

## TREASURE TROVE

### I

CUMINE OLD HALL had been long advertised for sale in *Country Life*, and other papers. The photograph of the ancient house, as seen from the small park, was beguiling (as the agents well knew), too beguiling, inasmuch as it roused in buyers an expectation that, subsequently, was left unsatisfied. Mr. Cumine asked a reasonable price for his property, although even he admitted that it was shockingly out of repair and lacking in modern improvements. For many years, Mr. Cumine had said to his daughter, Désirée, "It will last my time." Désirée would then nod cheerfully, keeping her thoughts to herself. Old fathers cannot be expected to understand young daughters. Désirée was twenty-one, and Mr. Cumine strolled placidly upon the shady side of sixty. He had married late in life a charming French woman, and his wife had died when Désirée was born. When she was blooming into womanhood, a fond father waxed optimistic. He loved his old house and his young daughter. She—so he reasoned—would restore the house and the fortunes of the family by marrying the right man. Nearly all impoverished fathers indulge in such pleasant dreams. How many of them come true?

Désirée chose what Mr. Cumine considered the wrong man, a rising journalist, who was—if you believed him—blossoming into a novelist. He didn't belong to any county family; he looked a gentleman and behaved like one. That was enough for Désirée. Without consulting

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her father, she became "engaged" to Mr. Adney, who, ardent youth, boldly asked Mr. Cumine for Désirée's hand. He claimed modestly that he was in a position to support her. Mr. Cumine was unable to agree with him upon this important point.

"Can you make any settlement on my daughter?"

"No, sir, I can't. Can you?"

It was anxiously asked, this question, with no taint of levity or impertinence.

"I am sadly crippled," replied Mr. Cumine. "When I die, and I have every intention of living as long as possible, what I have will belong to Désirée. From the way we live here you can form your own opinion of what I have *not* got."

He chuckled, eyeing the young man with whimsical benevolence.

"If you will allow me to say so," he continued agreeably, "you ought to seek out and find some young lady, or indeed a lady not too young, who can supplement your rather precarious income. You have good looks and an ingratiating smile. I say to you in all frankness and good temper: 'Look elsewhere.'"

Mr. Cumine spoke with finality.

The affair—as viewed by an affectionate and considerate sire—was the more unfortunate and inopportune because Mr. Adney happened to be the local parson's son. Happily, he did not live at home. He lived and worked near Fleet Street. He colloqued with Désirée, after taking respectful leave of her father.

"We are up against it," he declared ruefully.

"I suppose we are," said Désirée. "You see, Bobbie, I believe in you. Daddy doesn't. He's a dear, and so are you. If he happened to be the sort of waxy, impossible parent that one reads about in novels, everything would be so easy."

"Would it, darling? In what way?"



Désirée replied firmly :

" I should pack my things—that wouldn't take long—march out of Old Hall, and marry you."

" What a sunbeam ! "

" Because Daddy is such a dear, I can't do that. It wouldn't be cricket. Evidently, what impressed me about you has not impressed Daddy. Your great asset is—initiative."

If it be initiative to make hot love with the odds against you, Désirée was right, but she was not thinking of that. Bobby, from birth, had been ear-marked as a parson by the good vicar and his wife. To that end, they had " pinched " so as to secure for their son the advantages of a University education. Bobbie had helped himself to these advantages. Incidentally, he had become Assistant Editor, and finally Editor-in-Chief of *Granta*. Thence, he had drifted easily into Fleet Street, where he was slowly " making good."

" My initiative, darling, has not helped me much with my own people."

" Bobbie, why aren't you a Real Estate Agent ? "

" That seems to me an irrelevant remark."

" No. Selling our place has become a sort of obsession with Daddy. If you sold it——"

" If I sold it—— ? "

They stared at each other.

" If I could buy it and restore it, and then invite you to remain mistress of it, why then—there might be lively times in our little market. A working journalist has to scrap all ' ifs. ' "

" All the same," persisted Désirée, " if you, with your initiative, could find a buyer, Daddy would be tremendously impressed."

" I don't believe he wants to sell."

" He does. If I had been a boy——"

" Thank Heaven, you are not."

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“Cumines, male Cumines, have always lived at Old Hall. Daddy exists. He would be quite comfortably off if he sold.”

