of my people?"

"The rest of your people," said I, "have run away. You are in my hands. I can do just as I please with you."

His lips set in an obstinate curve, but he made no answer. I went on as sternly as I could: "And when I think of what I saw here yesterday—of that poor old man stabbed by your blood-thirsty crew—"

"It was an accident," he cried, sharply; the voice had lost its dreaminess, and sounded clear now.

"We'll see about that when we get Constantine and Vlacho before a judge," I retorted grimly. "Anyhow, he was foully stabbed in his own house, for doing what he had a perfect right to do."

"He had no right to sell the island," cried the boy; and he rose for a moment to his feet, with a proud air, only to sink back again into the chair and stretch out his hand for water again.

Now at this moment Denny, refreshed by meat and drink, and in the highest of spirits, bounded into the hall.

"How's the prisoner?" he cried.

"Oh, he's all right. There's nothing the matter with him," I said; and, as I spoke, I moved the lantern, so that the boy's face and figure were again in shadow.

"That's all right," observed Denny, cheerfully. "Because I thought, Charlie, we might get a little information out of him."

"Perhaps he won't speak," I suggested, casting a glance at the captive, who sat now motionless in the chair.

"Oh, I think he will," said Denny, confidently; and I observed for the first time that he held a very substantial looking whip in his hand; he must have found it in the kitchen. "We'll give the young ruffian a taste of this, if he's obstinate," said Denny; and I cannot say that his tone witnessed any great desire that the boy should prove at once compliant.

I shifted my lantern so that I could see the proud young face while Denny could not. The boy's eyes met mine defiantly.

"You hear what he proposes?" I asked. "Will you tell us all we want to know?"

The boy made no answer, but I saw trouble in his face, and his eyes did not meet mine so boldly now.

"We'll soon find a tongue for him," said Denny, in cheerful barbarity; "upon my word, he richly deserves a thrashing. Say the word, Charlie."

"We haven't asked him anything yet," said I.

"Oh, I'll ask him something. Look here, who was the fellow with you and Vlacho?"

The boy was silent; defiance and fear struggled in the dark eyes.

"You see, he's an obstinate beggar," said Denny, as though he had observed all necessary forms and could now get to business; and he drew the lash of the whip through his fingers. I am afraid Denny was rather looking forward to executing justice with his own hands.

The boy rose again, and stood facing that heartless young ruffian, Denny—it was thus that I thought of Denny at the moment—then once again he sank back into his seat, and covered his face with his hands.

"Well, I wouldn't go out killing if I hadn't more pluck than that," said Denny, scornfully. "You're not fit for the trade, my lad."

The boy had no retort. His face was buried in those slim hands of his. For a moment he was quite still. Then he moved a little; it was a movement that spoke of helpless pain, and I heard something very like a stifled sob.

"Just leave us alone a little, Denny," said I. "He may tell me what he won't tell you."

"Are you going to let him off?" demanded Denny, suspiciously. "You never can be stiff in the back, Charlie."

"I must see if he won't speak to me first," I pleaded, meekly.

"But if he won't?" insisted Denny.

"If he won't," said I, "and you still wish it, you may do what you like."

Denny sheered off to the kitchen, with an air that did not seek to conceal his opinion of my foolish tender-heartedness. Again I was alone with the boy.

"My friend is right," said I, gravely. "You are not fit for the trade. How came you to be in it?"

My question brought a new look, as the boy's hands dropped from his face.

"How came you," said I, "who ought to restrain these rascals, to be at their head? How came you, who ought to shun the society of men like Constantine Stefanopoulos and his tool Vlacho, to be working with them?"

I got no answer; only a frightened look appealed to me in the white glare of Hogvardt's lantern. I came a step nearer, and leaned forward to ask my next question:

"Who are you? What's your name?"

"My name—my name?" stammered the prisoner. "I won't tell my name."

"You'll tell me nothing? You heard what I promised my friend?"

"Yes, I heard," said the lad, with a face utterly pale, but with eyes that were

again set in fierce determination. I laughed a low laugh.

"I believe you are fit for the trade, after all," said I; and I looked with mingled distaste and admiration on him. But I had my last weapon still, my last question.

I turned the lantern full on his face; I leaned forward again, and said, in distinct, low tones—and the question sounded an absurd one to be spoken in such an impressive way:

"Do you generally wear clothes like these?"

I had got home with that question. The pallor vanished; the haughty eyes sank. I saw long, drooping lashes and a burning flush; and the boy's face once again sought his hands.

At the moment I heard chairs pushed back in the kitchen. In came Hogvardt, with an amused smile on his broad face; in came Watkins, with his impassive acquiescence in anything that his lordship might order; in came Master Denny, brandishing his whip in jovial relentlessness.

"Well, has he told you anything?" cried Denny. It was plain that he hoped for the answer "No."

"I have asked him half a dozen questions," said I, "and he has not answered one."

"All right," said Denny, with wonderful emphasis.

Had I been wrong to extort this much punishment for my most inhospitable reception? Sometimes now I think that it was cruel. In that night much had occurred to breed viciousness in a man of the most equable temper. But the thing had now gone to the extreme limit to which it could; and I said to Denny:

"It's a gross case of obstinacy, of course, Denny; but I don't see very well how we can horsewhip the lady!"

A sudden, astounded cry, "The lady!" rang from three pairs of lips; the lady herself dropped her head on the table, and fenced her face round about with her protecting arms.

"You see," said I, "this lad is the Lady Euphrosyne."

For who else could it be that would give orders to Constantine Stefanopoulos, and ask where "my people" were? Who else, I also asked myself, save the daughter of the noble house, would boast the air, the hands, the face, that graced our young prisoner? In all certainty it was Lady Euphrosyne.

