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With the new day, too, and the sunlight, and the cheery brightness of my own rooms, there came a lifting of that oppressive atmosphere of the esoteric which at Cameron's had set my nerves out of plumb and my reason on the bias. Indeed I was fully convinced that we had been foolishly constructing an Alpine chain out of a miserable little row of mole hills, and I determined to lose no time in bringing Cameron, whom I now regarded as most needlessly alarmed, to my own wholesome way of thinking.

Directly after breakfast, therefore, I set forth on foot for my neighbor's, choosing the shore road as the more direct of the two routes.

Personally, my taste in landscape is for distant view in preference to nearat-hand foliage. My own house, which is fashioned in semblance of a Pompelian villa, its cream-white walls punctuated with shutters of a somewhat vivid pea-green and crowned by

gently stoping roofs of the same bright color, gazes out across Stamford Harbor and the blue waters of the Sound, to where on clear days the pencilled outline of Eaton's Neck shows purple in the distance. There are no towering, umbrageous trees to interrupt the outlook; only low, carefully-trimmed shrubs, adorning a series of marble sculpture-dotted terraces, well below the line of vision. But the Cameron place, reflecting the Townsbury penchant for arboriculture, is quite the reverse. The prospect from the windows and verandahs of the fine old mansion is all green vistas and leafy perspectives, with only a glint of sun-sparkled waves, chancecaught between gray boles or when the wind spreads a momentary opening in the foliage.

My way to Cameron's led through a veritable forest of such luxuriant leafage that the path more than half the time was in twilight, while to right and left the shadows deepened into dark in the cloistral recesses of the woodland heart. The silence was profound. No voice of bird nor scurrying foot of squirrel invaded the morning hush of those ramous depths. My own footsteps on the soft turf returned no

A half-mile or more I had walked in this mute greenwood peace, when sharp and clear there echoed through the verdurous aisles the crack of a rifle, and I came to a sudden, involuntary halt.

Then it occurred to me that it was the third day of the open season for rail birds, and that it was the report of a shot-gun I had heard, fired by some sportsman, off on the shore, there, to my right. And so I resumed my tramp, with ears keen for a repetition. Al most immediately I was rewarded, and then I knew that it was no rail bird gunner, for the shot was unmistakably a rifle shot, and it was fired in the depth of the wood, to the left of me.

Three times more I heard it, in fair ly rapid succession, and sounding always from about the same direction. cannot say that it gave me any uneasiness, but it perplexed me in a mild way, arousing a passing curiosity as to its object. And then, I came out upon the well-kept, gravelled drive which circles the close-cropped, vel vety Cameron lawn, and catching sight of Cameron himself, in riding breeches and puttees, romping with one of his picturesquely graceful Russian wolf-hounds, promptly forgot all about it.

He came across the sward to mee me, the great, gaunt white hound pressing close to his side, and thought I saw that be, too, had experienced the inspiriting influence of the morning.

"I have found an answer," I cried, while he was still fifty yards away. "possibly the answer."

He raised his brows in question, and the hound, with open jaws, fondled his wrist.

"I had a horseback ride before breakfast," he told me, as he shook my hand. "Then I spent an hour at the kennels. We've a fine new brood of collie puppies. You must see them." "I want to," I returned.

"What do you say to tennis?" he suggested, irrelevantly. "Just a set. It's a fine morning for tennis."

"If you can lend me a pair of shoes, I consented, glaring down at my boots. "A dozen pairs," he smiled. "Come up to my dressing room. Louis will fit you out."

I was scarcely prepared for this change in my friend's mood, and far from happy over it. /He was evidently determined to ignore the subject that had so engrossed us the night before, hoping to find surcease of harassing thought in a restless round of activities. The condition was a morbid one which I believed should be discouraged; the more so as I possessed what I fancied was a perfectly practical solution of that which hitherto had seemed to us an inexplicable phenomenon. And I was a little annoved, oo, that my good tidings should be thus disregarded.

When, therefore, we had entere he hall and Cameron was leading to wards the broad, ascending staircase;

"Lo you mind giving me just a minute?"

