



"Nonsense!" I thought to myself; "it was a trick of the imagination."  
I raised my hand once more to the lock, when the sound broke again, louder, unmistakable. It was the voice of one in distress of body or mind.  
I listened with all my ears. Then there came through the door the low, stern tones of a man's voice speaking earnestly, pleadingly, threateningly, but in a suppressed monotone.  
Then the groan burst forth again, and it was followed by sobs and choked sounds, as of one who protested, yet, strangely, the voice was the same. There was one man, not two. It was self-accusation, self-excuse, and the sobs seemed to come in answer to self-reproaches.  
Then there was sound as of a man praying, and the prayer was broken by sobs; and again I thought there were two men. And then there was a noise of a man moving about, and a long smothered groan, as of one in agony of spirit. Fearful that the door might be flung open in my face, I tipped back to my room, and sileptly turned the key, as thoroughly mystified as ever I had been in the strange events that had crowded my life since I had entered the city.

CHAPTER XVII.  
In a Foreign Land.

The groans and prayers, if they continued, could be heard no longer through the double doors, and I seated myself by the desk and took account of the events that had brought me to my present position.  
Where did I stand? What had I accomplished? What had I learned? How was I to reach the end for which I struggled and bring justice to the slayer of my murdered friend? As I passed in review the occurrences that had crowded the few weeks since my arrival, I was compelled to confess that I knew little more of the mysteries that surrounded me than on the night I arrived. I knew that I was tussled between two opposing forces. I knew that a mysterious boy was supposed to be under my protection, and that to gain and keep possession of him my life was sought and defended. I knew that Doddridge Knapp had caused the murder of Henry Wilton, and yet for some unfathomable reason gave me his confidence and employment under the belief that I was Henry Wilton. But I had been able to get no hint of who the boy might be, or where he was concealed, or who was the hidden woman who employed me to protect him, or why he was sought by Doddridge Knapp.

How long I sat by the desk waiting, thinking, planning, I knew not. One scheme of action after another I had considered and rejected, when a sound broke on my listening ears. I started up in feverish anxiety. It was from the room beyond, and I stole toward the door to learn what it might mean. Burning with impatience, I thrust aside the fears of the evil that might follow hasty action. I had drawn the key and raised it to the slot, when I heard a step in the middle room. I had but time to retreat to my desk when a key was fitted in the lock, the door was flung open, and Doddridge Knapp stepped calmly into the room.  
"Ah, Wilton," said the King of the Street affably, "I was wondering if I should find you here."

There was no trace of surprise or agitation in the face before me. If this was the man whose prayers and groans and sobs had come to me through the locked door, if he had wrestled with his conscience or even had been the accusing conscience of another, his face was a mask that showed no trace of the agony of thoughts that might contort the spirit beneath it.

"I was attending to a little work of my own," I answered, after greeting. "I felt much like a disconcerted pick-pocket. I was careful to conceal the circumstance, and spoke with easy indifference. You have come back before I expected you," I continued carelessly.

"Yes," said the King of the Street with equal carelessness. "Some family affairs called me home sooner than I had thought to come."

"Mrs. Knapp is not ill, I trust?" I ventured.

"Oh, no."

"Nor Miss Knapp?"

"Oh, all are well at the house, but sometimes you know women-folks get nervous."

Was it possible that Mrs. Knapp had sent for her husband? What other meaning could I put on these words? But before I could pursue my investigations further along this line, the wolf came to the surface, and he waved the subject aside with a growl.

"But this is nothing to you. What you want to know is that I won't need you before Wednesday, if then."

"Does the campaign reopen?" I asked.

"If you don't mind, Wilton," said the Wolf with another growl, "I'll keep my plans till I'm ready to use them."

"Certainly," I returned. "But maybe you would feel a little interest to know that Rosenheim and Bashford have gathered in about a thousand shares of Omega in the last four or five days."

Doddridge Knapp gave me a keen glance.

"There were no sales of above a hundred shares," he said.

"No—most of them ran from ten to fifty shares."

"Well," he continued, looking fixedly at me, "you know something about Rosenheim?"

"If it won't interfere with your plans," I suggested apologetically.

The Wolf drew back his lips over his fangs, and then turned the snarl into a smile.

"Go on," he said, waving amends for the snarl he had administered.

"Well, I don't know much about Rosenheim, but I caught him talking with Decker."

"Were the stocks transferred to Decker?"

"No; they stand to Rosenheim, trustee."

"Well, Wilton, they've stolen a march on us, but I reckon we'll give 'em a surprise before they're quite awake."

"And," I continued coolly, "Decker's working up a deal in Crown Diamond and toying a little with Confidence—you gave me a week to find out, you may remember."

"Very good, Wilton," said the King of the Street with grudging approval.

"We'll sell old Decker quite a piece of Crown Diamond before he gets through. And now is there anything more in your pocket?"

"It's empty," I confessed.

"Well, you may go then."

Doddridge Knapp followed me to the door, and stood on the threshold as I walked down the hall. There was no chance for spying or listening at key-holes, if I were so inclined, and it was not until I had reached the bottom stair that I thought I heard the sound of a closing door behind me.

As I stood at the entrance, almost oblivious of the throng that was hurrying up and down Clay street, Porter joined me.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"Him? Who?"

"Why, Tom Terrill sneaked down those stairs a little bit ago, and I thought you might have found him up there."

Could it be possible that this man had been with Doddridge Knapp, and that it was his voice I had heard? This in turn seemed improbable, hardly possible.

"There he is now," whispered Porter.

I turned my eyes in the direction he indicated, and a shock ran through me; for my eye had met the eye of a serpent. Yes, there again was the cruel, keen face, and the glittering, repulsive eye, filled with malice and hatred, that I had beheld with loathing and dread whenever it had come in my path. With an evil glance Terrill turned and made off in the crowd.

"Follow that man, Wainwright," said I to the second guard, who was close at hand. "Watch him to-night and report to me to-morrow."

I wondered what could be the meaning of Terrill's visit to the building. Was it to see Doddridge Knapp and get his orders? Or was it to follow up some new plan to wrest from me the secret I was supposed to hold? But there was no answer to these questions, and I turned toward my room to prepare for the excursion that had been set for the evening.

It was with hope and fear that I took my way to the Pine Street palace. It was my fear that was realized. Mrs. Bowser fell to my lot, while Luella joined Mr. Carter, and Mrs. Carter with Mr. Horton followed.

Corson was waiting for us at the City Hall. I had arranged with the policeman that he should act as our guide, and had given him Porter and Barkhouse as assistants in case any should be needed.

"A fine night for it, sor," said Corson in greeting. "There's a little celebration goin' on among the haythens to-night, so you'll see 'em at their best."

Looking across the dark shrubbery of Portsmouth Square and up Washington street, the eye could catch a line of gay-colored lanterns, swaying in the light wind, and casting a mellow glow on buildings and walks.

"Oh, isn't it sweet! So charming!" cried Mrs. Bowser, as we came into full view of the scene and crossed the invisible line that carries one from modern San Francisco into the ancient oriental city, instinct with foreign life, that goes by the name of Chinatown. Sordid and foul as it appears by daylight, there was a charm and romance to it under the lantern-lights that softened the darkness. Crowds of Chinese hurried along the streets, loitered at corners, gathered about points of interest, but it seemed as though it was all one man repeated over and over.

"Why, they're all alike!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser. "How do they ever tell each other apart?"

"Oh, that's easy enough, ma'am," replied Corson with a twinkle in his eye. "They tie a knot in their pig-tails, and that's the way you know 'em."

"Laws! you don't say!" said Mrs. Bowser, much impressed. "I never

could tell 'em that way."

"It is a strange resemblance," said Mr. Carter. "Don't you find it almost impossible to distinguish between them?"

"To tell you the truth, sor, no," said Corson. "It's a trick of the eye with you, sor. If you was to be here with 'em for a month or two you'd never think there was two of 'em alike. There's as much difference betwixt one and another as with any two white men. I was lolke you at first. I says to meself that they're as like as two peas. But, now, look at those two mugs there in that door. They're no more alike than you and me, as Mr. Wilson here can tell you, sor."

