

# The Beautiful White Devil.

## CHAPTER XII. THE FIRST OF MAY.

Next morning after my return to England I donned the orthodox top hat and frock coat and set off to walk to South Kensington to call upon my sister Janet, who, by the way, was a widow, her husband having died of malarial fever when with his regiment on the west coast of Africa.

I found her in the morning room in the act of writing a note of welcome to me. She greeted me with all her old sisterly affection and when she had done so made me sit down before the fire and tell her all my adventures.

"We have heard the most wonderful tales about you," she said, with a smile. "How you were captured by a sort of female Captain Kidd of fabulous beauty, who carried you off to an island in the Pacific, where you were made to dig sufficient gold to pay your ransom."

"Indeed?"

"It has been recycled into all sorts of papers," she continued. "But I've no doubt it was a mass of mere fabrication. Own the truth now, wasn't it?"

"Every bit," I answered candidly. "I have been very much annoyed by those stupid newspaper paragraphs. It is just like the rabid craving of the age for sensationalism. But before I go any further, Janet, I want to tell you something. I am going to be married."

"You, George! Why, you always used to say you had made up your mind never to do anything so foolish."

"So I did, but you see I have changed my mind."

"So it would appear. And, now, who is she? Tell me where you met her and all about her."

"This was what I dreaded, but it had to be met and faced.

"Well, in the first place, her name is Alie. She is 27 years of age and an orphan. Her father was a captain in the English navy, but is now dead. She is very sweet, very accomplished, and very beautiful, and I feel sure, Janet, if only for my sake, you will offer her a hearty welcome when she comes home."

"You know me well enough to be sure of that, don't you, dear old George? And is anything settled yet? How soon does she come home, and when are you going to be married?"

"To your first question I can only answer, as soon after the 1st of May as possible. On the 1st Alie will arrive in England. Now will you wish me happiness, Janet?"

"With all my heart and soul. But I am dying to know more. Tell me where you met her and indeed all about your adventures; remember, you have been away a whole year."

I told her as much as I thought prudent without revealing Alie's identity, and when my story was ended we sat chatting on till lunchtime.

When I left the house in the afternoon, I knew I had insured a kind reception for Alie when she should arrive in England.

Now I must skip the greater part of a year and come to the middle of the last week in April, just three days, in fact, before I knew I might expect my darling.

I had her own assertion that she would be in England on the 1st of May, and I had never known her fail to keep her word. Just as that thought passed through my brain there was a ring at the bell, and a few seconds later my man brought up a telegram on a salver. With fingers trembling with eagerness I tore the envelope open and read the following message:

Arrived this morning. Bundaberg House, Surbiton. Come quickly.  
ALIE.

There and then I ran out of the room, gave the telegraph boy in the porch half a crown for his trouble, seized my hat and stick, hailed a hansom and bade the cabman drive me with all possible speed to Waterloo. The man was a good horse whippet, and as he possessed a smart we covered the ground in grand style.

When we reached the station, I paid him off, purchased my ticket and ran to the platform just in time to catch the 6:15 express. Punctually at five and twenty minutes to 7 I left the train again at Surbiton and, proceeding into the station yard, called another cab.

"Do you know Bundaberg House?" I asked the man as I took my place in the vehicle.

He shook his head and called to one of his mates.

George?"

"Doesn't this look as if I am, darling?" I whispered. "Yes, I love you more fondly than ever, and I have come tonight to claim the fulfillment of your promise."

"You have been very patient, George!"

"It was because I loved and believed in you, Alie!" I replied. "But come, darling; I want my answer."

"And you shall have it," she said softly. "There it is!"

As she spoke she raised her beautiful white hand and pointed to the ring I had given her, saying as she did so, "It has never left my finger since you placed it there!"

"My best of girls," I cried, raising the little hand to my lips and kissing it fondly. "I am the very happiest man in the world! And now I must hear all your doings; tell me how you got home!"

"There is little to tell," she answered. "I followed your route via Thursday Island, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. I staid in the latter place for nearly a month, and while there advertised for a companion. The result was Mrs. Barker, a nice, amiable little person, whom you will shortly see. When we reached Naples, I happened to see an advertisement concerning this furnished house in an English paper, telegraphed about it, received an answer in Paris, engaged it and arrived here this morning."