He stopped, turned, and stood in questioning silence. "A minute in your study," I added,

in explanation. Reluctantly, it seemed to me, he crossed to the study door, and throwing it open, stood aside that I might

precede him. The room appeared far less grim and gloomy than when I had last entered it. Its windows faced the south; and between the olive-green tapestry curtains the sun poured in a flood, lighting up the far corners, glinting on the gilt ornaments of the writing table, and bathing in dazzling splendor the burnished bronzes on the

crowded top of the book-shelves. "I see you are not disposed to resume our discussion of last night," I began, when Cameron, having closed the door behind him, halted just inside, and with hands in pockets, awaited my opening. "But I want to show you that we have been in very much the same position as the wondering children who watch the prestidigitateur. We have imagined something amazingly like a miracle, which, in point of fact, is capable of a very sim-

ple, commonplace explanation." "You mean the cutting out of the head of the portrait?" he asked, with kindling interest.

"I do." "You have discovered how it was done, before my eyes, so to speak,

and yet-?" "I have discovered how it may have been done," I interrupted. He moved his head just perceptibly

from side to side in skeptical gesture. "The door of this room is seldom locked?" I queried, ignoring the indicated skepticism.

"Never locked," he answered. "It would be quite possible for any one, knowing that you were absent, to spend an hour or so here uninter-

"Any one?" he questioned. "Any one who had gained entrance to the house," I amplified.

"Oh, yes, I presume so." "They would have ample time to clear a space on the book-shelves, climb up, and carefully cut out the head, or any part, or the whole of a

portrait, if they were so inclined?" I paused for his answer, but he only smiled with a sort of incredulous tol-

"Would they not?" I insisted. But Cameron was most perverse this morn-

"My dear Clyde," he scoffed, "of what use is all this? The portrait was cut, not while I was absent, but while I was present. I saw it complete at three o'clock; at twelve minutes past three, it was mutilated."

"My contention ig," I explained, quite patiently, "that while you saw it complete at three o'clock, the cut had already been made, but the cut portion had not been removed. In other words, the cutting having been deftly done with a thin, sharp knife, it was perfectly feasible to leave the portrait apparently intact, though with the slightest effort the incised portion could subsequently be released-with, say, a piece of cord, glued to the back

for that especial purpose." Now that I had made myself clear Cameron was quick to acknowledge the possibility of such a method.

"And the cord, you mean, led down behind the book-shelves, and perhaps through a window?" he suggested. "Precisely. And was pulled by some

one on the outside." "Yes," he said, thoughtfully. "Such an explanation is not unreasonable. The thing, really, must have been

done in some such way.' "And don't you see," I hurried on with my advantage, "how utterly cheap this makes she whole affair? There's nothing at all impressive in that performance when you find out how it was done. If the next demonstration is no better than such claptrap, you may rest assured you have a very picayunish sort of mountebank villain to deal with. So, cheer up, my dear man, and I'll show you a few tricks at tennis that may be equally

eve-opening." Unquestionably my friend appeared relieved. But I came to fancy later that the appearance was feighed for my benefit. Certainly he was not convinced, and in that proved himself possessed of an intuition, a world more accurate than my own.

CHAPTER III.

The Target.

The set at tennis having finished with victory perching on my banners, I made excuse to put off the inspection of the collie puppies until another time, resumed my walking boots and, with a parting if fatile admonition to Cameron to "think no more about it," started on my homeward way.

My route lay again through the minfature forest, for the day had waxed uncomfortably warm with the apeach of noon, and there was scant shade on the high-road between our mee In the wood, however,

the air was patefully cool, and I strode on at a good pace, breathing deeply and with enjoyment the bosky odors which greeted me afresh at

every step. The dead silence which I had remarked earlier was broken now by the hoarse tooting of a steamboat whistle, somewhere off shore, and by the shrill voices of birds, apparently in resentful protest at this raucous invasion of their sylvan quiet.

I had succeeded in putting aside, for the moment at least, all thought of Cameron, his anonymous letters, and his mutilated portrait, and was dwelling on my disappointment at not having caught even so much as a glimpso of Evelyn Grayson during my morning visit to Cragholt. It is true that I had gone there with a single purpose in mind-to convey to Cameron what I believed to be an important theorybut underlying this, I realized now, was more than a hope, a confidence even, that I should see Evelyn. I was tempted, indeed, to a regret that I had not waited, visited the kennels, and accepted Cameron's invitation for luncheon, which would doubtless have insured me a few words at least with my Goddess of Youth.