CHAPTER V.

THE COTTAGE ON THE HILL.

THE effect of my remark was curious. Denny turned scarlet, and flung his whip down on the table; the others stood for a moment motionless, then turned tail and slunk back to the kitchen. Euphrosyne's face remained invisible. However, I felt quite at my ease. I had a triumphant conviction of the importance of my capture, and a determination that no misplaced chivalry should rob me of it. Politeness is, no doubt, a duty, but only a relative duty; and, in plain English, men's lives were at stake here. Therefore I did not make my best bow, fling open the door, and tell the lady that she was free to go whither she would; but I said to her in a dry, severe voice:

"You had better go, madam, to that room you usually occupy here, while we consider what to do with you. You know where the room is; I don't."

She raised her head, and said in tones that sounded almost eager:

"My own room? May I go there?"

"Certainly," said I. "I shall accompany you as far as the door; and when you've gone in, I shall lock the door."

This programme was duly carried out, Euphrosyne not favoring me with a word during its progress. Then I returned to the hall, and said to Denny:

"Rather a trump card, isn't she?"

"Yes, but they'll be back pretty soon to look for her, I expect."

Denny accompanied this remark with such a yawn that I suggested he should go to bed.

"And aren't you going to bed?" he asked.

"I'll take first watch," said I. "It's nearly twelve now. I'll wake you at two, and you can wake Hogvardt at five, and Watkins will be fit and well at breakfast time, and can give us roast cow."

Thus I was left alone again; and I sat, reviewing the position. Would the islanders fight for their lady? Or would they let us go? They would only let us go, I felt sure, if Constantine were outvoted, for he could not afford to see me leave Neopalia with a head on my shoulders and a tongue in my mouth. Then they probably would fight. Well, I calculated that as long as our provisions held out, we could not be stormed; our stone fortress was too strong. But we could be beleaguered and starved out, and

should be very soon, unless the lady's influence could help us. I had just arrived at the conclusion that I would talk very seriously to her in the morning, when I heard a remarkable sound.

"There never was such a place for queer noises," said I, pricking up my ears.

The noise seemed to come from directly above my head; it sounded as though a light, stealthy tread were passing over the roof of the hall in which I sat. But the only person in the house besides ourselves was the prisoner; she had been securely locked in her room; how then could she be on the top of the hall? For her room was in the turret over the door. Yet the steps crept over my head, going toward the kitchen. I snatched up my revolver, and trod with a stealth equal to the stealth of the steps overhead, across the hall and into the kitchen beyond. My three companions slept the sleep of tired men, but I ruthlessly roused Denny.

"Go on guard in the hall," said I; "I want to have a look round."

Denny was sleepy, but obedient. I saw him start for the hall, and went on till I reached the compound behind the house. Here I stood, deep in the shadow of the wall. The steps were now over my head again. I glanced up cautiously, and above me, on the roof, three yards to the right, I saw the flutter of a white kilt.

"There are more ways out of this house than I know," I thought to myself.

I heard next a noise as though of something being pushed cautiously along the flat roof. Then there protruded from between two of the battlements the end of a ladder! I crouched closer under the wall. The light flight of steps was let down; it reached the ground; the kilted figure stepped on it and began to descend. Here was the Lady Euphrosyne again! Her eagerness to go to her own room was fully explained; there was a way from it across the house and out on to the roof of the kitchen; the ladder showed that the way was kept in use. I stood still. She reached the ground, and as her foot touched it she gave the softest possible little laugh of gleeful triumph. A pretty little laugh it was. Then she stepped briskly across the compound, till she reached the rocks on the other side. I crept forward after her, for I was afraid of losing sight of her in the darkness, and yet did not desire to arrest her progress till I saw where she was going. On she went, skirting the perpendicular drop of rock. I was behind her now. At last she came to the angle formed by the rock running north and that

which, turning to the east, enclosed the compound.

"How's she going to get up?" I asked myself.

But up she began to go—her right foot on the north rock, her left foot on the east. She ascended with such confidence that it was evident that steps were ready for her feet. She gained the top. I began to mount in the same fashion, finding steps cut in the face of the cliff. I reached the top, and I saw her standing still, ten yards ahead of me. She went on. I followed. She stopped, looked, saw me, screamed. I rushed on her. Her arms dealt a blow at me—I caught her hand, and in her hand there was a little dagger. Seizing her other hand, I held her fast.

"Where are you going?" I asked in a matter-of-fact tone, taking no notice of her hasty resort to the dagger. No doubt that was purely a national trait.

Seeing that she was caught, she made no attempt to struggle.

"I was trying to escape," she said. "Did you hear me?"

"Yes, I heard you. Where were you going?"

"Why should I tell you? Shall you threaten me with the whip again?"

I loosed her hands. She gave a sudden glance up the hill. She seemed to measure the distance.

"Why do you want to go to the top of the hill?" I asked. "Have you friends there?"

She denied the suggestion, as I thought she would.

"No, I have not. But anywhere is better than with you."

"Yet there is some one in the cottage up there," I observed. "It belongs to Constantine, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does," she answered, defiantly. "Dare you go and seek him there? Or dare you only skulk behind the walls of the house?"

"As long as we are only four against a hundred I dare only skulk," I answered. She did not annoy me at all by her taunts. "But do you think he's there?"

"There! No, he's in the town—and he'll come from the town to kill you to-morrow."

"There is nobody there?" I pursued.

"Nobody," she answered.

"You're wrong," said I. "I saw somebody there to-day."

"Oh, a peasant, perhaps."

"Well, the dress didn't look like it. Do you really want to go there now?"

"Haven't you mocked me enough?" she burst out. "Take me back to my prison."

