

phere that harmonized with the tropical aspect of the scene. After making many sharp turns and winding through some curious nooks the road suddenly terminated in front of a tall cottage, the verandah of which was enclosed by a lattice. The passenger had determined to discharge the hack here, but he wondered not a little how he would extricate himself alone from the labyrinth of alleys that ran in all directions through the neighborhood. He paid the hackman and, after seeing him drive away, noiselessly ascended the steps of the dwelling. Reaching the doorway, he stopped for a minute and looked across the verandah into a lighted room. A small lamp was burning on a table, beside which sat a man bent with years, poring over the pages of an account book. A high-post bedstead, covered with a mosquito net, stood in a corner, and there was little else in the room besides two or three chairs, a wash-stand and a profuse assortment of pictures on the walls. The floor was covered with matting.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Medstone!" shouted the stranger in a hearty tone as he walked into the room.

The old man relaxed his hold of the book, threw himself back in the chair and glared at the new comer. "What do you mean by this intrusion?" he asked in a tremulous voice.

"Just to pass the compliments of the season and have a little chat. Perhaps I should have addressed you by your stage name Mr. Urquhart. I'm only a sailor. I left New York last July in the ship Asia, bound for Hongkong. We put in here two weeks ago with kerosene and, seeing you on the street one day, I thought I recognized a very old acquaintance. Having a habit of quizzing I asked several parties about you and, though people generally are not inclined to be talkative to rough sailor men, I got a good deal of information. I asked one man if your name was Urquhart back in the States, and he said 'may be,' just like that. Then he told me you were an old kammy yammer, whatever that is, and that as long as folks behaved themselves here nobody cared what they were called in the States."

"You are an impertinent fellow, to say the least. If you don't leave my house at once I'll ring up the police."

"O, no, you wouldn't call the police. You know you have a mortal horror of anybody that has anything to do with enforcing law. Hear me out. Thirty years ago this night you strangled your wife on the sands of Little Nahant and—"

"Stop!" roared Urquhart, now pallid with emotion and fear. "What sort of rubbish are you talking of? I'll—"

"You discharged your coachman—who was my father—that very day in order to throw the crime on him. A very pretty strategy, Medstone! When your wife was found murdered and robbed of her jewels my poor old father, who, unfortunately, had been implicated in a previous affair of the kind, and you knew it, was arrested, tried and given a life term, only on circumstantial evidence. You testified against him, and because your family was somewhat higher in the social scale than ours, a credulous jury believed you and not him. I suspected at the time—and I afterwards had my suspicion confirmed—that you could have told the jury more than you cared to about the case. My father died in prison of a broken heart, but nevertheless your desire to get rid of a wife you didn't want was gratified."

This narrative, delivered rapidly and emphasized by a fierce, earnest expression on the face of the speaker, was not without its effect on the hearer, who, with countenance agape and his bony frame trembling from head to foot, but too plainly expressed a confession of guilt.

"I'm only Joe Copthorne," continued the sailor, "but I knew you when you brought your wife to that elegant house in Winthrop. You led a gay life and had money. You are just twice the age you were then, but I can see the pangs of remorse have put thirty years on top of your natural age, making you just ninety. When I started looking for you in different parts of the globe I expected to find a man appearing thirty years older than he really was and I was right. Why, you look older than Santa Claus. I

have it from an excellent source here in town—for I'm as good as a commercial agency when I start out—that you are worth \$150,000. Now, as only a modicum of this world's goods ever came my way, I propose that you divide your lot with me and I will give you a quit claim deed to all knowledge of that disagreeable affair on the sands of Little Nahant."

"Blood money!" gasped the culprit.

"No, gold money, sugar stock, houses and lots or any good thing that will set me up in business, for I'm tired of the sea."

"Not a cent, villain!" screamed Urquhart, now rendered desperate by the situation. "Tell your story to the world. Who'll believe the yarn of a roving sailor?"

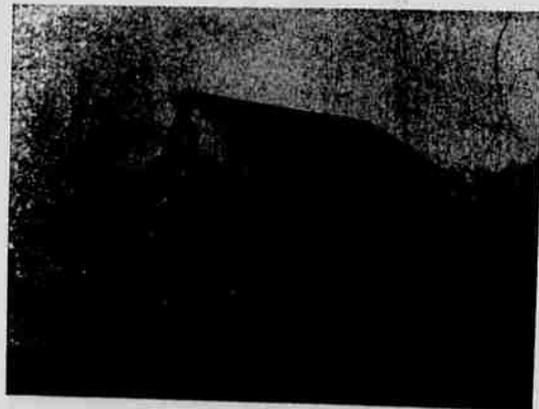
Copthorne's brow darkened and a sinister look came into his eyes as he fastened his gaze on the feeble form of the being before him. He advanced a step or two and, clenching his fists, made a threatening gesture with a view of intimidating. The old man was no match for the stout, agile sailor, but, through sheer force of will, he determined to refuse his demands to the end. "Help! Help!" he shouted, the last word dying uncompleted on his lips, for Copthorne had seized him by the throat. Then something bright flashed above his head and in another second the sailor's sheath knife sank into his breast. As the point of the blade pierced the heart the body of the wretched man sprang convulsively forward, but the arm of the sailor quickly arrested the movement and forced the victim into the seat, where with eyes dilated, jaws relaxed and head thrown back old Charles Medstone was the very presentment of agonizing death.

Copthorne extinguished the light and stealthily departed from the house. "I didn't intend to go that far with the old bloke," he muttered to himself, "but he made me mad. Any way, he got two for one and, now he is over his long worry, it may be an all-round blessing that I stopped his speed."

At daybreak the Asia was towed out to sea and bore Joe Copthorne to a distant clime.

On the morning of the third day a Chinese banana vender entered Medstone's cottage and discovered in the chair by the table what the voracious vermin had left there—the murdered man's skeleton, clothed in the garments of the living. The knife, which had fallen to the floor, told of the tragedy.

Then the neighbors and friends of the man that had been known as John Urquhart buried the remains and extolled the deeds of the departed. There was an abiding conviction among them, however, borne out by the manner of his death, that in his early manhood John Urquhart had committed some moral transgression, atonement for which could be rendered only with his own life.



Country House of Minister Lansing.

(Photo by Hamra)