“I suppose he would,” said Mr. Adney carelessly.

He spoke lightly, but, without another word to Désirée, he felt himself challenged. If he had initiative, and he fondly believed this great gift was his, surely it should be “on tap” in such an exigency, a flowing well, a fountain of endeavour. He could hear his sprightly mistress, as she continued :

“Yes ; Daddy gets less than two per cent on his land ; the dear old house eats up cash in repairs. If he could sell for, say, twenty thousand pounds, why then, at seven per cent, we should have a gross income of fourteen hundred a year, not counting what he had in other securities, say, six hundred a year. With two thousand a year he would be passing rich.”

Mr. Adney nodded and presently went his way.

Inspiration came to him at his desk from no less a person than the Assistant Editor. Mr. Adney and other gentlemen, who write with ease (but not at ease), worked in a room described by the Editor as the “lethal chamber,” a large room with a huge horse-shoe table in it upon which were inkpots, blotting paper, and countless sheets of foolscap. In this room, the learned clerks wrote to order, an order rooted in disorder. The name explained itself ; originality perished in this room. The Editor imposed upon his staff *his* ideas, *his* policy. “I am an echo,” Mr. Adney had reflected, “nothing more.” It was some consolation to reflect that he echoed a Voice that was heard by millions. Each morning a babe was born in the great building after indescribable groanings and travailings ; and it was delivered, more or less punctually, before breakfast. Another babe had to be conceived before the forms went to press at two the next



morning——! Under such circumstances can originality live and flourish save in the panelled seclusion of the Editor's sanctuary.

"Adney," said the sub-Chief, "do you know anything about Treasure Trove?"

"Not a thing."

"Good! Nobody does. I want eight hundred words on the elusive subject. Go into the library, dig out the facts, and let me have the muck at once."

"Right," said Mr. Adney.

He plunged forthwith into the library, an adjoining room, where (*inter alia*), ready for instant use, reposed the obituary notices of celebrities, and every book of ready reference that has been published. An acolyte, shingled and in exiguous skirt, flitted to Bobbie's assistance. The facts were dug out. Mr. Adney returned to the lethal chamber. He filled his quill, which wasn't a quill but a fountain pen, and held it poised as he considered an arresting opening sentence.

*"Treasure Trove warms the cockles of every heart."*

Mr. Adney was far from pleased with this affirmation. His Chief demanded "facts," but it was understood in the lethal chamber that fiction cleverly disguised as fact was the "stuff to give the troops."

Mr. Adney chuckled as he erased his opening line. He did his job and sent it in. The sub-Chief sent for him some few minutes later. This Olympian had a tiny room of his own, which held an immense desk, littered with papers, cuttings, and pamphlets, and a lady typist whose face was like a last-year's bird's-nest.

"This isn't what I wanted, Adney."

"Sorry, sir. Scrap—and at it again."

"No; I like it; it's provocative; but you didn't dig this out of the library, eh?"

"No, sir——"

"Is it a true story?"

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“ It might be true.”  
“ I shall shove it in.”  
And “ in ” it went.

### II

Incidentally Mr. Adney knew his Editor (at a respectful distance), and that Editor's public. Primarily, newspapers are published to please the public, not to educate them, as in the days of the great Delane. With us Education curtsseys to Circulation.

Two days later the Editor sent for Mr. Adney.

“ That article of yours on Treasure Trove has brought me a stack of letters. I am tempted to publish some of them. I have just read your article. Of its literary merit the less said the better. But it is, I admit, a startling note of interrogation. You hint, in no uncertain terms, that there is a manor house, not far from London, *and advertised for sale cheap*—clever touch that—which holds treasure.”

“ That is perfectly true, sir.”

“ Gold.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ You hint, Adney, that some enterprising man, or men—a syndicate is indicated by you—might discover this property and buy it. Treasure hunts happen to be the rage at the moment. It would not surprise me, after reading some of these letters, to hear that cars, from the lordly Rolls-Royce to the ubiquitous Ford, are scouring our Home Counties at this moment, trying to find this ancient manor and the treasure which is hidden in it.”

“ That, sir,” said Mr. Adney modestly, “ was the idea.”

The Editor laughed.

“ I ask no more questions ; I shall publish some of these letters.”