Her tragedy air was quite delightful. But I had been leading her up to something which I thought she ought to know.

"There's a woman in that cottage," said I. "Not a peasant—a woman in some dark-colored dress, who uses opera glasses."

I saw her draw back with a start of surprise.

"It's false," she cried. "There's no one there. Constantine told me no one went there except Vlacho, and sometimes Demetri."

"Do you believe all Constantine tells you?" I asked.

"Why should I not? He's my cousin and——"

"And your suitor?"

She flung her head back proudly.

"I have no shame in that," she answered.

"You would accept his offer?"

"Since you ask, I will answer. Yes; I have promised my uncle I would."

"Good God!" said I, for I was very sorry for her.

The emphasis of my exclamation seemed to startle her afresh. I felt her glance rest on me in puzzled questioning.

"Did Constantine let you see the old woman whom I sent to him?" I demanded.

"No," she murmured. "He told me what she said."

"That I told him he was his uncle's murderer?"

"Did you tell her to say that?" she asked, with a sudden inclination of her body toward me.

"I did. Did he give you the message?"

She made no answer. I pressed my advantage.

"On my honor I saw what I have told you at the cottage," I said. "I know what it means no more than you do. But before I came here I saw Constantine in London. And there I heard a lady say she would come with him. Did any lady come with him?"

"Are you mad?" she asked; but I could hear her breathing quickly, and I knew that her scorn was assumed. I drew suddenly away from her, and put my hands behind my back.

"Go to the cottage if you like," said I. "But I won't answer for what you'll find there."

"You set me free?" she cried with eagerness.

"Free to go to the cottage. You must promise to come back. Or I'll go to the cottage, if you'll promise to go back to your room and wait till I return."

She hesitated, looking again toward where

the cottage was; but I had stirred suspicion and disquietude in her. She dared not face what she might find in the cottage.

"I'll go back and wait for you," she said. "If I went to the cottage and—and all was well, I'm afraid I shouldn't come back."

The tone sounded softer. I would have sworn a smile or a half smile accompanied the words, but it was too dark to be sure; and when I leaned forward to look, Euphrosyne drew back.

"Then you mustn't go," said I decisively. "I can't afford to lose you."

"But if you let me go, I could let you go," she cried.

"Could you? Without asking Constantine? Besides, it's my island, you see."

"It's not," she cried, with a stamp of her foot. And without more she walked straight by me and disappeared over the ledge of rock. Two minutes later I saw her figure defined against the sky, a black shadow on the deep gray ground. Then she disappeared. I set my face straight for the cottage under the summit of the hill. I knew that I had only to go straight, and I must come to the little plateau, scooped out of the hillside, on which the cottage stood. I found not a path, but a sort of rough track that led in the desired direction, and along this I made my way very cautiously. At one point it was joined at right angles by another track, from the side of the hill where the main road across the island lay. This, of course, afforded an approach to the cottage without passing by my house. In twenty minutes the cottage loomed, a blurred mass, before me. I fell on my knees and peered at it.

There was a light in one of the windows; I crawled nearer. Now I was on the plateau; a moment later I was under the wooden veranda and beneath the window where the light glowed. My hand was on my revolver. If Constantine or Vlacho caught me here, neither side would be able to stand on trifles; even my desire for legality would fail under the strain. But for the minute everything was quiet, and I began to fear that I should have to return empty-handed; for it would be growing light in another hour or so, and I must be gone before the day began to appear. Ah! There was a sound—a sound that appealed to me after my climb—the sound of wine poured into a glass; and then came a voice I knew.

"Probably they have caught her," said Vlacho the innkeeper. "What of that? They will not hurt her. And she'll be kept safe."

"You mean she can't come spying about here?"

"Exactly. And that, my lord, is an advantage. If she came here——"

"Oh the deuce!" laughed Constantine. "But won't the men want me to free her by letting that infernal crew go?"

"Not if they think Wheatley will go to Rhodes and get soldiers and return. They love the island more than her. It will all go well, my lord. And this other here?"

I strained my ears to listen. No answer came; yet Vlacho went on as though he had received an answer.

"These cursed fellows make that difficult, too," he said. "It would be an epidemic." Then he laughed, seeming to see wit in his own remark.

"Curse them, yes. We must move cautiously," said Constantine. "What a nuisance women are, Vlacho."

"Ay, too many of them," laughed Vlacho.

"I had to swear my life out that no one was here—and then, 'If no one's there, why mayn't I come?' You know the sort of thing."

"Indeed, no, my lord. You wrong me," protested Vlacho, humorously; and Constantine joined in his laugh.

"You've made up your mind which, I gather?" asked Vlacho.

"Oh, this one, beyond doubt," answered his master.

Now, I thought that I understood most of this conversation, and I was very sorry that Euphrosyne was not by my side to listen to it. But I had heard about enough for my purpose, and I had turned to crawl away stealthily—it is not well to try fortune too far—when I heard the sound of a door opening in the house. Constantine's voice followed directly on the sound.

"Ah, my darling, my sweet wife," he cried, "not sleeping yet? Where will your beauty be. Vlacho and I must plot and plan for your sake, but you need not spoil your eyes with sleeplessness."

Constantine did it uncommonly well. His manner was a pattern for husbands. I was guilty of a quiet laugh all to myself, in the veranda.

"For me? You're sure it's for me?" came in that Greek tongue with a strange accent which had first fallen on my ears in the Optimum restaurant.

"She's jealous, she's most charmingly jealous!" cried Constantine, in playful rapture. "Does your wife pay you such compliments, Vlacho?"

"She has not cause, my lord. Now my

Lady Francesca thinks she has cause to be jealous of the Lady Euphrosyne."

Constantine laughed scornfully at the suggestion.