While on the verge of this self-reproach my spirits suddenly lifted, for the steam whistle having died away in the distance and the feathered choirsters have relapsed into a pleased chirp that merely accented the stillness, there broke all at once on the mute calm of the woodland the silver sweetness of a girl's singing. Clear and resonant it rang through the forest aisles; a voice I knew beyond mistaking. Evelyn Grayson was coming towards me over the scented turf, Still hidden by a bend in the path, the melody alone measured for me ber approach. It was a French chanson she was lilting, a lyric of Baudelaire's, of which we were both fond.

Sweet music sweeps me like the sea Toward my pale star. Whether the clouds be there or all the air be free, I sail afar.

And then she came around the turn. At first she did not see me, for her eyes were lifted with her voice, and I had time to mark the fascinating grace of her long, free stride, before she became conscious of my presence and checked and shortened it. She wore a frock of white serge, the skirt's edge at her ankles, revealing dainty, snowy buckskin ties and just a peep of white silk hose. And her

flower-like face looked out through a frame of Leghorn straw and pink roses, tied snugly beneath her softly rounded chin with the filmlest of long, floating white veils. You can imagine the picture she made, there in this green glade, with her big blue eyes alight with glad surprise, and the warm blood suddenly risen in her cheeks.

"You truant!" I cried, in jocular reprimand. "Are you always going to run away when I visit Cragholt?"

She pouted prettily, I detest a woman who pouts, ordinarily. There is usually such palpable affectation about it. But Evelyn's pouting was winsome as an infant's. Besides it was only momentary. Then her eyes flashed and her foot was planted very hard, for such a tiny thing, on the green grass blades.

"I'm not a truant," she declared, with feigned indignation, "and I never thought of running away. That's just your conceited manly imagination. You fancy that everything I do can have but one cause, and that is yourself. How, pray, was I to know you intended paying us a morning call?"

"Tut, tut," I caught her up. "What a little spitfire we have here! If you hadn't deserted me so shamefully last evening. I shouldn't have minded this morning, so much. As it is, it seems acons since I saw you."

Now she smiled until her dimples nestled. "That is much better," she returned, gayly, "and deserves a reply, just as my action of last evening deserves praise, and not rebuke. I sacrificed myself and my pleasure for one I love."

"Not for me, surely!"

"Did I use the word conceit a moment ago? Are you the only man I

"I hope so," I answered, impudently. "There is another," she confessed, in mock tragedy. "Behold his face!"

I had not noticed that she held a little roll in her hand, for my eyes had been ever on hers; so, when abruptly. she spread out and held before me the missing head from Cameron's portrait, I was doubly unprepared. I know I was startled. She said afterwards that I went very white. I suppose I did; for with the rush of realization came such a chain of supposition as to drive me momentarily dizzy. For a second or more I stood dumb, while my hand went out in eager reach for the scrap of canvas, which, I had observed, instantaneously, bore four perforations, all of a size—the size of a rifle bullet. With that discovery had recurred the shots I had heard; and following this, came a maze of conjecture, going back to that first letter, then to the painting's mutilation, and on through devious ways to the morning's target practice; and always with one or another of Cameron's trusted servants as the chief actor.

found Evelyn backing wilfully away lodge keeper; and the questions were from my covetous hand.

"It is the picture of the man I love," she was saying, teasingly. "A very, very good man."

"But where did you get it?" I aaked seriously. "Do you know where it came from?" Suddenly she was as grave as I

could wish. "I found it nailed to a tree," she answered. "Wasn't it odd? How do you suppose it care bere? It looks like

the portrait hung in Uncle Robert's study. Do you suppose he grew to dislike it, and cut it up and threw it away?"

Now I found myself in some little embarrassment. If I was to obey Cameron's injunction I could not tell Evelyn the truth. Yet I was in no position to make light of her find. On the other hand I must learn from her just where she had come upon it, and so trace, if possible, the person who had fired the shots which riddled it.

"My dear girl," I said, adopting a tone of cajolery, "we have here, think, a matter in which we both can be of service-very valuable service. indeed, to that beloved uncle and guardian of yours. But, you must trust me, absolutely, and, for the present at least, you must give to him no hint of what we have in hand. Do you understand?"

She laughed in that merry rippling fashion which I had found not the least of her charms.

"Do I understand?" she repeated, laying a hand on my arm in emphasis of her amused tolerance. "Do I understand? Of course I don't, and I shan't, until you have answered at least a half-dozen whys and whats."

"But you must trust me." I insisted, "and as primary evidence of that trust you will proceed at once to hand over to me, for examination, that somewhat damaged piece of portraiture which you are holding behind you."

Very wide her eyes opened in an innocent, almost infantile stare, as she asked:

"Do you really mean it, Philip?" "Really," I answered, gravely. "I'd like to tell you all about it, right here and now, but that might spoil everything, so you must show what a strong womanly woman you are, by keeping silence and waiting."

In token of compliance she gave me the oval piece of canvas.

"I wonder who punched the holes in it!" she remarked, ruefully. "Whoever it was, they were shockingly disrespectful."

I tried to fancy what she would have said had she known they were bullet holes. Evidently that possibility had not occurred to her and I was glad that it had not.

"There are two ways of looking at it," I replied, my eyes fixed on the canvas and its perforations. "At first glance it does seem spiteful; but then there is a chance that it is not iconoclasm, after all. It may be, you know, just the reverse. I have not infrequently seen portraits that were so

unjust to the originals that they fairly cried out for destruction."

"But this is not one like that," she retorted. "This seems to me a very good portrait. I am sure Uncle Robert must have looked exactly like it, ten years ago."

"Alas, we do not all see with the same eyes," I assured her, smiling. "The destroyer may have looked on it as a caricature, not having your cultured taste in art." I held it off at arm's length, and after regarding it critically for a moment between halfclosed lids, I continued, "Do you think you could point out the identical tree to which it was nailed?"

"I could try," was her answer.

"Is it far?" "Not very. A mile, from here, possibly. Over the ridge."

"Near anything in particular?" "Near the trail which leads up from the trout stream to the entrance drive not far from the Lodge."

"When will you take me there?" I this to be.

For just an instant she hesitated. "We might go now," she replied, "if it weren't that I am expecting Celia Ainslee for luncheon. Suppose we say five o'clock. You can meet me at the Lodge. It's a short walk from there." "Fine!" I approved, thrusting the

taking possession of both her whitegloved hands. Slender and shapely hands, yet wonderfully capable. "Good-by!" she cried, laughing. "Take care of my uncle!" with

portrait head beneath my arm and

glance towards her punctured finds "Good-by!" I returned, releasing her. "Your uncle shall have my most faithful concern."

The real significance of the words she, of course, did not comprehend. But as I stood watching her until a turn in the path enfolded her from my sight, their echo, ringing in my ears, impressed me with their pregnancy. Her uncle was evidently the focal point of a crafty and vengeful conspiracy, the seriousness of which I had been foolishly endeavoring to minimize; and as such he was in need, not only of my concern, but of all the loyal, energetic, and efficient aid of which I was capable.

CHAPTER IV.

The Chinese Servant.

Four o'clock found me rapping at the door of Cragholt Lodge. Considering that it was built thirty-five years ago by one of the Townsbury family who probably read English novels but had never been nearer to England than Coney Island, it possessed a surprising picturesqueness; due in large part to its covering of dark English ivy.

I had anticipated my appointment with Evelyn by a full hour; for When I recovered my composure I wished to question old Romney, the not for milady's ear.

He opened to me promptly, in person, this odd, rugged old man, with his seamed brow and great shock of iron-gray hair and beard. He was in his shirt sleeves, but on seeing me he reached for his coat, which hung

on a peg beside the door. "Never mind the coat, Romney," said, "don't make yourself uncom fortable on my account. It's a warn afternoon."

"It is warmion, sir," he assented; but despite my protest he was thrusting his arm into the coat sleeves. "It's been an uncommon hot Septem-

ber. Won't you step inside, sir?" He knew his place too well to indicate any surprise at my visit; yet l felt he must be curious over an event so unusual.

"I have an inquiry or two to make, Romney," I told him, as, accepting his suggestion, I stepped into his cosy, old-fashioned sitting room. heard some shooting over this way this morning, and I've been wondering whether the game laws weren't being broken."

He placed a cushioned rocking-

chair for me, and I sat down. "Now did you hear that, too, Mr Clyde?" he asked, brightening, as he leaned against the low sill of one of the daintily curtained windows. "Twas about ten o'clock, sir; a little after, maybe. I was doin' a bit of trimmin' on the hedge outside, sir, when them same shots set me a-thinkin' that very thing. An' right away, sir, I says to myself, says I 'It's that Chink what just went up to the house to borrow a rifle." "That Chink?" I repeated, puzzled

"Yes, sir. Yellow Chinese boy, sir. He works for Mr. Murphy, the artist, what has the bungalow, down on the shore near Cos Cob. About half an hour before that he comes by here on his way up to the house. 'What's wantin'?' I asks. 'Mistle Mulfy,' he says, 'wantee bollow lifle, shootee weasel, stealee chickee.' 'All right,' I tells him, and away he goes. So, you see, sir, when I hears the shots I thinks right away that Mr. Murphy's Chink is tryin' his 'bollowed lifle' on some of Mr. Cameron's pheasants, maybe. But 15 minutes later, along comes John again, with an innocent grin on his face, the rifle over his shoulder, and his hands empty as air. Well, to be sure, I stops him, sir 'You been shootin' in the woods?' asks. 'No shootee,' he grins back 'Me no shootee.' Then, sir, I swears at him, good and hearty, and calls him what he is. But all he can say is, 'No lie; me no shootee.' Then asks him if he didn't hear a gun go off, 'Gun?' he says, as if he didn't know what gun meant. 'Lifle,' I explains. 'Yes, yes,' says he, 'me hear lifle shootee. Not my lifle,' 'Whose lifle?' I asks him. 'Man with lifle, up load,' he says, pointing back. An' that was all I could get out of him.

I should have been amused, I suppose, by old Romney's recital. I was certainly very graphic, and his imitation of the Chinaman was histrionically artistic-I fear the stage missed a comedian of merit when Romney took to lodge-keeping-but at the first mention of the oriental, I had pricked my ears, and throughout the narration my mind was busy with those strangely worded letters of Cameron's and those still stranger blots which looked one way like a Chinese junk and the other way like a coolie in a straw belmet. The possibility of a connection, especially in view of the rifle and the perforated painting, seemed to me the reverse of remote. And yet I could hardly reconcile the notion of this apparently ignorant Mongolian being in any wise interested in bringing disaster upon a person so far removed from him in every way as was Cameron; much less in evolving or taking part in such a crafty plot as everything we had thus far learned of it indicated My questioning of Romney shed

very little new light on the subject. He had seen the Chinaman pass the Lodge on several occasions; he had rarely entered the grounds, however. I tried to ascertain what his "rarely" meant, and finally got him to say that in the past six months, "John," as he called him, had visited Cragholt, on one pretext or another, possibly three or four times. But Romney's memory for dates was exceedingly feeble. He could not recollect whether one of Those times was on or about the twenty-first of August. He was equal ly at a loss concerning the fourteenth of August and the fourteenth of September.

"What do you know of this artist, Murphy, who employs John?" asked.

"Not much, sir," was his answer, "They do say as he is rather eccentric, sir. He and the Chink lives alone there in the bungalow, summer and winter. He's a big red-headed and bearded fellow, sir. I did hear a story as to him gettin' into a fight up at Garrison's hotel in Greenwich village. and nearly killin' three young watermen near as big as himself."

"Has he lived here long?" "Goin' on two years, now, sir." "He paints and sells pictures, I sup-

pose?" "Maybe, sir. I never sees any, though. But they calls him an artist,

I determined to visit Murphy on the pretext of purchasing some of his work, and in this manner learn, if possible, something more of his celestial servitor.

else with a rifle, today?" I asked, in conclusion. "The 'man with lifle up load' didn't materialize?" "No, sir. Not another soul, sir.

"Of course you didn't see any one

asked some of the boys-them as has charge of the deer in the preserve, over the way the shootin' sounded But they hadn't seen no one, either, sir. Though they did hear the shots.

I thanked Romney for his interest -he knew I was one of the state game wardens-and admonished him to keep his own counsel as to my visit, leaving the impression with him that I wished to round up the culprit and feared if my activity in the matter were scented my prey would be put on his guard and thus escape

It still lacked twenty minutes of the hour of my appointment with Evelyn when I issued from the Lodge, and to occupy the time I entered the wide gateway between the great stone pillars with their heraldic shields, and sauntered leisurely along the smooth macadam drive, bordered by sentinel elms.

