

given to his fellow-passenger to seek out Jack Cordery.

"Great Scot!" he said, "to think that I forgot that too! If that fellow—Vernon—yes, by Jupiter that was the name!—if he went to Cordery with his inquiry, it would make it quite clear that he really wanted Rowley badly; and maybe Cordery was the man who accompanied him upon the trip. I'll write a note with the name and this little bit of news, and send a couple of boys down to Moresby with it. Then Rowley can make inquiries about Vernon and his movements and find out if Cordery knows anything about this fellow."

But though he carried out this intention, the well-meant effort was in vain, for when the natives reached Port Moresby with the note, Charles Rowley had left, and by that time was racing down the long Queensland coast on his way to Sydney, there to take the English boat.

CHAPTER IX

THE STOWAWAY

ABOARD the Australian liner *Queensland*, two days out of Sydney, and bound for England, most of the first-class passengers were on deck, enjoying the beautiful weather. Among them was Charles Rowley. He was seated on a deck-chair, a little apart from his fellow-passengers, with a very thoughtful look in his eyes. The locket which Boromai had found was in his hand, open, and from time to time he glanced at the beautiful face, which looked out at him

therefrom. In that miniature he felt lay the key to the solution of the mystery of his foster-brother's death ; and now, as often since its discovery, he was thinking over the problem which the two presented.

Since boyhood the murdered man and himself had been inseparable. There was nothing about Jim that he did not know ; and he was firmly convinced that there was no hidden thing, no entanglement in his foster-brother's life to account for what had happened. Very carefully he reviewed Jim's life as he knew it. Twice Jim had been with him on trips to Sydney and once to Melbourne, and there had been occasional visits to Cooktown—none of them very recent ; but on all those occasions they had been together ; and he must have known if any love affair had occurred. That Jim had ever met the original of the miniature he could not believe ; and he was sure that the crime had nothing whatever to do with the beautiful girl whose portrait might yet help him to find the murderer in whose possession it had been, and who had left it behind on the scene of his crime.

His thoughts wandered from the circumstances in which the miniature had been found, and the end of justice that it might serve, to the beautiful original herself. Who was she ? What was her relation to the slayer of his foster-brother ?

Somehow the latter question filled his heart with a vague disquiet. Always when he thought of it, it was so, but he had never yet owned to himself the reason for it. He had looked at the beautiful face so often, that it seemed to him that he must have been familiar with it for quite a long time. And now the question troubled him more than ever. As he asked it, he answered it as he had done many times with those others.

“ Brother ? Lover ? Husband ? ”

Almost automatically his mind dismissed the first alternative. Brothers, however fond, were not given to carrying about with them miniatures of their sisters. But lovers and husbands had a weakness that way ; and——

The disquiet in his heart grew more pronounced. He was conscious of a stirring of resentment against the unknown man to whom, as he surmised ; the miniature had been given by the original—a resentment that had nothing to do with his foster-brother's death. The feeling grew, and as the meaning of it flashed upon him he broke into a little grim laugh.

"Jealous!" he whispered to himself. "Jealous—of Jim's murderer!"

He looked again at the miniature. The sweet face and the grave eyes drew him as he had never been drawn before. He lifted the miniature towards his lips, and then paused, held by an odd scruple. "She might not like it," he whispered, and closed the locket, and set the gold of it to his lips. He smiled queerly.

"You can't object to that, you darl——"

A sudden commotion broke on the whisper. There was laughter, and a movement of curious passengers towards a portion of the deck where the first officer had appeared, with two seamen between whom stood a miserable-looking creature, in a dun-garee suit at least two sizes too large.

"What is the matter?" asked a lady of her companion, as they passed Rowley. He listened and caught the answer.

"Looks like a stowaway."

Charles Rowley rose from his seat and followed in the wake of the other passengers, prompted by the same curiosity which moved them.

The stowaway was standing between the two seamen,

while the ship's captain, fierce and magisterial, shot his questions.

"Where did you come on board?"

"At Sydney."

"Which of the crew helped you?"

"None of them, sir," was the answer in a voice that to Rowley seemed weak and tremulous. "I came aboard after dark, pretending to be worse for liquor, and the watch mistook me for one of the firemen."

"Which you shall be, confound you!" cried the captain. "I'll have no sponging stowaways on my ship. You'll work your passage and go to prison at the other end." He turned to the first officer. "Take him away and put him with the stokehold gang."

"You can't do that with me, sir," protested the stowaway.

"Can't do that!" The captain's voice was explosive, and his face almost apoplectic as he echoed the unexpected words. "We'll see about that, you skrimshanker! I am master of this ship and any man who——"

"But I'm not a man," answered the stowaway. "I am a woman."