"Where is she now?" came swift and sharp from the woman. "Where is Euphrosyne?"

"Why, she's a prisoner to that Englishman," answered Constantine.

I suppose explanations passed on this point, for the voices fell to a lower level, as is apt to happen in the telling of a long story, and I could not catch what passed till Constantine's tones rose again, as he said:

"Oh, yes, we must have a try at getting her out, just to satisfy the people. For me, she might stay there as long as she likes, for I care for her just as little as, between ourselves, I believe she cares for me."

Really, this fellow was a very tidy villain; as a pair, Vlacho and he would be hard to beat—in England, at all events. About Neopalia I had learned to reserve my opinion. Such were my reflections as I turned to resume my interrupted crawl to safety. But in an instant I was still again—still, and crouching close under the wall, motionless as an insect that feigns death, holding my breath, my hand on the trigger. For the door of the cottage was flung open, and Constantine and Vlacho appeared on the threshold.

"Ah," said Vlacho, "dawn is nearly on us. See, it grows lighter on the horizon."

A more serious matter was that, owing to the opened door and the lamp inside, it had grown lighter on the veranda, so light that I saw the three figures—for the woman had come also—in the doorway; so light that my huddled shape would be seen if any of the three turned an eye towards it. I could have picked off both men before they could move; but a civilized education has drawbacks; it makes a man scrupulous; I did not fire. I lay still, hoping that I should not be noticed. And I should not have been noticed but for one thing. Acting up to his part in the ghastly farce which these two ruffians were playing with the wife of one of them, Constantine turned to bestow kisses on the woman before he parted from her. Vlacho, in a mockery that was horrible to me who knew his heart, must needs be facetious. With a laugh he drew back; he drew back farther still; he was but a couple of feet from the wall of the house, and that couple of feet I filled.

In a moment, with one step backward, he would be upon me. Perhaps he would not have made that step; perhaps I should

have gone, by grace of that narrow interval, undetected. But the temptation was too strong for me. The thought of the thing threatened to make me laugh. I had a penknife in my pocket; I opened it, and I dug it hard into that portion of Vlacho's frame which came most conveniently (and prominently) to my hand. Then, leaving the penknife where it was, I leaped up, gave the howling ruffian a mighty shove, and with a loud laugh of triumph bolted for my life down the hill. But when I had gone twenty yards I dropped on my knees, for bullet after bullet whistled over my head. Constantine, the outraged Vlacho too, perhaps, carried a revolver. And the barrels were being emptied after me. I rose and turned one hasty glance behind me. Yes, I saw their dim shapes like moving trees. I fired once, twice, thrice, in my turn, and then went crashing and rushing down the path that I had ascended so cautiously.

I cannoned against the tree trunks; I tripped over trailing branches; I stumbled over stones. Once I paused and fired the rest of my barrels; a yell told me I had hit—but Vlacho, alas! not Constantine. At the same instant my fire was answered, and a bullet went through my hat. I was defenceless now, save for my heels, and to them I took again with all speed. But as I crashed along, one, at least, of them came crashing after me. Yes, it was only one. I had checked Vlacho's career. It was Constantine alone. I suppose one of your heroes of romance would have stopped and faced him, for with them it is not etiquette to run away from one man. Ah, well, I ran away. For all I knew, Constantine might still have a shot in the locker. I had none. And if Constantine killed me, he would kill the only man who knew all his secrets. So I ran. And just as I got within ten yards of the drop into my own territory I heard a wild cry, "Charlie, Charlie! Where the devil are you, Charlie?"

"Why, here, of course," said I, coming to the top of the bank and dropping over.

I have no doubt that it was the cry uttered by Denny which gave pause to Constantine's pursuit. He would not desire to face all four of us. At any rate the sound of his pursuing feet died away and ceased. I suppose he went back to look after Vlacho and show himself safe and sound to that most unhappy woman, his wife. As for me, when I found myself safe and sound in the compound, I said, "Thank God!" And I meant it, too. Then I looked round. Certainly the sight that met my eyes had a touch of comedy in it.

Denny, Hogvardt, and Watkins stood in the compound. Their backs were toward me, and they were all staring up at the roof of the kitchen, with expressions which the cold light of morning revealed in all their puzzled foolishness. On the top of the roof, unassailable and out of reach—for no ladder ran from roof to ground now—stood Euphrosyne, in her usual attitude of easy grace. And Euphrosyne was not taking the smallest notice of the helpless three below, but stood quite still, with unmoved face, gazing up toward the cottage. The whole thing reminded me of nothing so much as of a pretty, composed cat in a tree, with three infuriated, helpless terriers barking round the trunk. I began to laugh.

"What's all the shindy?" called out Denny. "Who's doing revolver practice in the wood? And how the dickens did she get there, Charlie?"

But when the still figure on the roof saw me, the impassivity of it vanished. Euphrosyne leant forward, clasping her hands, and said to me:

"Have you killed him?"

The question vexed me. It would have been civil to accompany it, at all events, with an inquiry as to my own health.

"Killed him?" I answered gruffly. "No, he's sound enough."

"And—" she began; but now she glanced, seemingly for the first time, at my friends below. "You must come and tell me," she said; and with that she turned and disappeared from our gaze behind the battlements. I listened intently. No sound came from the wood that rose gray in the new light behind us.

"What have you been doing?" demanded Denny, surlily; he had not enjoyed Euphrosyne's scornful attitude.

"I have been running for my life," said I, "from the biggest scoundrels unchanged. Denny, make a guess who lives in that cottage."

"Constantine?"

"I don't mean him."

"Not Vlacho—he's at the inn."

"No, I don't mean Vlacho."

"Who, then, man?"

"Some one you've seen."