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SERVED IN NEW WAY

DESSERT DISHES FOR THOSE WHO LIKE THE QUINCE.

Sweet Apples Mixed with the Fruit  
Add Flavor—Chopped Preserved  
Quinces Served with Boiled  
Custard—Quince Tart.

Quince chips are a thick preserve of tender quinces and sugar syrup. A little invention may vary this by adding fruit that does not disturb the flavor. When cooked all alone the quince flavor is quite strong, and sweet apples seem created to

borrow an equal flavor from the quince. A very few quinces preserves with ice cream is a dainty dish, and a spoonful served with a mound of whipped cream and gelatin is delicious.

The Housekeeper suggests new ways for the fruit, and one of these is a trifle made with chopped preserved quinces. Arrange them in a deep glass dish with alternate layers of macaroon or sponge cake crumbs, then pour over a rich boiled custard made with the yolks of six eggs, three tablespoonfuls of sugar, three cupfuls of milk and half a teaspoonful of almond extract. Pour the custard over while it is still warm and set aside until very cold. Just before serving heap over the top the whites of two eggs whipped to a very stiff snow with two tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar and two tablespoonfuls of chopped blanched almonds. Garnish with candied orange carrels or candied cherries.

A quince tart is either a pie or pudding if one prefers it so called, but it is equally delicious under either name. Press one pint of quince pulp through a colander, add to it one cupful of granulated sugar, the beaten yolks of four eggs and one pint of milk. Line a shallow pudding dish with puff paste and pour in the quince mixture. Twist a strip of the pastry around the edge of the dish for a border, and bake in a moderate oven for about half an hour or until done. Whip the whites of the eggs to a very stiff snow with four tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, heap it over the top and let it brown very delicately in a slow oven. Serve cold with whipped cream.

Tapoca cooked in water until perfectly clear and thick to jelly makes another pleasing foundation for a quince dish. Sweeten the tapoca to taste and flavor with a little nutmeg and lemon juice. Place it in layers in a buttered pudding dish with chopped preserved quinces, cover the top with the whites of two eggs whipped to a stiff snow with two tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, and let it brown delicately in a slow oven. The syrup should be drained from the fruit and used as a sauce. Whipped cream is also a delicious accompaniment. This pudding is excellent either hot or cold.

Swiss Roast.

Take a round steak—from two to two and a half inches in thickness—and pound into it as much flour as it will take, using the edge of a heavy plate for that purpose. When the flour has been pounded into both sides put the meat into an iron skillet with some lard, and brown it on both sides. Then cover it with water, adding onions enough to flavor and a whole ripe tomato, or an equal quantity of canned tomatoes when fresh vegetables are not in season. Cover tightly and cook two hours, adding more water as necessary during the time. Just before the meat is done, salt and pepper to taste. Delicious as this dish is when served hot, it is also nice when cold.

To Clean Aigrettes.

Make a soap suds from any pure soap and warm water; after fastening the aigrette by the wired end to a clean, smooth table—an oilcloth covered table is good—take a fine fibered brush and clean by gently brushing with the soap suds. When thoroughly clean you will find that your feathers are limp. Let them dry and dip in a bit of cold starch, then hang up by the wired end to again dry. You will find them to be like new if treated gently and carefully as indicated.

Concerning Fish.

When a fish is to be broiled, never bone it. If the bones are removed the tissues are broken and the juices escape. Before frying fish dust it off with salt and pepper. Never use filling or stuffing in a fat fish that is to be baked. Fish fat is very strong and, mingled with a stuffing, is most unpleasant.

Savory Breakfast Dish.

A tasty breakfast or luncheon dish for two people: Large cup of calves' liver left from previous meal cut into small pieces, half green pepper cut in fine pieces, piece of butter in frying pan; stir liver and pepper together until hot. Break in two eggs. Stir all together. Serve before eggs get dry.