The captain's amazement was comical to behold. For a moment he stood there stuttering, unable to speak, whilst one of the onlookers broke into a laugh. For his part, Charles Rowley looked at the stowaway's face, saw that the features were too delicate for a man's, his eyes ran over the shrinking form, and knew instantly that the statement was true. The captain also accepted it.

"A woman!" he said. "A woman! Then what are you doing here in this rig-out?"

"I wanted to get to England to join my husband.

He went on the last boat, leaving me to follow, but my money was stolen from me, and I knew nobody. I was desperate, so—so——”

The stowaway's face quavered and broke, and tears began to run down the begrimed face.

The captain stormed. “A likely tale. What's your husband's name?”

“Jack Cordery.”

“Never heard of him!” said the sailor woodenly.

“You don't expect——”

“But I've heard of him, captain; indeed, I've met him, and though he's no great class, I'd like to pay this poor woman's passage to England. That will clear up the difficulty, I suppose.”

The speaker was Charles Rowley, and as the captain turned and recognized him, a little of the fierceness died out of his face. Rumours of great wealth had circulated about the young man, and the captain was human enough to desire the good opinion of a rich passenger.

“Oh, well, sir,” he said, “if you like to waste your money, that's all right. But how do you know that she's the man's wife, that she isn't telling the tale?”

“I've got my marriage lines!” snapped the woman in swift resentment of this imputation.

“I'll pay,” repeated Rowley imperturbably, “and if you can get some clothes from the stewardess——”

“Very well,” said the captain. “Put her in the hands of one of the stewardesses, Mr. Johnson, and then send her into the steerage.” He turned from the officer to the stowaway. “You've got out of this very luckily, woman. And if you'll accept a piece of good advice, you won't play any more of these May-games.”

He nodded to the first-officer, who turned to the

woman. She, on her part, flashed a grateful glance at Charles Rowley, then accompanied the officer to the stewardess's quarters, and the incident was closed.

The young man did not see her again until they reached Tilbury, when, just as he was leaving the ship, a voice accosted him.

"Sir, will you permit me to thank you?" He turned to find the woman looking at him with tearful eyes. "I am very grateful to you," she continued. "The stewardess has just given me a packet with money in it from you. How to thank you, sir, I don't know; but——"

"Don't trouble to, Mrs. Cordery. There's no need for you to do so. I hope you'll find your husband without any trouble."

He was turning away when the woman spoke again:

"Pardon me, sir, but I should like to know the name of my—my benefactor. I may very shortly be able to return the money; but quite apart from that I should like to know, that I may have it in grateful remembrance."

The young man laughed.

"Really, Mrs. Cordery, you are making too much of a very trifling service. The money is nothing to me, and I believe I shall be quite angry with you, if you attempt to return it, for it was a pleasure to me to help a plucky little woman on her way. But all the same if it's any pleasure to you, I will introduce myself. My name is Charles Rowley."

The result of the introduction amazed him. The woman went suddenly white, and stood there gazing at him with fear-stricken eyes.

"Charles—Charles—what?"

"Rowley!" he answered, inwardly wondering what on earth had overtaken the little woman at the sound of the name. "It's the same name that

a century or two ago an English King was not too proud to wear.

"But," gasped the woman, "that can't be."

"Why not?" asked Rowley, smiling at the conviction in the woman's tone.

"Because Charles Rowley is dead!" blurted out the woman.

"But how do you know?"

"I—I heard it at Port Moresby!" stammered the woman, betraying a sudden confusion.

"Then you heard wrong," he replied quickly. "It was my foster-brother Jim who died, and I am Charles Rowley—very much alive, as you see."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the woman, and for a moment stood there with a dismayed expression on her face. "Then it's all a mistake and——"

"And what?" asked Rowley, his curiosity aroused.

"Oh! don't ask me," cried the woman in sudden panic. "Don't ask me!"

"But really, I must," said Rowley as a quick suspicion leapt in his mind. "You know my brother was murdered and——"

He got no further. Just at that moment two or three trucks laden with luggage came along.

"By leave, please! By leave, please!"

He stepped aside to allow the trucks to pass, and as he did so, the woman turned and ran like a frightened deer. Before he could recover from his amazement she was lost to sight in the throng on the quayside, and though he followed in the direction which she had taken he saw her no more.

As he seated himself in the train running up to town, his brow was puckered with thought. Did the woman know something about his brother's death? She had heard something of the murder

—that was clear; but that was easily explained. In a small place like Port Moresby, where the gossips of the bush loomed larger than the affairs of Europe, she was bound to have heard it; but the odd thing was that she had heard the news wrongly, that she had heard that he himself was the victim. That struck him as peculiar, and, added to her manifest dismay and panic, made her recent conduct almost suspicious. And what was she doing in Europe? Following her husband, she had said on the boat; but why had Cordery himself come to Europe in such haste as to leave her to follow by a later boat? He knew Cordery to be a rough character, unscrupulous, and of a rather unsavoury reputation. Did Cordery know anything of Jim's death? Had his hurried journey to Europe any connection therewith?