"Oh, I give it up. It's not the time of day for riddles."

"The lady who dined at the next table to us at the Optimum," said I.

Denny jumped back in amazement, with a long, low whistle.

"What, the one who was with Constantine?" he cried.

"Yes," said I. "The one who was with Constantine."

They were all three round me now ; and, thinking that it would be better that they should know what I knew, and four lives instead of one stand between a ruffian and the impunity he hoped for, I raised my voice and went on in an emphatic tone :

"Yes. She's there, and she's his wife."

A moment's astonished silence greeted my announcement. It was broken by none of our party. But there came from the battlemented roof above us a low, long, mournful moan that made its way straight to my heart, armed with its dart of outraged pride and trust betrayed. It was not thus, boldly and abruptly, that I should have told my news. But I did not know that Euphrosyne was still above us, hidden by the battlements ; nor had I known that she understood English. We all looked up. The moan was not repeated. Presently we heard slow steps retreating with a faltering tread across the roof ; and we also went into the house in silence and sorrow. For a thing like that gets hold of a man ; and when he has heard it, it's hard for him to sit down and be merry till the fellow that caused it has paid his reckoning—as I swore then and there that Constantine Stefanopoulos should pay his.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POEM OF ONE-EYED ALEXANDER.

THERE is a matter on my conscience which I can't excuse, but may as well confess. To deceive a maiden is a very sore thing—so sore that it had made us all hot against Constantine ; but it may be doubted by a cool mind whether it is worse, nay, whether it is as bad, as to contrive the murder of a lawful wife. Poets have paid more attention to the first—maybe they know more about it ; the law finds greater employment on the whole in respect to the latter. For me, I admit that it was not till I found myself stretched on a mattress in the kitchen, with the idea of getting a few hours' sleep, that it struck me that Constantine's wife deserved a share of my concern and care. Her grievance against him was at least as great as Euphrosyne's ; her peril was far greater. For Euphrosyne was his object, Francesca (for that appeared from Vlacho's mode of address to be her name) was an obstacle that prevented his attaining that object.

For myself, I should have welcomed a

cutthroat if it came as an alternative to Constantine's society ; but probably his wife would not agree with me ; and the conversation I had heard left me in little doubt that her life was not safe. They could not have an epidemic, Vlacho had prudently reminded his master ; the island fever could not kill Constantine's wife and our party all in a day or two. Men suspect such obliging maladies, and the old lord had died of it, pat to the happy moment, already. But if the thing could be done, if it could be so managed that London, Paris, and the Riviera would find nothing strange in the disappearance of one Madame Stefanopoulos and the appearance of another, why, to a certainty, done the thing would be, unless I could warn or save the woman in the cottage. But I did not see how to do either. So (as I set out to confess) I dropped the subject. And when I went to sleep I was thinking, not how to save Francesca, but how to console Euphrosyne, a matter really of less urgency, as I should have seen had not the echo of that sad little cry still filled my ears.

The news that Hogvardt brought me, when I woke in the morning and was enjoying a slice of cow steak, by no means cleared my way. An actual attack did not seem imminent—I fancy these fierce islanders were not too fond of our revolvers—but the house was, if I may use the term, carefully picketed ; and that both before and behind. Along the road that approached it in front, there stood sentries at intervals. They were stationed just out of range of our only effective long-distance weapon, but it was evident that egress on that side was barred ; and the same was the case on the other. Hogvardt had seen men moving in the wood, and had heard their challenges to one another, repeated at regular intervals. We were shut off from the sea ; we were shut off from the cottage. A blockade would reduce us as well as an attack. I had nothing to offer except the release of Euphrosyne. And to release Euphrosyne would in all likelihood not save us, while it would leave Constantine free to play out his ghastly game to its appointed end.

I finished my breakfast in some perplexity of spirit. Then I went and sat in the hall, expecting that Euphrosyne would appear from her room before long. I was alone, for the rest were engaged in various occupations, Hogvardt being particularly busy over a large handful of hunting-knives that he had gleaned from the walls ; I did not understand what he wanted with them, unless he meant to arm himself in porcupine fashion.

Presently Euphrosyne came, but it was a transformed Euphrosyne. The kilt, knee breeches, and gaiters were gone; in their place was the white linen garment with flowing sleeves and the loose jacket over it, the national dress of the Greek woman; but Euphrosyne's was ornamented with a rare profusion of delicate embroidery, and of so fine a texture that it seemed rather like some delicate, soft, yielding silk. The change of attire seemed reflected in her altered manner. Defiance was gone and appeal glistered from her eyes as she stood before me. I sprang up, but she would not sit. She stood there, and, raising her glance to my face, asked simply: "Is it true?"

In a business-like way I told her the whole story, starting from the every-day scene at home in the restaurant, ending with the villainous conversation and the wild chase of the night before. When I related how Constantine had called Francesca his wife, Euphrosyne shivered; while I sketched lightly my encounter with him and Vlacho, she eyed me with a sort of grave curiosity; and at the end she said: "I'm glad you weren't killed." It was not an emotional speech, nor delivered with any *empressment*; but I took it for thanks, and made the best of it. Then at last she sat down and rested her head on her hand. Her absent air allowed me to study her closely, and I was struck by a new beauty which the bizarre boy's dress had concealed. Moreover, with the doffing of that, she seemed to have put off her extreme hostility; but perhaps the revelation I had made to her, which showed her the victim of an unscrupulous schemer, had more to do with her softened air. Yet she bore the story firmly, and a quivering lip was her extreme sign of grief or anger. And her first question was not of herself.

"Do you mean that they will kill this woman?" she asked.

"I'm afraid it's not unlikely that something will happen to her, unless, of course—" I paused, but her quick wit supplied the omission.

