

"Oh," cried the girl in distress, "I must go to him. I must tell him——"

"To whom must you go?" broke in her lover harshly. "To the sergèant? I assure you that it is no——"

"No. I must go to Mr. Rowley. I must speak to him, warn him. They must not take him by surprise. That would be too terrible. He must be told by a friend. Warned! I must go at once.

CHAPTER XIX

A WARNING

AS Janet Selby announced her intention of going to Charles Rowley to warn him of his impending arrest, her lover laid a restraining hand upon her arm.

"But you can't do that, Janet," he protested quickly. "People will notice you—they will talk. You know what they will say."

"Let them say," she retorted sharply. "I do not care. This man saved my life at the risk of his own, and I am not an ingrate."

"But he killed this man Cordery," said Shapland harshly. "He is a murderer, of that there can be no question whatever. The less you have to do with him the better. He——"

"I do not believe what you say, Vernon," the girl replied vehemently. "You do not like Mr. Rowley, and you are prejudiced, but I am quite sure that he is incapable of doing a thing so foul. He is high-minded. He is brave and chivalrous; and he only spoke to this Cordery because the man

was loafing round and watching me—why, I do not know."

Vernon Shapland could have explained had he so desired. He guessed that Cordery had been watching not Janet but himself, who that morning had been much by Janet's side. The mistake was a perfectly natural one, and he congratulated himself that the possible alternative had not presented itself to the girl, congratulated himself and held his peace upon the matter.

"Janet," he said soothingly, "you are generous-minded, and in view of what Rowley did for you at the *Murland* I can understand why you should wish to serve him, to save him. But you can do nothing. Even now I daresay Lindsay and the sergeant have arrested him, and——"

She threw off his detaining arm and without waiting for him to complete the sentence ran back to the great doorway. He followed her and cried to her.

"Janet! Janet!"

But the girl did not so much as turn her head. When he reached the doorway she was already half-way across the hall, and the coat which had been upon her shoulders was lying on the floor as she had flung it from her.

Recognizing that to overtake her was hopeless, he shrugged his shoulders, lit a cigarette, and went back to the terrace to await the inevitable developments.

As Janet entered the ballroom there was a tragic look on her face, but noticing the light of surprise in the eyes of an acquaintance as they met her own, she strove to compose herself, and succeeded so well that, except for a trifling pallor, there was nothing to indicate the tumult of her feelings. She

skirted the room quickly until she came to the glass doors which opened into the conservatory and passed through them.

Just before Vernon had spoken to her she had seen Charles Rowley pass through the doorway, and was sure she would find him there still. As she entered she looked round. From one of the aisles between the palms came the sound of soft feminine laughter, and instinctively she turned into the other, feeling sure that the man she sought had entered the conservatory for quietude. As she walked under the green fronds she glanced from side to side, and then almost at 'the far end' she saw him.

He was seated in a rustic chair. On his face was a very thoughtful expression, and his eyes were fixed on some object held in the palm of his hand. She caught the gleam of gold, and knew intuitively that the object in his hand was the miniature. For a second or two she watched the man, all unconscious of her presence, and she saw him lift the miniature to his lips. As he did so her face flushed rosily, and her heart grew suddenly tumultuous. She had known all along that he loved her, and now a new knowledge came to her—knowledge of which she was almost afraid, the knowledge that she herself returned his love.

The flush faded, leaving her marble-pale, and then recalling the purpose which had brought her to the conservatory she coughed discreetly and took a step forward. Charles Rowley looked up, and became aware of her presence.

His hand closed on the locket, and as he rose to his feet his eyes flashed welcome and a smile came on his face. But before he could speak she cried impulsively :

"Oh, Mr. Rowley, I am so glad that I have found you."

He gave her a quick look of inquiry, marked her evident agitation, and then said quietly :

"There is something the matter, Miss Selby. What is it? Nothing very serious, I hope."

"Oh, it is very serious for you—for all of us," she said in a quick tense whisper.

He betrayed no discomposure. His manner was quiet and self-possessed, as he replied gravely :

"Please explain, Miss Selby."

"I don't know how to do it," she said. "I can scarcely find words to do it, since to me it seems so absurd, but I must tell you. In the servants' hall there are two policemen. They have come, I understand, to get a warrant for your arrest."

"My arrest!" he said calmly. "For what am I to be arrested?"

"For the murder of that man Cordery, whom you threatened to thrash the other day."

She was watching his face as he spoke, and her heart rejoiced as she saw there was no sign of guilt. For a moment he stood quite still, then a half-smile came on his face.

"Your news is not altogether surprising," he replied quietly.

"Then you knew? You were expecting——"

"I have contemplated the possibility during the last half-hour," he answered. "I overheard a word or two spoken by some of your guests, and I gathered that they thought that I ought not to be here to-night, as it was more than possible that I should be arrested within the next few days."

Janet was surprised at his calmness, and indignant that any one should thus assume his guilt.

"It is shameful," she said, "and though there

may be circumstances that point to you, the whole thing is dreadfully absurd. I cannot think how people can be so utterly foolish."

As she thus protested her faith in his innocence, a light of joy glowed in Charles Rowley's eyes. He stepped impulsively towards her.

"Ah, I am glad to hear you say that," he whispered, "very glad. I think it would have been altogether too much for me to bear if you had believed——"

"I could never believe anything so wicked of you," she interrupted quickly.

"And yet circumstances are all against me," he said thoughtfully. "I knew, this man, and we both come from the same remote corner of the earth. From remarks that Cordery had made in the village, and of which Sir James told me, it is clear that this man had come to England to look for some man whom he had known in New Guinea—for me, ninety-nine out of every hundred men would say, and with some show of reason. Further, there were people who witnessed that little incident at the hunt meet the other day, and with Cordery murdered, once suspicion is awakened, that trivial affair quite naturally takes a new significance. I can understand why people should jump to the conclusion that I——" He broke off suddenly and looked at her. "Tell me why you came to warn me?"

The pallor of her face gave place to a sudden crimson. She had not analysed the impulse which had brought her to him, had only followed it blindly, but now at his unexpected question she saw the explanation of her action in the light of the knowledge which had come to her as she had watched him, and knew that she could not tell him.

"Oh," she said stammeringly, "I could not bear to think that they should come and take you without warning. It seemed so—so cruel—unfriendly. I—thought that if I told you, you could—could get away—if you wished."

"Then there was no doubt in your mind? You——"

"Never even the shadow of a doubt!" she cried quickly. "I should believe in you if all the world were against you!"

He looked at her steadfastly for a moment. Her eyes met his in level glance, and in them there was a light that made his heart beat quickly. Then her eyelids fell, and a deep blush dyed her neck and face. He lifted his hand and took hers. She made no protest and for a moment he did not speak. He waited until her eyes were unveiled again, and he saw them a-brim with tears and bright with love.

"Thank you!" he said simply. "I can say no more now. It is not right that I should wish this shadow upon me. But when it has——"

His voice thrilled with a sudden exultation, as he broke off. But she understood all that he left unsaid, and in spite of her anxiety she smiled. Then he lifted her hand and held it for one moment to his lips. That done, he released her, and his manner became almost brusque.

"Now," he said, "I will tell you something that you once asked me." He held out his other hand and she saw the locket with the miniature, lying in his palm. "I will tell you how this came into my possession. It was found, as I told you, and found in very tragic circumstances. I had a foster-brother, who was my partner, and I left him in a camp in the hills of New Guinea, whilst I went with some native carriers to the nearest trading-post for a

new stock of provisions. I returned to find him dead outside the tent door, shot through the heart. He must have died only an hour or two before my return, and why any one should have killed him I cannot imagine, for some gems which were in the tent were untouched, and a couple of natives who were engaged on a mine we had opened two miles from the camp, had not been disturbed. One of my carriers—Boromai by name—nosing among the bushes, found this miniature. It was untarnished, and could have been there but a very short while. I was absolutely sure that it did not belong to Jim—my foster-brother, you know—and naturally I saw in it a clue to the perpetrator of the crime.”

He broke off as he saw that her face had grown ghastly pale, and waited for her to speak. She did not do so, and he resumed his narrative.

“I guessed that whoever had shot Jim had left this clue behind him. The chain to which it had been attached had caught in the bushes, and had broken, leaving the locket hanging there. When I saw your eyes looking out at me from the miniature I was amazed. I believe” (he smiled as he spoke) “I fell in love with you in that first glance. But I loved Jim; we were brothers in spirit if not in flesh, and we had grown up together from childhood. I felt that his death ought to be avenged, and when I took out the miniature and saw the name at the back—Crispi, London—I realized that it ought not to be difficult to find the owner of the locket, and determined there and then to come to England. I should explain that the mine Jim and I had found, the first of its kind in Papua, required machinery for its development, and capital also, and we had already discussed what we would do, and had thought of Sir James Nancarrow, who is

interested in the Australian goldfields. I saw that I could kill two birds with one stone, and accordingly I went down to Port Moresby, obtained a letter of introduction to Sir James from an official at the Government House, and came to England.

"My business affairs, as you will have heard, have prospered exceedingly, the other affair not so well. I went to Crispi's, but was unable to see him. The doorkeeper at the studio denied all knowledge of the miniature, and Mr. Shapland, who saw it by accident, decided that he did not know the original. I tried to see Crispi again; and followed him to a restaurant. But he would not hear me, and though I had made an appointment with him, the next day he went off to Rome; and as I have not been able to go into the matter with him I have learned nothing yet."

Again he paused. Janet's face was still pale, and there was a dawning horror in her beautiful eyes, but she made no comment. His voice grew sterner and less matter-of-fact, as he added, "I am quite sure that the man at Crispi's was lying, and I have sometimes wondered whether Mr. Shapland was not lying also."

Janet gasped, and then spoke in a broken whisper.

"But why should you think that he—that he——"

"Because he knew you, and because when talking to me, he led me to believe that he knew nothing whatever of New Guinea, whilst I have since discovered, quite by accident, that he had been to New Guinea on business, that as a matter of fact he was in the colony when my brother was killed. That is why I think that he was lying to me when he denied that the miniature——"

There was the sound of heavy feet at the far end of the conservatory. Both Janet and Rowley turned instinctively. Through the green of the tree-ferns they caught a glimpse of blue, and as he perceived it the young man looked at Janet, and saw that her eyes were full of apprehension.

"They are coming," he said in a level voice. "Your warning was just in time."

CHAPTER XX

ARRESTED

THE two policemen drew nearer. They were accompanied by Janet's father, and in the background hovered Vernon Shapland, who from his position on the terrace had seen Mr. Selby and the officers of the law enter the conservatory by a side door, and had followed in their wake. There was a troubled look on Mr. Selby's face, a look which grew more pronounced as he caught sight of Janet standing by Charles Rowley.

"Oh, what will you do?" whispered the girl in a voice tense with emotion.

"Go with them, of course," answered the young man with a wry smile. "There is nothing else to be done."

"But——" She broke off as a thought struck her. "The locket!" she said. "Let me have it for a few days. I will return it as soon as I can."

"Why do you want——" He caught the appeal in her eyes. Mr. Selby was very close now, and he saw the opportunity to explain was not to be