A week passed.

Mr. Cumine read two papers—*The Times* and the *Morning Post*. Désirée, being in love with Bobbie, read the *Daily Banner* and prided herself upon being able to pick out of it Bobbie's "stuff." Oddly enough, she failed on this occasion to identify the article on Treasure Trove as his. Guile informed it; guile made Mr. Adney dissemble his style. Any person of ordinary intelligence reading the article would have said: "This has been written by an archæologist who, obviously, is not a treasure hunter, but some lean and slippered pantaloon. In his wanderings among long-forgotten quartos he has found a cypher which reveals the existence of treasure hidden in a house rapidly falling to decay." Accordingly, if Désirée read the article, she dismissed it from her mind as negligible. She ought, it may be contended, to have recognised her own home from the description of it, but she was searching at the time for Bobbie's prose and youthfully indifferent to the prose of others.

The lovers met.

Désirée was much excited.

"It's an extraordinary thing, Bobbie, but dozens of people have been looking at our house. They come, with or without 'orders to view'; they poke about; they ask questions; they seem—excited. Daddy is quite flustered."

"What questions do these people ask?"

"Oh, the age of the house, how long we have lived here, and if we have any old books or documents dealing with the history of the house. Daddy, of course, is rather short with them. Why are you smiling?"

"I—well, I felt that he would be. I hate answering impertinent questions. The place is for sale. Let people come and look at it. If they want it, it's theirs at the price, a very low price."

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"That is exactly what Daddy says. He refuses to see these people; he turns them over to me."

"He would; and you—how do you treat them?"

"I humour them. Gracious! Here's another car rolling up. We had three this morning."

The lovers were on the lawn, within sight of the gravel drive, sadly in need of more gravel. Indeed, the disconcerting conviction that Old Hall was vocal in its mute appeal for reparations struck intending purchasers like a slap in the face.

"Come with me," whispered Désirée. "You can help me a lot. How disgustingly rich these people look!"

Three middle-aged gentlemen were getting out of a superb saloon car. Spring was afoot in Buckinghamshire; blackbirds and thrushes were fluting in the overgrown shrubberies where rhododendrons had reverted to *Ponticum*; the ambient air was soft and balmy. And yet, these three gentlemen wore coats with collars and cuffs of costly fur; they smoked big cigars; they looked unnecessarily well-nourished.

"City birds" whispered Mr. Adney.

"Looking for worms," whispered back Désirée. "Why did we use worm-killer on our lawns?"

The most opulent of the three—and the owner of the car—presented himself and his friends.

"I am Mr. Reuben Colquhoun. This," he lisped slightly, "is Mr. Isidore Gordon and Mr. Adalbert Lenox, my partners—Colquhoun, Gordon and Lenox, of Montrose House."

"I am Miss Cumine. This is Mr. Adney. You have come to see Old Hall?"

"Pleath."

Mr. Colquhoun waved an order to view which Désirée waved aside. The party entered the house after glancing keenly at the thick walls. Mr. Colquhoun stared hard



at Mr. Adney; he had never seen him before; but he recognized in him intelligence and honesty. Mr. Colquhoun had inherited a nose from his father and a slanting smile from his mother. When the smile slanted up the nose came down to meet it. He smiled at Désirée and sniffed at Mr. Adney. It occurred to him that Mr. Adney might be interested in treasure.

Désirée explained that her father was in the library into which they could peep presently. Charmed by her agreeable manners and deportment, Mr. Gordon, the youngest of the three, moved to her side. Mr. Lenox, not to be outdone in politeness, joined Mr. Gordon. Mr. Colquhoun was left alone with Mr. Adney.

“ You know this house, Mr. Adenoid ? ”

“ Adney, sir. Yes; I am the local parson’s son. I have played hide-and-seek all over it with Miss Cumine, when we were children.”

“ Hide-and-seek, yeth. We go on playing that game, *hein?* so long as we live, what ? ”

Désirée pressed on with her two cavaliers; Mr. Colquhoun followed slowly, asking questions, innocent questions, answered in like innocence by Mr. Adney.

“ Family it is old, yeth ? ”

“ Old and once rich. The Cumines owned a dozen parishes. Acre by acre the land has slipped away.”