"Unless," she said, "he lets her live now, because I am out of his hands."

"Will you stay out of his hands?" I asked. "I mean, as long as I can keep you out of them."

She looked round with a troubled expression.

"How can I stay here?" she said in a low tone.

"You will be as safe here as you were in your mother's arms," I answered.

She acknowledged my promise with a

movement of her head; but a moment later she cried:

"But I am not with you—I am with the people! The island is theirs and mine. It is not yours. I will have no part in giving it to you."

"I wasn't proposing to take pay for my hospitality," said I. "It'll be hardly handsome enough for that, I'm afraid. But mightn't we leave that question for the moment?" And I described briefly to her our present position.

"So that," I concluded, "while I maintain my claim to the island, I am at present more interested in keeping a whole skin on myself and my friends."

"If you will not give it up, I can do nothing," said she. "Though they knew Constantine to be all you say, yet they would follow him and not me if I yielded the island. Indeed, they would most likely follow him in any case. For the Neopallians like a man to follow, and they like that man to be a Stefanopoulos; so they would shut their eyes to much, in order that Constantine might marry me and become lord."

She stated all this in a matter-of-fact way, disclosing no great horror of her countrymen's moral standard. The straightforward barbarousness of it perhaps appealed to her a little; she loathed the man who would rule on those terms, but had some toleration for the people who set the true dynasty above all else. And she spoke of her proposed marriage as though it were a natural arrangement.

"I shall have to marry him, I expect, in spite of everything," she said.

I pushed my chair back violently. My English respectability was appalled.

"Marry him?" I cried. "Why, he murdered the old lord!"

"That has happened before among the Stefanopouloi," said Euphrosyne, with a calmness dangerously near to pride.

"And he proposes to murder his wife," I added.

"Perhaps he will get rid of her without that." She paused; then came the anger I had looked for before. "Ah, but how dared he swear that he had thought of no one but me and loved me passionately? He shall pay for that." Again it was injured pride that rang in her voice, as in her first cry. It did not sound like love, and for that I was glad. The courtship had probably been an affair of state rather than affection. I did not ask how Constantine was to be made to pay, whether before or after marriage. I was struggling between horror and amusement at my guest's point

of view. But I take leave to have a will of my own, even sometimes in matters that are not exactly my concern, and I said now, with a composure that rivalled Euphrosyne's: "It is out of the question that you should marry him. I'm going to get him hanged, and, anyhow, it would be atrocious."

She smiled at that, but then she leant forward and asked:

"How long have you provisions for?"

"That's a good retort," I admitted.

"A few days; that's all. And we can't get out to procure any more; and we can't go shooting, because the wood's infested with these ruff—I beg pardon—with your countrymen."

"Then it seems to me," said Euphrosyne, "that you and your friends are more likely to be hanged."

Well, on a dispassionate consideration, it did seem more likely; but she need not have said so. And she went on with an equally discouraging good sense:

"There will be a boat from Rhodes in about a month or six weeks. The officer will come then to take the tribute; perhaps the governor will come. But till then nobody will visit the island, unless it be a few fishermen from Cyprus."

"Fishermen? Where do they land? At the harbor?"

"No. My people do not like them, though the governor threatens to send troops if we do not let them land. So they come to a little creek at the opposite end of the island, on the other side of the mountain. Ah, what are you thinking of?"

As Euphrosyne perceived, her words had put a new idea in my mind. If I could reach that creek and find the fishermen and persuade them to help me, or to carry me and my party off, that hanging might happen to the right man, after all.

"You're thinking you can reach them?" she cried.

"You don't seem sure that you want me to," I observed.

"Oh, how can I tell what I want? If I help you, I am betraying the island. If I do not——"

"You'll have a death or two at your door, and you'll marry the biggest scoundrel in Europe," said I.

She hung her head, and plucked fretfully at the embroidery on the neck of her dress.

"But, anyhow, you couldn't reach them," she said. "You are close prisoners here."

That, again, seemed true, so true that it put me in a very bad temper. Therefore I rose, and, leaving her without much ceremony, strolled into the kitchen. Here I

found Watkins dressing the cow's head, Hogvardt surrounded by knives, and Denny lying on a rug on the floor with a small book, which he seemed to be reading. He looked up with a smile that he considered knowing.

"Well, what does the captive queen say?" he asked with levity.

"She proposes to marry Constantine," I answered, and added quickly to Hogvardt: "What's the game with those knives, Hog?"

"Well, my lord," said Hogvardt, surveying his dozen murderous instruments, "I thought there was no harm in putting an edge on them, in case we should find a use for them;" and he fell to grinding one with great energy.

"I say, Charlie, I wonder what this yarn's about? I can't construe half of it. It's in Greek, and it's something about Neopalía, and there's a lot about a Stefanopoulos."

"Is there? Let's see;" and taking the book I sat down to look at it. It was a slim old book, bound in calfskin. The Greek was written in an antique style; it was verse. I turned to the title-page. "Hullo, this is rather interesting," I exclaimed. "It's about the death of old Stefanopoulos—the man they sing that song about, you know."

In fact, I had got hold of the poem which One-eyed Alexander composed. Its length was about three hundred lines, exclusive of the refrain which the islanders had chanted, and which was inserted six times, occurring at the end of each fifty lines. The rest was written in rather barbarous iambics; and the sentiments were quite as barbarous as the verse. It told the whole story, and I ran rapidly over it, translating here and there for the benefit of my companions. The arrival of the Baron d'Ezonville recalled our own with curious exactness, except that he came with one servant only. He had been taken to the inn, as I had, but he had never escaped from there, and had been turned adrift the morning after his arrival. I took more interest in Stefan, and followed eagerly the story of how the islanders had come to his house, and demanded that he should revoke the sale. Stefan, however, was obstinate; it lost the lives of four of his assailants before his house was forced. Thus far I read, and expected to find next an account of a *mêlée* in the hall. But here the story took a turn unexpected by me, one that might make the reading of the old poem more than a mere pastime.