"And how did you leave the settlement? And, by the way, where is Mr. Beizenbo?"

"The settlement was very well when I came away. They were busy building the new Communal hall I used to talk to you about. And poor old Bel is left at the hovel. I was afraid he might excite remark and possibly draw suspicion upon me."

"Alie, do you think you are safe in London?" I cried in alarm, all my old fears rushing back upon me at the mention of that one word suspicion. "What ever should I do if any one suspected you?"

"You need have no fear on that score, dear," my intrepid sweetheart answered. "There is no one in England who could possibly recognize me, and the only people in the whole world who could do so are Vesey of Hongkong, the sultan of Surabaya, the rajah of Tavoy, Barkmansworth and that lieutenant and midshipman. The first is dead, the second never leaves his own territory, the third is in bad odor with the English government just at present and little likely to come home. Barkmansworth is, I presume, still in Hongkong, and the lieutenant and his junior are with their ship in the China sea."

"All the same, I shall not be satisfied until we are safely out of Europe again, Alie."

"You say we. Then you mean to come away with me, George?"

"Of course. With whom else should I go? Heck, somebody is coming."

"It is Mrs. Barker, my duenna. Now we must be matter of fact folk once more."

As she spoke Mrs. Barker, a dapper little lady with silver gray hair and a very pleasant expression, entered the room.

"Let me introduce Dr. De Normanville to you," said Alie, rising from her chair and going forward to meet her. "Dr. De Normanville, Mrs. Barker."

I bowed and Mrs. Barker did the same. Then we went in to dinner. What happened during that very pleasant meal, how Mrs. Barker found occasion to require something from her bedroom afterwards and so left us alone in the drawing room together, I need not relate. Suffice it that when I got home about 12 o'clock I was the happiest and at the same time the most nervous man in England.

Next morning I called for Janet and, willy nilly, carried her off there and then to call on Alie. We found her walking in her garden, which led down to the river, and I must be excused if I say that, proud as I was of my darling, I was infinitely prouder as I noticed the look of astonishment and admiration that came into Janet's face when she was introduced to her. Alie's radiant beauty and charming manners were irresistible, and before they had been together half an hour the two women were on the best of terms. It was Alie's earnest desire that we should remain to luncheon, and she herself walked to the railway station with us when we at last took our departure.

"Now what do you think of my sweetheart?" I asked as we steamed out of the station.

"That she is a very beautiful and charming girl," was my sister's immediate reply, "and if I know anything of my sex she is as good as she's beautiful."

This pleased me, as you may be sure, and when Janet went on to tell me that she had invited Alie and Mrs. Barker to spend a few days with her and that the visit would commence the following afternoon my opinion of my sister's kindness became even more exaggerated than before.

And so that week went by and another after it, till Alie had thoroughly settled down among us and nearly all the preparations for our wedding were complete. By that time, you may be sure, she had won golden opinions on every side. On each occasion that I saw Janet she was more and more profuse in her praises of her, until I had really to tell her that unless she moderated them a little I should soon become insufferably conceited about my good fortune.

One morning when I was beginning to think of getting up the following note was brought to me with my shaving water. It was from my sister and had evidently been written the previous evening:

SOUTH KENSINGTON, Monday Evening.

DEAR OLD GEORGE—I have succeeded in inducing Alie and Mrs. Barker to prolong their visit to me until Saturday. On Wednesday evening we hope to witness the new play at Drury Lane. Alie, you know, has never seen a spectacular melodrama. We shall of course want a seat—how to secure it. Would you care



I noticed that three gentlemen entered the box opposite us.

for the position, or must we look elsewhere? On that occasion we dine at 6:30, and, unless I hear from you to the contrary, I shall lay a place for you. In haste. Your affectionate sister, JANET.

Need it be said that I accepted, or that on Wednesday evening I was proud of my charges as they took their seats in the box Janet had been at some pains to secure?