“ Und the money, too ? ”

“ Strictly between ourselves, it is a mystery where the money went, but, forgive me, I am boring you.”

“ No; you were thaying——”

“ I was about to make a wild guess, but again pardon me, a man of substance, like yourself, can hardly be interested in shadows.”

Mr. Colquhoun, now out of ear-shot of the others, said emphatically:

“ All my life, young man, I make money by guessing

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where money ith. I am a good guesser, yeth. Go on—you interetht me.”

“You must have read,” said Bobbie gravely, “a short article that appeared some ten days ago in the *Daily Banner*. Again, strictly between ourselves, I want to tell you that Mr. Cumine has not read that article, nor has Miss Cumine.”

“You don’t thay tho?”

“I do. More, it would be indiscreet to speak of that article before them.”

“Yeth.”

“Unquestionably, somebody has been guessing, as—I did. I would stake all I have, which isn’t much, that there *is* treasure in this old house.”

“Shush-h-h,” enjoined Mr. Colquhoun, and his smile slanted more than ever. Mr. Adney lowered the tone of his voice.

“But, apart from that, the property is worth the money asked.”

“The price ith high, Mr. Adenoid.”

“Adney. The land lies high, five hundred feet above sea level. Considered residentially, not agriculturally, the land if subdivided and sold as building lots would pay for the whole property and leave the house, the park, and the gardens in the purchaser’s hands. Mr. Cumine is considering half a dozen offers, all of which shade his price; a firm offer of twenty thousand would secure the property. If I had the money I’d buy it to-day.”

“May be,” Mr. Colquhoun observed slyly, “you are in the real-estate buthineth; may be, I thay, you have thith property on your books.”

Mr. Adney assured him that it was not so with such sincerity of utterance, with a countenance so free from guile, that Mr. Colquhoun apologized quite handsomely.



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"We will join the others," he said, "but I should like, young man, to make your better acquaintance, *hein?* Dine with me to-morrow, if you have no engagement."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I live in Hyde Park Square, Number 197, a corner houthouse. Shall we thair eight-thirty?"

"I shall be delighted."

They joined the others; they went over the house; they peeped into the library without disturbing Mr. Cumine; they strolled through the gardens. And then they rolled away after thanking Miss Cumine too profusely for showing them over such a charming house and garden. As the great car purred down the drive, Désirée said mournfully:

"They don't mean business."

"Colquhoun," said Mr. Adney thoughtfully, "is a Scotch name; so is Gordon; so is Lenox. A Scot means business when he never mentions it. Cheerio!"

### IV

At eight-thirty, to the tick, Mr. Adney presented himself at the corner house in Hyde Park Square. A butler, who would have been an ornament to the House of Lords, ushered him into a snug smoking-room where his host received him graciously. When the nobleman reappeared with a brace of cocktails, Mr. Colquhoun said in his Scots accent:

"We dine mit ourselufs. You like to drink a Rheingau hock?"

"Whatever pleases your palate, sir."

They dined sumptuously. After dinner, coffee, old brandy, and cigars were served in the smoking-room. As Mr. Colquhoun pinched tenderly the end of his cigar, he said, in business-like accents:

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“Life ith dear to all of uth. Tell me, my young friendt, why you told me that you stake your life that there ith treasure in Old Hall ? ”

“Simply because I know there is.”

“Und why do you tell me, a stranger, information which a clever young man would keep to himseluf. *hein?* ”

“Because I hoped that information of no value to me might be of value to Mr. Colquhoun, whom I cannot regard altogether as a stranger.”

Scots may be a dour race, but they are susceptible to flattery. A smile flickered upward to meet a long nose and downward to meet a triple chin. Between the two it was lost.

“Tell me then—between ourselufs—what you know.”

“On terms ? ”

“Terms ? *Lieber Gott!* What terms ? ”

“I am a writer. I employ an agent. To be frank with you, he doesn't make much out of me. Still, I pay him a ten per cent commission on sales. Shall we say five per cent to me, if you buy Cumine Old Hall ? ”

“Yeth—if—if I find the treasure there.”

“It's there right enough.”