"But when they had broken in," said One-eyed Alexander, "behold, the hall was empty and the house empty! And they stood amazed. But the two cousins of the

lord, who had been the hottest in seeking his death, put all the rest to the door, and were themselves alone in the house ; for the secret was known to them who were of the blood of the Stefanopouloi. Unto me, the bard, it is not known. Yet men say they went beneath the earth, and there in the earth found the lord. And certain it is they slew him, for in a space they came forth to the door bearing his head, and they showed it to the people, who answered with a great shout. But the cousins went back, barring the door again ; and again, when but a few minutes had passed, they came forth, and opened the door, and the elder of them, being now by the traitor's death become lord, bade the people in and made a great feast for them. But the head of Stefan none saw again, nor did any see his body ; but the body and head were gone, whither none know saving the noble blood of the Stefanopouloi ; for utterly they disappeared, and the secret was securely kept."

I read this passage aloud, translating as I went. At the end Denny drew a breath.

"Well, if there aren't ghosts in this house, there ought to be," he remarked. "What the deuce did those rascals do with the old gentleman, Charlie?"

"It says 'they went beneath the earth.'"

"The cellar," suggested Hogvardt, who had a prosaic mind.

"But they wouldn't leave the body in the cellar," I objected; "and if, as this fellow says, they were only away a few minutes, they couldn't have dug a grave for it. And then it says that they 'there in the earth found the lord'!"

"It would have been more interesting," said Denny, "if they'd told Alexander a bit more about it. However, I suppose he consoles himself with his chant again?"

"He does. It follows immediately on what I've read, and so the thing ends." And I sat looking at the little yellow volume. "Where did you find it, Denny?" I said.

"Oh, on a shelf in the corner of the hall, between the Bible and a Life of Byron."

I got up and walked back to the hall. I looked round. Euphrosyne was not there. I inspected the hall door ; it was still locked on the inside. I mounted the stairs, and called at the door of her room ; when no answer came I pushed it open and took the liberty of glancing round ; she was not there. I called again, for I thought she might have passed along the way over the hall and reached the roof, as she had done before. This time I called loudly. Silence followed for a moment. Then came an answer, in a hurried, rather apologetic tone,

"Here I am." But then the answer came, not from the direction that I had expected, but from the hall. And looking over the balustrade, I saw Euphrosyne sitting in the armchair.

"This," said I, going down-stairs, "taken in conjunction with this," and I patted One-eyed Alexander's book, which I held in my hand, "is certainly curious and suggestive."

"Here I am," said Euphrosyne, with an air that added, "I've not moved. What are you shouting for?"

"Yes, but you weren't there a minute ago," I observed, reaching the hall and walking across to her.

She looked disturbed and embarrassed.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"Must I give an account of every movement?" said she, trying to cover her confusion with a show of haughty offence.

The coincidence was really a remarkable one ; it was as hard to account for Euphrosyne's disappearance and reappearance as for the vanished head and body of old Stefan. I had a conviction, based on a sudden intuition, that one explanation must lie at the root of both these curious things, that the secret of which Alexander spoke was a secret still hidden, hidden from my eyes but known to the girl before me, the daughter of the Stefanopouloi.

"I won't ask you where you've been, if you don't wish to tell me," said I, carelessly.

She bowed her head in recognition of my indulgence.

"But there is one question I should like to ask you," I pursued, "if you'll be so kind as to answer it."

"Well, what is it?"

"Where was Stefan Stefanopoulos killed, and what became of his body?"

As I put my question I flung One-eyed Alexander's book open on the table beside her.

She started visibly, crying, "Where did you get that?"

I told her how Denny had found it, and I added :

"Now, what does 'beneath the earth' mean? You are one of the house, and you must know."

"Yes, I know, but I must not tell you. We are all bound by the most sacred oath to tell no one."

"Who told you?"

"My uncle. The boys of our house are told when they are fifteen, the girls when they are sixteen. No one else knows."

"And why is that?"

She hesitated, fearing perhaps that her

answer would itself tend to betray the secret.

"I dare tell you nothing," she said. "The oath binds me; and it binds every one of my kindred to kill me if I break it."

"But you've no kindred left except Constantine," I objected.

"He is enough. He would kill me."

"Sooner than marry you?" I suggested, rather maliciously.

"Yes, if I broke the oath."

"Hang the oath!" said I, impatiently. "The thing might help us. Did they bury Stefan somewhere under the house?"

"No, he was not buried," she answered.

"Then they brought him up, and got rid of his body when the islanders had gone?"

"You must think what you will."

"I'll find it out," said I. "If I pull the house down, I'll find it. Is it a secret door or—"

She had colored at the question. I put the latter part in a low, eager voice, for hope had come to me.

"Is it a way out?" I asked, leaning over to her.

She sat mute, but irresolute, embarrassed and fretful.

"Heavens!" I cried, impatiently, "it may mean life or death to all of us, and you boggle over your oath!"

My rude impatience met with a rebuke that it perhaps deserved. With a glance of the utmost scorn, Euphrosyne asked, coldly:

"And what are the lives of all of you to me?"

"True, I forgot," said I with a bitter politeness. "I beg your pardon. I did you all the service I could last night, and now I and my friends may as well die as live! But I'll pull this place to ruin but I'll find your secret."

I was walking up and down now in a state of some excitement. My brain was fired with the thought of stealing a march on Constantine through the discovery of his own family secret.

Suddenly Euphrosyne gave a little soft clasp with her hands. It was over in a minute, and she sat blushing, confused, trying to look as if she had not done it at all.

"What did you do that for?" I asked, stopping in front of her.

"Nothing," said Euphrosyne.

"Oh, I don't believe that," said I.

She looked at me. "I didn't mean to do it," she said again. "But can't you guess why?"

"There's too much guessing to be done here," said I, impatiently; and I started

walking again. But presently I heard a voice say softly, and in a tone that seemed to address nobody in particular—me least of all:

"We Neopalianians like a man who can be angry, and I began to think you never would."

"I am not the least angry," said I, with great indignation. I hate being told that I am angry when I am merely showing firmness.

Now, at this protest of mine Euphrosyne saw fit to laugh—the most hearty laugh she had given since I had known her. The mirthfulness of it undermined my wrath. I stood still opposite her, biting the end of my mustache.

"You may laugh," said I, "but I'm not angry; and I shall pull this house down—or dig it up—in cold blood, in perfectly cold blood."

"You are angry," said Euphrosyne, "and you say you're not. You are like my father. He would stamp his foot furiously like that and say, 'I am not angry, I am not angry, Phroso.'"

Phroso! I had forgotten that diminutive of my guest's classical name. It rather pleased me, and I repeated it gently after her, "Phroso, Phroso," and I'm afraid I eyed the little foot that had stamped so bravely.

"He always called me Phroso. Oh, I wish he were alive! Then Constantine——"

"Since he isn't," said I, sitting by Phroso (I must write it, it's a deal shorter)—by Phroso's elbow—"since he isn't, I'll look after Constantine. It would be a pity to spoil the house, wouldn't it?"

"I've sworn," said Phroso.

"Circumstances alter oaths," said I, bending till I was very near Phroso's ear.

"Ah," said Phroso, reproachfully, "that's what lovers say when they find another more beautiful than their old love."

I shot away from Phroso's ear with a sudden backward start. Her remark, somehow, came home to me with a very remarkable force. I got off the table, and stood opposite to her, in an awkward and stiff attitude.

"I am compelled to ask you for the last time if you will tell me the secret," said I, in the coldest of tones.

She looked up with surprise. My altered manner may well have amazed her. She did not know the reason of it.

"You asked me kindly and—and pleasantly, and I would not. Now you ask me as if you threatened," she said. "Is it likely I should tell you now?"

Well, I was angry with myself, and with her because she had made me angry with myself ; and, the next minute, I became furiously angry with Denny, whom I found standing in the doorway that led to the kitchen, with a grin of intense amusement on his face.

"What are you grinning at?" I demanded fiercely.

"Oh, nothing," said Denny, and his face strove to assume a prudent gravity.

"Bring a pickaxe," said I.

Denny's face wandered toward Phroso. "Is she as annoying as that?" he seemed to ask. "A pickaxe?" he repeated in surprised tones.

"Yes, two pickaxes! I'm going to have this floor up, and see if I can find out the great Stefanopoulos secret." I spoke with an accent of intense scorn.

Again Phroso laughed ; her hands beat very softly against one another. Heavens, what did she do that for when Denny was

there, watching everything with those shrewd eyes of his?

"The pickaxes!" I roared.

Denny turned and fled ; a moment elapsed ; I did not know what to do, how to look at Phroso, or how not to look at her. I took refuge in flight. I rushed into the kitchen on pretence of aiding or hastening Denny's search. I found him taking up an old pick that stood near the door leading to the compound. I seized it from his hand.

"Confound you!" I cried, for Denny laughed openly at me ; and I rushed back to the hall! But on the threshold I paused—and said what I will not write.

For, though there came from somewhere just the last ripple of a mirthful laugh, the hall was empty! Phroso was gone! I flung the pickaxe down with a clatter on the boards, and exclaimed in my haste :

"I wish to heaven I'd never bought the island!"

But I did not mean that really.

(To be continued.)

CLIMBING MONT BLANC IN A BLIZZARD.

CAUGHT IN A BLINDING SNOW STORM ON A NARROW CLIFF,
TWO AND A HALF MILES ABOVE SEA LEVEL.

BY GARRETT P. SERVISS,

Author of "Astronomy with an Opera Glass," "Climbing the Matterhorn," * etc.



STANDING on the spindling tower of the Matterhorn early one August morning in 1894 I saw, for the first time, the white crown of Europe, Mont Blanc, with its snows sparkling high above the roof of clouds that covered the dozing summer in the valleys of Piedmont. Just one year later I started from Chamonix to climb to that cool world in the blue.

My guide was Ambroise Couttet, whose family name is famous in the mountaineering annals of Savoy. An earlier Ambroise Couttet lies in the icy bosom of Mont Blanc, fallen, years ago, down a crevasse so profound that his would-be rescuers were drawn, baffled, awe-struck, and with shaking nerves, from its horrible depths, whose bottom they could not find. Even before that time Pierre Couttet had been

whirled to death on the great peak, and his body, embedded and preserved in a glacier, was found nearly half a century afterward at its foot. And two other Couttets of past years escaped, by the merest hair of miraculous fortune, from a catastrophe on the same dreadful slopes in which three of their comrades were swallowed up. Yet the Ambroise Couttet of to-day is never so happy as when he is on the mountain. His eyes sparkle if he hears the thunder of an avalanche, and he smiles as he watches its tossing white crest ploughing swiftly across some snowy incline which he has just traversed.

One porter sufficed, for my only traps consisted of a hand camera, a field-glass, and a few extra woollen shirts and stockings. Having had no serious exercise since climbing the Matterhorn a year before, I deemed it prudent to spare my strength for the more important work

* See McCLELLAN'S MAGAZINE for September, 1895.