The house was packed from pit to gallery, and I noticed that more than one glass was leveled at the beautiful girl who took her place at Janet's side in the front of the box. Alie herself, however, seemed quite unconscious of the admiration she excited and throughout the piece kept her eyes fixed upon the stage with never failing earnestness. What the play was I have not the very vaguest recollection.

In the middle of the first act I noticed that three gentlemen entered the box opposite us and from the vociferous nature of their applause gathered that they had evidently been dining—not wisely, but too well. After awhile their glasses were so continually brought to bear on our box that I began to feel myself, foolishly enough, becoming excessively annoyed. The face of one of them struck me as familiar and during the next interval, seeing that they had left their box, I made an excuse and went out to endeavor to discover who he was and where I had seen his face before. For a little while I was unsuccessful in my search; then, just as the next act was commencing, I turned a corner and almost ran into their arms. The man whose face I had been puzzling about was farthest from me, but I knew him instantly. It was Barkmansworth! My heart seemed to stand still with terror, and when I recovered my wits he was gone.

What was I to do? I dared not tell Alie before my sister and Mrs. Barker, and yet I knew, if Barkmansworth had recognized her, not an instant must be lost in getting her out of harm's way. For a moment I stood in the vestibule feeling more sick and giddy than I have ever felt before or since, and all the time trying vainly to think how to act. Then, when I took my seat again and saw that the occupants of the box opposite had gone, I resolved to put off all consideration of the matter for that evening and to call and tell Alie first thing in the morning. Oh, that little bit of indecision! How fatal were its consequences!

When I had conveyed my fair charges home, I made a severe headache an excuse, and bidding them good night set off on foot for my own abode. But my brain was too full of anxiety to entertain any idea of bed, so turning off from the direct route I wandered down to the Green park and on to the embankment, thence through Lincoln's Inn Fields to Oxford street, and so round to Cavendish square. By the time I let myself into my house it was nearly 8 o'clock and a beautiful morning. Passing along the hall, I went into my consulting room and lit the gas. A letter lay upon the table, addressed in my sister's handwriting and marked "Immediate." With a sickening fear in my heart I tore it open and read:

DEAR GEORGE—Come to me at once, without an instant's delay. Alie has been arrested. Your frantic sister, JANET.

The blow had fallen. My little shirking of an unpleasant duty had ruined the woman I loved. Oh, how bitterly I reproached myself for my delay in reporting my discovery! But if I had hesitated then I did not do so now. A second or two later I had let myself out again and was off as fast as I could go on my way back to South Kensington.

CHAPTER XIII.  
REMANDED.

Never shall I forget the misery of that walk back from Cavendish square to South Kensington. I rang the bell, and the peal had not died away before poor, heavy eyed Janet had opened the door to me. Without a word she led me into her morning room, the room where I had first told her of my love for Alie, and having made me sit down would not let me speak until I had partaken of some refreshment. I filled my glass, but pushed my plate away from me. "I could drink, but I was far too miserable to eat."

"Janet," I cried, "for heaven's sake tell me, as quickly as you can, all that has happened!"

"My poor George," she said, "as I told you in my note, Alie has been arrested. You had not left the house more than a quarter of an hour before two men called and asked to be allowed to see me on most important business. They were shown in here and when we were alone requested permission to see Alie. I went to fetch her and brought her down with me. Then one of the men advanced toward her with a paper in his hand and said, 'Alie Dunbar, in the queen's name I arrest you on a charge of piracy upon the high seas.' Oh, it was horrible, and I can see it all now!"

"And what did my poor girl say?"

"Nothing. She was just as calm and collected as she always is. She simply took the paper from the man's hand and looked at it, after which she said: 'There must be some mistake. However,

you are only doing your duty, I suppose. Where do you wish to take me?' To Scotland Yard first, madam," the man said, "then on to Bow street." Hearing that, Alie turned to me and, putting her arms round my neck, said, "You will soften this blow as much as you can for George, won't you, Janet?" and then announced that as soon as she had changed her dress and procured her hat and cloak she would be ready to accompany them. These changes in her costume she was permitted to make, and when they were accomplished we set off, but not before I had written that note to you. We expected you would follow us at once and be able to arrange the matter of bail."