“Soh ! You intrigue me, Misthter Adney. *Himmel!* if you know where the treasure ish, why do you not find it yourseluf, eh ? ”

“The treasure, sir, is *in* the house ; it belongs to the house ; it belongs to the owner of the house. I cannot afford to buy the house ; you can. Have I made myself plain ? ”

Mr. Colquhoun, also an adept at flattery, smiled genially.

“You could not make yourseluf plain. But handsome is as handsome does.”

“And treasure or no treasure that property is cheap at twenty thousand pounds to any man who can



appreciate a pure specimen of Tudor architecture. Forgive me, sir, but will you, as a man of business, scribble a few lines securing me in my commission if—*if I earn it.*”

Mr. Colquhoun rose, walked to a Louis XIV writing-table, scribbled a few lines as requested, and handed them to Mr. Adney.

“Und now, my young friendt, let’ uth see if you haf earnt your dinner und that cigar.”

v

Mr. Adney paused to collect his wits. Being a journalist he was not conscious of effort in doing so. Nevertheless, as an honest craftsman, he wanted to give “value received,” and perhaps he did, or perhaps he didn’t. Fiction, disguised as fact, has a market value, but the valuation placed upon their wares by young novelists may be overestimated.

“You are interested in cyphers,” asked Mr. Adney.

“On cheques, yeth. An extra cypner makth all the differenth to capital und interetht.”

“You have a sense of humour, sir?”

“Out of bothr eth hours, yeth.”

“I asked you where the Cumine money had gone? I have asked Mr. Cumine and Miss Cumine the same question. They don’t know. So far as I can learn, living on the spot, and knowing the family intimately, nobody knows. I spoke of a wild guess. Supposing, supposing, I say, that some of these Cumines were misers——”

Mr. Colquhoun lent an attentive ear, nodding approvingly. His own father had been a miser; he had “cut up” astoundingly well in Hamburg. Mr. Adney continued:

“Suppose that a miserly Cumine had a spendthrift son. The Doctrine of Compensation adjusts these

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matters. Is it too wild a guess to hazard the conjecture that a miser hid his hoard, fearing that a spendthrift might squander it at cards, with women, or at New-market ?”

“*Potztausend!* I could tell you somethings about my own——” he broke off ; there is honour amongst Scots. Mr. Colquhoun firmly closed a too leaky mouth by inserting between his lips a five-shilling cigar. Mr. Adney went on :

“ This miser, so I conjecture, hid his money in his house, knowing that house and property were strictly entailed.”

“ Yeth.”

“ Before I say more, will you kindly glance at this paper. The ink is faded ; the paper is brittle with age ; so please handle it carefully.”

Mr. Colquhoun poised a pince-nez upon his nose, took the paper and read two paragraphs :

*“ I have tried to inculcate thrift into my son, but a spendthrift is irreclaimable. This Bible I bequeath to my grandson, Thomas. Let him read the lines traced now herein ; let Thomas read diligently ; let my thrift turn to his advantage.*

*If you search in Scripture, the seeker after Truth shall find Gold. I have panelled my own snug parlour in oak, for oak costs the gold which your grandsire denied your father. I swear that he shall not spend this gold.”*

Mr. Colquhoun shrugged his shoulders. Mr. Adney observed casually :

“ This paper was found by me in the very Bible bequeathed to Thomas Cumine, the great-grandfather of Mr. Cumine. The Bible was handed to the gentleman in question by the trustees of the estate upon the death of Thomas Cumine’s father, the spendthrift. Apparently,



he could make neither head nor tail of it. The Bible is still in the panelled parlour."

Mr. Colquhoun admitted frankly that he, for his part, was bewildered. Mr. Adney laughed.

"It is a clumsy example of a cypher in common use during the eighteenth century. In the first paragraph note all the words that begin with a 'T.' Take them in their numerical order. Three — four — six — fifteen — nineteen — twenty-two — twenty-six — twenty-eight — thirty-two — thirty-seven — thirty-eight — thirty-nine. In the second paragraph isolate the words in the same numerical order, and we get this message: "Search in the panelled parlour for gold your father shall not spend."

"*Lieber Gott*" exclaimed Mr. Colquhoun. "Und you, my young friendt, you find thith so old paper in der Bible, *hein?*"

"I took it out of that Bible, on my word of honour."

"Und then, you talk, you blab, und so we haf an article in a *verdammt* newspaper?"