My thoughts were busy with the new line of conjecture which Romney had unconsciously opened up for me. I wondered whether by any possibility this eccentric painter, Murphy, could be personally involved. Was Cameron acquainted with him? Had they ever quarrelled? From what Romney had told me of the affair at Garrison's the artist was evidently of a bellicose disposition. He had come here two years ago. Cameron had owned Cragholt less than a year. Perhaps at the time he was preparing the mansion for occupancy he had offended the too sensitive Murphy, who-I was letting my imagination run free-may have wished to take a hand at the new decoration. It would probably be well for me to see Cameron before seeing the artist. The involutions of my hypothetical train led me, I fear, into many monstrously preposterous conceits; yet, as subsequent events proved, the cogitation in which I indulged on that afternoon wall was not wholly idle. Although the working out was along lines which I was then far from foreseeing, it was curious, in looking back, to observe how very closely, collaterally, even at that stage, I came to the truth.

In the midst of my revery, the rhythm of horse's hoofs on the drive awoke me to time and place. And as I raised my eyes, I saw, still some distance away, but bearing down upon me at a swift single-foot, the girlish figure of Evelyn Grayson, in white waist and gray habit, mounted on Prince Charley, a buckskin cayuse, which for saddle purposes she preferred to all the thoroughbreds in the

Cameron stables. "Am I late?" she cried, reining the wiry little animal to a stand beside me, "Celia Ainslee just left. She was expecting the Lentilhons to stop for her in their motor boat, but they broke down and were delayed, and instead of coming at three o'clock, it was half-past four before they land-

"I fancy you are just on the minute," was my response, as I consulted my timeplece. "But I'm still a mile from the

Lodge," she argued. "And all the nearer to the trail," I condoned. "It must be somewhere about here, isn't it?"

"You've passed it. It's just beyond that next bend." And she pointed over my shoulder. "Why didn't you bring a groom

with you to hold your steed?" I asked, smiling. "You don't expect to ride Prince Charley into the forest fastnesses, do you?" "I could," she answered, promptly. "I will, if you dare me. He can pick

his way like a cat. But it isn't necessary. He'll stand forever, the dear thing, if I drop the bridle rein over his head." My preference was to have her or foot at my side, and so I did not dare her. And thus it chanced that we left

the homely little animal standing with drooping head and dangling rein on the shadowed side of the driveway, and went off together down the narrow, slow-descending trail, the girl in the lead. The slanting sunlight, shooting its

golden arrows in intermitent volleys through the tree tops, made target of her hair, as we passed, scoring brilliant flashes of burnished bronze, Her hat, a broad-brimmed sailor of coarse straw, was but a poor shield for that shimmering, tawny coil which lay low on her neck, and the darting rays had their will with it. I have never before or since seen hair just like Evelyn Grayson's. There was such a wealth of it, and its color was so elusive. Under dim lights it seemed a prosaic brown, but with small encour agement it changed to a light fawn, streaked with lustrous topaz strands; which in the sun's blaze became a dazzling bronze glory.

"I'm pretty sure I can find the tree," she asserted, as she swung along with that free, lissome stride which I loved. "It is an old, dead chestnut, a great glant of the woods, imposing even in death; and it stands only a half-dozen yards off the trail. I was looking for ferns, or I never in the world should have come upon it. How do you imagine that thing ever got away off here? And who could have stuck it up on that dead tree trunk?"

"That is precisely what I should like to find out," was my reply. "It seems very mysterious to me. About what time was it, when you discov-

"Just before I met you." "Had you heard any shooting in

the woods, before that?" "Shooting?" she queried, apparent-"No. Was some one ly surprised. shooting?"

(To be continued.)

New Industry.

"Now that so many automobiles are passing your house," said the visitor, 'I should think you would keep your hens shut up." "What!' said the farm er, "and cut off my greatest income?" -Judge's Library.

Worth of Education. Quintilian recommends all parents properly to educate their children, advising them to train their offspring carefully in learning good manners and virtuous exercises, since we commonly retain those qualities in an which we cultivated and pos ta our youth