"I did not get your letter until after 8 o'clock. I was in such a strange state of mind last night that I went for a long walk after leaving you, Janet, it is all my fault. Did you notice those men in the box opposite us at Drury Lane? If so, you may have observed that they continually stared at Alie through their glasses."

"I did notice them, and very ill bred fellows I thought them. I think Alie must have thought so too. But what have they to do with this matter?"

"Why, the man at the back of the box was none other than the person mentioned in that last newspaper paragraph about the Beautiful White Devil. He was the man Barkmansworth, in fact, whom the Beautiful White Devil took from the mailboat and flogged in midocean."

"But what has this to do with Alie?"

"Why, simply that—no, there can be no shirking it now, it must come out, and I know it is perfectly safe for me to tell you—simply, Janet, because Alie is the Beautiful White Devil."

"Oh, George, my dear old brother, is this terrible thing true?"

"Perfectly true, Janet."

"And you of all men were going to marry the Beautiful White Devil?"

"Don't say 'were,' say 'are.' Janet, it is only half past 5 now. An hour and a half must elapse before I can do any good at the police station. If you will listen, I will tell you the story of Alie's singular life and how I became mixed up with her. Then, remembering what you have seen of her yourself, you will be able to judge what sort of woman the Beautiful White Devil really is."

Thereupon I set to work and told her all my adventures. Then I looked at Janet and found big tears standing in her eyes.

"What do you think of the Beautiful White Devil now?" I asked.

"I think that, come what may, George, we must save her."

"Of course we must, and now I'm going off to see her. May I give her any message from you?"

"Give her my fondest love and tell her that, come what may, she shall be saved."

"It will cheer her to know that in spite of what has happened you believe in her. Goodby."

"Goodby, my poor George."

I left the house, and hurrying down to Gloucester road took the underground train for the Temple, walking thence to Bow street. On entering the police station I asked to see the officer in charge. To this grim official I stated the nature of my business and begged to be permitted an interview with his prisoner. This he granted with a very civil grace. The jailer was accordingly called, and I was led down a long corridor.

"Seeing that she is a lady," that official said as he unlocked the door on the right, "we have given her a somewhat better room than we usually allow our prisoners. I have orders to permit you a quarter of an hour together."

He opened the door, and I went in. With a little cry of joy, Alie, who had been sitting on a sofa at the farther end, sprang to her feet and ran toward me, crying as she did so:

"Oh, George, dear, I knew you would come to me as soon as you could."

I took her in my arms and kissed her again and again; her dear eyes were flooded with tears when I released her, but she brushed them away and tried to look brave for my sake. Then I led her back to the sofa and sat down beside her.

"Alie," I said softly, "this is all my fault. I saw Barkmansworth at Drury Lane last night and ought to have warned you. I intended to have done so this morning, but it was too late."

"Hush!" she answered. "You must not blame yourself. I, too, recognized him last night and should have spoken to you about it today. It is too late now, as you say."

"Can nothing be done, Alie?"

"I cannot say yet. I have been too much upset since my arrival here to think. But you must find me a lawyer at once, George, who will defend me at the preliminary examination, and if it looks as if the case will go against me you must find some means by which I can escape."

"Escape? Alie, you do not realize how impossible that is."

"Nothing is impossible when one has brains enough to devise a plot and sufficient money to work it out."

"If I could only feel as you do about it. But have you any scheme to suggest?"

"Not yet, but I shall devote my whole attention to it, and it will go hard with me if I cannot hit on something. Would you have the courage to dare very much for my sake, George?"

"I would dare anything under the sun for you, Alie, and though you asked me such a question I do not think you feel any doubt as to what answer I would give."

"I had no doubt. Do not think that. And now, George, tell me what your sister says, now that she knows who I am?"

"Janet is more your friend than ever. I told her your story this morning, and she bade me give you her love and tell you we would save you yet."

Again the tears rose in Alie's eyes.

"What will the east say when it hears that the Beautiful White Devil is caught at last?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. One

thing I'm certain of, however, and that is that I should like to have five minutes with Mr. Barkmansworth alone. I think then he'd know that?"