"I wrote that article myself."

"Und why?"

"I hoped it would challenge attention. It did. Out of the many persons curious enough to hunt for treasure I expected to pick the right man. I picked you. Forgive me if I have made a mistake."

Mr. Adney spoke with the ingenuousness of youth. Out of this Highland chieftain oozed suspicion; but caution, that racial quality, remained.

"You egsplain; good! Now, you egsplain more, und then, maybe, we get down to buthness. You are parson's son; you blay hide und seek mit Mith Cumine; they are your friendts. But you do not go to your friendts und thay: 'My good peoples I haf found money for you, lots of money. Let me take you to that money in the panelled parlour.' You do not thay that—why?"

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Mr. Adney smiled reassuringly.

"I was expecting that question. Why, indeed? You put your finger, sir, upon the marrow of the matter; you touch my heart, which is not mine. I have bestowed it, such as it is, upon Miss Cumine. I am engaged to Miss Cumine; and her father refuses consent to our marriage. That, if you understand the expression, gets my goat."

Mr. Colquhoun chuckled, rubbing together a pair of soft, white, podgy hands. It was difficult to imagine those hands wielding a claymore or a skene dhu. They seemed to have been designed by an inscrutable Providence to sign cheques.

"Soh-h-h! Yeth—I tomble, to use your own egspressions."

"I will add one more illuminating word. Mr. Cumine might reconsider his objections to me as a son-in-law, if Old Hall were sold through my initiative. Initiative is my capital."

"Good! I haf initiative, too. Yeth—I read your article. I show it to Isidore und Adalbert, my partners. We are in the money-lending buthneath, as may be you know."

"I have read some of your confidential letters, admirably worded, if I may say so."

"Yeth; I—I write good English although I—I talk——"

"Scotch," murmured Mr. Adney.

Mr. Colquhoun's smile slanted more than ever. He continued:

"I persuade my partners to take a look at Old Hall. They go down in my car—they look—they laugh—they grimace—soh! Adalbert, he thay to me: 'Treasure? Rats!' Und so I cut Adalbert und Isidore out of this."

Mr. Adney looked grieved.



" You affirm, sir, that your two partners, who, together with you, must often advance large sums of money upon security not to be described as gilt-edged, can detect no signs of treasure in Old Hall ? "

" No. "

" They have not your nose. However—— ! "

" To-morrow," said Mr. Colquhoun, " I go again to Old Hall, by myself. You smoke another cigar ? No ? Put one in your pocket, my friend. "

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Adney withdrew.

VI

Mr. Colquhoun kept his word, which he did religiously when it was to his interest to do so. Désirée told the tale of what passed during his second visit. She showed him the panelled parlour ; and, in answer to a question, she assured him that the panelling, still in fine condition, had not been touched since it was put in. Désirée played no rehearsed part. Throughout a long morning, she answered many questions honestly and charmingly. Mr. Colquhoun was particularly interested in a large Family Bible, which he discovered in the panelled parlour ; and he found in it, in crabbed handwriting, which he thought he had seen before, an inscription : " To my grandson, Thomas Cumine. " He learned, what was perfectly true, that the sire of Thomas had been a sad spendthrift. Canny to the last, he appraised carefully the potential value of the agricultural land and the timber upon the estate. Ultimately, when his solicitors, Messrs. Curzon and Montagu, gentlemen with remarkable noses, had passed judgment upon the ancient title deeds, Mr. Colquhoun bought the property for twenty thousand pounds.

He took possession within three months.

About the same time, Mr. Adney married Désirée.

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### VII

After returning from an enchanting honeymoon, spent in the pleasant land of France, Mr. Adney called upon Mr. Colquhoun, carrying with him a sheet of cream-laid note paper. In fine, he claimed the sum of one thousand pounds as commission due to him as agent in the sale of Cumine Old Hall.

Mr. Colquhoun displayed strange irritability.

"You haf a cheek——!"

"I have two cheeks, sir, but I only ask for one cheque."

"Young man, you haf bamboozled me. There is no treasure in that *verdammt* parlour."

"There was."

"*Gott im Himmel!* you—you took it away mit you?"

"I did."

"Schweinhund——!"