He asked himself the questions; but he could find no definite answer, and at any rate it was not Cordery who had left that locket in the bush. He was sure of that; and with that in his mind, the incident on the quayside seemed to grow less important. After all the woman's confusion and dismay might be due to the mistake she had made in regard to himself! So for want of a better explanation, he put the matter to himself, and as he looked out of the window he reflected that every moment now was bringing him nearer to the solution of the mystery. London was a huge place, no doubt it had many painters of miniatures, but it ought not to be difficult to find one with a name as distinct as Crispi. And once he found the artist the rest would be easy, and Jim's murderer would soon be run to earth. And then——

The sweet face of the miniature rose suddenly before him in vision. What would the discovery

of the criminal mean to her? What if indeed she were the wife or sweetheart of the criminal? Could he strike the blow knowing all that it would mean to that innocent girl, whom, not having seen, he had learned to love?

As he asked himself the question, realizing all that it meant, his tanned face paled a little. Then his mouth set hard, and his jaw bones showed suddenly. He would have no mercy—none, even though it broke that girl's heart; even though it set a gulf between her and him that no man could ever hope to cross.

When he reached London he drove to an hotel in the West End to which he had been recommended by one of the boat stewards. There he lunched, and after making an appointment by telephone for the next day with a great mining magnate to whom he had an introduction, he walked down to the office to consult the girl clerk.

"I say, miss, do you know anybody of the name of Crispi in this city?"

The girl only half-suppressed a smile at the *naïveté* of the question.

"I know one," she said, "an Italian who keeps a restaurant down in Soho. I went there once with a friend to dine."

"That's not the one," answered Rowley. "The man I want is an artist."

The girl shook her head. "I do not know any artists—they are an odd lot, and I don't like men with long hair. But why not consult the directory. I daresay you'll find lots and lots of Crispis, for Italians seem to like London better than their own country just now."

"The directory! Where——"

"You'll find it in the smoke-room, sir. You

can't miss it. It's a very big book on a side table."
 "Thank you, miss."

He turned and walked in the direction of the smoke-room, the girl watching him with amused eyes.

"Green!" she murmured to herself. "Green—like all these Colonials. If he doesn't look out he'll find himself taken in badly."

Charles Rowley certainly did not merit the girl's rather sweeping estimate of him, but he was certainly unused to those amenities of civilization known as directories, and as he gazed at the ponderous volume of Greater London, he was conscious of a stab of dismay. Was he to wade all through that? Impossible! And as a matter of fact he did not even look inside the covers, for whilst he was still staring at it, a new idea came to him, which, leaving the hotel, he proceeded at once to follow.

Calling a taxi-cab he told the man to drive him to a picture shop.

"What sort of a shop, sir? Any particular name?"

"Not unless you know one of the name of Crispi."

"Only man I know of that name, sir, sells ice-creams down Camden Town way."

"Then he won't do! I want to get to a place where they sell good pictures and would know an artist's name when they hear it."

"Right, sir, I know the very place."

As a matter of fact the man knew nothing, but he remembered there was a fine-art dealer's shop in the Strand, and there he took his fare. Rowley gave him instructions to wait; and entering the shop, he was received by a lady assistant.

"I am looking for a miniature-painter of the name of Crispi," he explained. "Can you tell me where to find him?"

"Yes, sir," replied the assistant with a smile, if you will wait one moment, sir."

She disappeared behind a fixed screen, and a moment later returned with a card in her hand.

"That is where Signor Crispi lives, and has his studio. But unless you have an appointment with him, sir, I am afraid you will find it rather difficult to get to see him. He is a very busy man, and he has the oddness of genius."

"Thank you, miss, I'm awfully obliged to you for the address. As to seeing him, well, I'll have to take my chance."

Returning to the waiting taxi, he showed the driver the card.

"Know where that is?" he said.

"St. John's Wood, of course, sir."

"Then just get the street and the name of the house in your mind, and drive me there as fast as you dare."

"Right, sir," answered the chauffeur, giving another glance at the card; and a moment later Charles Rowley was on his way to Crispi's, his heart beating quicker as he anticipated what the artist would be able to tell him.

In due time they arrived at St. John's Wood, and found Signor Crispi's house and studio without difficulty. Rowley rang the bell and found himself confronted by a uniformed man-servant, who ushered him in an artist's reception-room, where two girls were at work, retouching old miniatures. On his entrance one of the girls rose and advanced towards him.

"Have you an appointment, sir?" she asked, looking a little askance at his obviously ready-made suit.

"No, miss," he answered. "I came on the chance of finding Signor Crispi disengaged."

The girl shook her head. "He is never that," she said, "and at this moment he has a sitter. If you will leave your name and address, sir, Signor Crispi will communicate with you."

"Thanks," answered the young man carelessly. "But maybe there is no need for that. How long have you been here?"

The girl stared at the abruptness of his question, and with a faint trace of resentment in her tones, answered: "Three years."

Charles Rowley thrust a hand in his pocket, and, drawing out the locket, opened it, then held it towards the girl.

"That was painted here," he said, "and I want to learn the name and address of the young lady. Do you recognize her? Can you help me?"

The girl took the locket in her hand, then a look of surprise came on her face, and a moment later she smiled.

"The young lady——" she began, then broke off, as if some second thought had checked what she was about to say.

"Yes?" said the young man encouragingly.

The girl glanced towards a door at the far end of the room, a doubtful look on her face; then she began again.

"Your request, sir, is a rather unusual one. I could not possibly answer your questions without the consent of Signor Crispi. If you will tell me why you require this information I will lay the matter before him, and see what he has to say."

Rowley guessed that feminine curiosity had prompted the suggestion, and he shook his head. "I am afraid I cannot do that," he said, "the mat-

ter being extremely private and personal. But

The door at the far end of the room opened, and a tall, handsome young man stepped into the reception-room, and began to walk towards the entrance. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and beside him Charles Rowley felt a very plain bird indeed. The new-comer glanced at Rowley superciliously, almost insolently, and was passing on, when the girl cried quickly, "Mr. Shapland, one moment. This gentleman——"

In the impulsive movement that she made, the hand holding the miniature caught a tall vase of flowers on an ornamental table, upsetting it, and jerking the locket from her hand. It fell at the feet of Shapland, who stooped to pick it up, and as he did so there was a sudden change in his demeanour. The superciliousness dropped from him. The blood receded from his face, leaving it white and drawn, and his eyes gleamed with apprehension.

"To whom does this belong?" he demanded hoarsely, looking from the sweet face in the miniature to the girl.

"It belongs to this gentleman here," answered the assistant quickly. "He was asking who the lady——"

Verion Shapland swung round quickly, and as he interrupted the girl, measured the man before her with quick eyes.

"Yours?" he asked.

"Yes, do you know——?"

Shapland glanced uneasily towards the room from which he himself had emerged, and broke in on the other's question.

"Come outside," he said brusquely, "and we can talk. These steam-heated places are stifling."

Rowley held out his hand for the locket, and as the other yielded it reluctantly, answered: "I don't mind, if you can help me. This young lady here seems disinclined to give me the information I want, which is just the name and address of the original of that miniature."

Shapland nodded.

"Professional etiquette. But if you come with me perhaps I can help you."

He led the way to the door, and Rowley followed. But when they were fairly outside something struck Shapland, and with a quick "Excuse me one moment," he hurried back into the reception-room. The two girls were in animated conversation, but broke off on his appearance. He walked straight up to them, and taking out a pocket-book, slipped out a crisp piece of paper, and set it on the table.

"You did quite right in not giving him Miss Selby's name. Do not do so. Do not let him see Crispi. The man is a lunatic. He will only annoy Miss Selby, and it will be better to make no mention of the matter to her. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," answered the elder of the girls.

"Then I rely on your discretion," said Shapland, and a moment later he was gone.

One of the girls picked up the paper he had left on the table. It was a ten-pound note.

"My!" she cried. "Look here. He must be terrible set on keeping the man away from Miss Selby."

"That's because he's going to marry her. It's the way with men in love. But, any way, the money's all right, and there's a costume in this morning's paper that I am going to buy with my share. But I wonder what the lunatic would have

done if he'd known that Miss Selby was there in that room all the time?"

"I wonder!" echoed her companion.

CHAPTER X

FACE TO FACE

WHEN Vernon Shapland reached the street he found the man with the miniature talking to the taxi-driver, and realizing that it would not be easy to discuss a delicate matter in the open street, he proposed they should run into the city.

"Shall we go to my club in Piccadilly?" he asked. "We shall be quiet there at this hour, and it will be possible to talk without interruption."

"Don't mind if I do," answered Rowley. "These streets are frightfully noisy after the New Guinea bush."

Vernon Shapland was not startled by the other's revelation of the place he came from. From the moment his eyes had fallen on the miniature, and he had learned who was in possession of it, he had been sure that he came from Papua. As they settled themselves in the taxi he exhibited no more than a polite interest in his companion, though in reality he was in a raging fever of curiosity.

"You are a stranger in London, then?"

"Never set foot in it till three hours or so ago. I've lived all my life in the Pacific, knocking about the islands, pearling and gem-hunting, prospecting, and what not."

Vernon Shapland betrayed a quickened interest.