But what I was going to say was interrupted by the entrance of the officer who had brought me to the room.

"Time's up, I'm sorry to say, sir."

I rose immediately and turned to say goodby. Being a good hearted fellow, the man left us alone together for another moment, and during that time I was able to whisper an assurance to my sweetheart that no stone should be left unturned to secure her release. Then bidding her be of good cheer, I passed out, feeling as if the bolts clanging behind me were closing on my heart.

It was well after 8 o'clock before I left Bow street and turned homeward. The shops in most cases had their shutters down, but though I looked for a newspaper board it was some time before I sighted one. Then for the first time I saw the headline I had been dreading:

"Sensational Arrest of the Notorious Beautiful White Devil."

I stopped and bought a paper and then continued my journey, pausing at a telegraph office to send a wire to my old chum, Brandwon, in which I asked him, as he valued our friendship, to come to me without a moment's delay.

When I got home, I changed my clothes, had a cold bath, which restored me somewhat, and then ordered breakfast, which I felt I could not touch, and while it was preparing sat down to read the account of the arrest. It was but a short report and published the barest details.

Nine o'clock had just struck when a cab drew up at the door, and Brandwon jumped out. I opened the front door to him myself, and as I did so felt as if we were one step at least on the road to Alie's release.

"Look here, my friend," he said, as I led him across the hall to my dining room. "This is all very well, you know, but what in the name of fortune makes you send for me at this unearthly hour?"

Janet kissed Alie and cried over her.

Have you poisoned a patient and find yourself in need of me to square matters, or have you been jilted and hope to bring an action for the damage done to your broken heart? Out with it. But forgive my chaff if it's anything more serious."

He must have seen by my face that something was every wrong, for his jocular manner suddenly left him and he sat down all seriousness.

"There is something very much the matter, Brandwon," I said. "Read that."

I handed him the morning paper and pointed to the paragraph detailing the arrest. He read it through, and then, seating himself at the breakfast table, poured himself out a cup of coffee and buttered a piece of toast before he spoke.

When he did so, he said solemnly: "I think I understand. You are interested in this lady and want me to undertake her defense. Is that so?"

"That is exactly what I want. I was at my wits' end to know what to do, when suddenly it flashed through my brain, 'Send for Edward Brandwon.' I sent that wire accordingly, and here you are. If there is any man living who can save the woman I love, you are he."

"I'll do my best, you may be sure, for your sake, old boy. Now where is she?"

"At Bow street. She is to be brought before the court this morning at 12 o'clock."

He took out his watch and looked at it.

"Well, I've none too much time. I'll go down and have an interview with her at once. Keep up your heart, old chap. We'll do our best, and nobody can do more."

I wrung his hand, and then, hailing a cab, he jumped into it and set off for the police station.

Long before 12 o'clock I was in the court, waiting for the examination to come on. The news of the case must have gone abroad, for the hall was densely packed with people anxious to catch a glimpse of the famous Beautiful White Devil, whose exploits were almost as well known in England as in the east. Every rank of life seemed to be represented, and when the magistrate took his seat on the bench I noticed that the chairs on either side of him were occupied by two illustrious personages whose dignity should have prevented them from giving such an exhibition of idle curiosity. Seeing the rush there was to stare at my poor, unfortunate sweetheart, I could have found it in my heart to hit out like a madman at those round me.

Precisely at 12 o'clock the door on the right hand side of the court opened and Alie stepped into the hall and ascended the iron dock. She walked with her usual queenly step, held her head high, and when she reached her place looked proudly round the dingy hall. Such was the effect of her wonderful beauty upon those present that, despite the efforts of the officers of the court to prevent it, a loud buzz of admiration came from the spectators. She was dressed entirely in black, a color which,

as I have said before, displayed her white skin and beautiful hair to the very best advantage. Having taken her place, she bowed politely to the presiding magistrate, who returned her salute, and then the examination commenced. The first proceeding was for the police to make a statement of their case to the court. It was then shown that, although a warrant had long been out for her arrest, the Beautiful White Devil had evaded justice for many years. Indeed it was only for the reason that information had been supplied to the London police within the last few days that they had become aware that the Beautiful White Devil had left the east and arrived in England. Inquiries were instantly made, and on the strength of them the prisoner now in the dock had been arrested. They, the police, did not propose to call witnesses at this preliminary hearing, but would merely ask that the information should be read over, the evidence of arrest given, and then a remand granted in order that the arrival of an officer from Singapore might be awaited and further inquiries made.