"Softly, Mr. Colquhoun, softly. The panelled parlour was Miss Cumine's own room. Miss Cumine is now Mrs. Adney. You can take my word for it that she is a treasure, her price is above rubies. My interpretation of the word 'treasure' happens not to be the same as yours."

"You said—gold, yeth, gold."

"That describes adequately Mrs. Adney's hair. I am a truthful and honourable man, sir. In my dealings with you, I have not strayed from the straight and narrow way. The grandfather of Thomas Cumine was a miser; his son, the spendthrift, squandered his father's money. I found that cypher in the old Bible because I placed it there myself. I exercised, it is true, certain poor powers of imagination which served my purpose, the sale of a property worth every penny you paid for it. You exercised your powers of imagination in like manner. I was perfectly frank with you. I told you that I had written the article which challenged your attention; I told you that I was engaged to Miss Cumine. This scrap



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of paper sets forth that you will pay me, on demand, five per cent of the purchase price of Old Hall, provided you find in the panelled parlour treasure. Next day, you went down to Old Hall; you spent an hour at least in the panelled parlour with the treasure. If you failed to recognize pure gold when you saw it, I can only suggest that your eyes are not so sharp as your nose. Please write out a cheque to bearer."

"No."

"Right. I am still on the staff of the *Daily Banner* and I am now one of the sub-Editors. The curiosity of the great British Public was provoked by my article and by the publication of certain letters, but my Chief complained that it was not satisfied. It shall be satisfied. I wish you good day, Mr. Colquhoun."

Mr. Colquhoun's eyes bulged out of his head.

"You forged der cypher——!"

"Forged is a libellous word, sir. It amused me to try my prentice hand at a cypher. I was very careful not to tell you that it was genuine. I am wasting your valuable time——"

"Wait! What you mean to do, *hein?*"

"To tell the true story to our million readers. As corroborative detail we shall print, I make no doubt, a facsimile of this paper which you repudiate. If you happen to possess a non-copyright photograph of yourself you might let us have it. At the moment, the public is interested in you philanthropists who are such a tower of strength to poor and not too intelligent persons. My story, sir, will make good copy. *Adieu!*"

Mr. Adney moved to the door.

"Haf a cigar, Mithter Adenoid?"

"Adney, sir, Adney. Do I address you as Cohen? No. I accept a cigar, particularly if it is as good as the last, provided I have your assurance that it is merely your customary preliminary to doing business."

## *Dew of the Sea*

Mr. Colquhoun muttered something in his native Doric that could not be printed. Then he handed Mr. Adney a cigar, and his voice became calm, dangerously so.

"I haf never sought—publicity."

"I am sure that statement is true. Like the humble Allen, you, sir, do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

"See now—I gif you a hundert pounds; und we cry quits."

"Offer refused without thanks."

Mr. Colquhoun's nose kissed his chin. He could hear the raucous laughter and splutterings of rage of Mr. Isidore Gordon and Mr. Adalbert Lenox. To build up a great philanthropic business, to see it grotesquely shattered by laughter, to attempt to reconstruct from such ruins another business, under other names, and far from Montrose House—these possibilities distressed Mr. Colquhoun. He wiped his ample brow with a gorgeous handkerchief.

"This ith a hold-up, yeth. See now, a last word mit you: I gif you two hundert pounds."

"You mean a penultimate word. Do you ask me to value Mrs. Adney at two hundred pounds?"

"Three hundert——?"

"One thousand—or nothing. Fierce is the light that beats upon your throne, sir."

A vanquished Scot strode to his desk. He held out his cheque; Mr. Adney exchanged it for the sheet of note paper. Mr. Colquhoun tore up the sheet of note paper, viciously. Mr. Adney tore up the cheque.

"*Potztausend!*"

"My dear sir, we are quits. You gave me a wonderful dinner, and, incidentally, you have helped to give me a wife. Let us shake hands and part friends."



## Treasure Trove

They did so. Mr. Colquhoun was visibly affected.

About ten days later, Désirée received, by parcel post, a large cardboard box that contained a lovely sealskin coat and a card. She read the card.

“With Mr. Colquhoun’s best wishes and compliments.”

“Bobbie——?”

“Désirée——?”

“What does this mean?”

“In two words, darling—Treasure Trove.”