At this point Brandwon rose to his feet, and, adopting a quiet, sober attitude of respectful remonstrance, begged to be allowed to place before the court what he considered and would unhesitatingly call a deliberate and cruel injustice. He pointed out the small likelihood there was of the charge being true, he dilated upon the facts of Alie's arrival from Australia, of her quiet, ladylike demeanor, spoke of her impending marriage with a gentleman, a personal friend of his own, well known and universally respected in London, and brought his remarks to a close by declaring it a monstrous thing that, in this nineteenth century and in this land of which we pretend to be so proud, it should be within the power of a public body like the police, without a tittle of evidence at their back to bear their case out, to bring so shameful a charge against an innocent girl, who might possibly have to suffer from the effects of it all her life. He would not ask the court to consent to a remand; on the contrary, he would ask his worship to dismiss the case altogether, and at the same time to issue a stinging and well merited rebuke to the police for their officiousness and quite uncalled for action in the matter.

Clever and impressive as his harangue was, it, however, failed utterly in its purpose. The magistrate had evidently carefully considered the case beforehand and determined upon his course of action. The decision given, therefore, was: "Remanded for a week. Bail refused."

I saw Alie bow gravely to the court, the policeman open the door of the dock, and a moment later, feeling quite sick and giddy, I was in the throng leaving the court. By the time I reached the street my darling was on her way to Holloway.

That afternoon, at 8 o'clock, Janet and I drove out to the prison, and having shown our authorities were instantly conducted to the room in which prisoners are permitted to interview their friends.

What the two women I loved best in the world said to each other during that interview I cannot remember. I only know that Janet kissed Alie and cried over her, and that Alie received it all with that gentle graciousness which was so wonderfully becoming to her. When we had discussed the events which had led up to the arrest, I asked Alie if she were quite comfortable.

"Perfectly," she answered. "My cell is by no means an unpleasant one. I have some books and writing materials, and I have arranged to have my meals brought in to me from a restaurant outside."

"What did you think of Brandwon's speech this morning?" I then asked her.

"I thought it very clever and impressive," she answered, "but I was not surprised when it proved of no avail. No, there is very little chance as far as I can see. In a month the officer from Singapore will be in London, and unless something happens to prevent it I shall be sent out east to stand my trial."

"Something must prevent it," whispered Janet.

"But what? You cannot escape so easily in England, I find," she answered. "These stone walls are very strong, and the discipline is so perfect."

"Be sure we will find a way to get you off. Trust us." Then dropping my voice, "And if we can't do it legally we'll do it illegally."

"You must run no risk for my sake, George. I could not allow that."

"If only Walworth were here! His wit would hit on something."

"Walworth unfortunately is 10,000 miles away. So it is no use thinking of him. But, see, here is the warden. Your time is up. Goodby, dear Janet. I pray that you may find it in your heart to forgive me for having brought this trouble upon you."

But Janet, who by this time had learned to love this fascinating girl with all her heart, would listen to no such talk. When the door opened, like the kind sister she was, she went out first, thus permitting us an opportunity of saying farewell alone. When I joined her again, I had a little note in my waistcoat pocket that seemed somehow to make me a happier man than I had been for hours past.

From the prison I drove Janet to her own house and then went back to Cavendish square.

When I had dismissed the cabman, I let myself in and proceeded to my consulting room. Opening the door, I walked in, only to come to a sudden halt before a man sitting in my own armchair. He was small and queerly built, wore a long coat that reached nearly to his heels, had gray hair, a ferociously curled mustache and a short, closely cropped white beard. The effect when he looked at me over the edge of the paper he was perusing was most comical. For a moment I stood bewildered, but I was destined to be even more so when he rose and came toward me, holding out his hand and saying: