

“Why I was thinking that although you’re so awful fond of goose-berries, an’ though there’s lots of ripe ones on the bushes I’ve never seen you eat a single one.”

CHAPTER X

How Bellew and Adam entered into a solemn league and covenant

“Look at the moon to-night, Uncle Porges!”

“I see it.”

“It’s awfull’ big, an’ round, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it’s very big, and very round.”

“An’ — rather — yellow, isn’t it?”

“Very yellow!”

“Just like a great, big golden sovereign, isn’t it.”

“Very much like a sovereign, my Porges.”

“Well, do you know, I was wondering — if there was any chance that it was a — Money Moon?”

They were leaning out at the lattice, Small Porges, and Big Porges. Anthea and Miss Priscilla were busied upon household matters wholly feminine, wherefore Small Porges had drawn Bellew to the window, and there they leaned, the small body enfolded by Bellew’s long arm, and the two faces turned up to the silvery splendour of the moon.

But now, Anthea came up behind them, and,

not noticing the position of Bellew's arm as she leaned on the other side of Small Porges, it befell that her hand touched, and for a moment, rested upon Bellew's hand, hidden as it was in the shadow. And this probably began it.

The air of Arcadia, as has been said before, is an intoxicating air; but it is more, it is an air charged with a subtle magic whereby the commonest objects, losing their prosaic, matter-of-fact shapes, become transfigured into things of wonder, and delight. Little things that pass as mere ordinary common-places, — things insignificant, and wholly beneath notice in the every day world, become fraught with such infinite meaning, and may hold such sublime, such undreamed of possibilities — here in Arcadia. Thus, when it is recorded that Anthea's hand accidentally touched, and rested upon Bellew's — the significance of it will become at once apparent.

“And pray,” said Anthea, laying that same hand in the most natural manner in the world, upon the Small Porges' curls, “Pray what might you two be discussing so very solemnly?”

“The moon,” answered Small Porges. “I was wondering if it was a Money Moon, an' Uncle Porges hasn't said if it is, yet.”

“Why no, old chap,” answered Bellew, “I'm afraid not.”

“And pray,” said Anthea again, “what might a Money Moon be?”

“Well,” explained Small Porges, “when the moon's just — just so, then you go out an' — an' find a fortune, you know. But the moon's got to be a Money Moon, and you've got to know, you know, else you'll find nothing, of course.”

“Ah Georgy dear!” sighed Anthea, stooping her dark head down to his golden curls, “don't you know that fortunes are very hard to get, and that they have to be worked for, and that no one ever found one without a great deal of labour, and sorrow?”

“'Course — everyone can't find fortunes, Auntie Anthea, I know that, but we shall, — my Uncle Porges knows all about it, you see, an' I know that we shall. I'm sure as sure we shall find one, some day, 'cause, you see, I put it in my prayers now, — at the end, you know. I say: ‘An' please help me an' my Uncle Porges to find a fortune when the Money Moon comes, — a big one, world without end — Amen!’ So you see, it's all right, an' we're just waiting till the Money Moon comes, aren't we, Uncle Porges?”

“ Yes, old chap, yes,” nodded Bellew, “ until the Money Moon comes.”

And so there fell a silence between them, yet a silence that held a wondrous charm of its own; a silence that lasted so long that the coppery curls drooped lower, and lower upon Bellew’s arm, until Anthea, sighing, rose, and in a very tender voice bade Small Porges say ‘ Good-night!’ The which he did, forthwith, slumberous of voice, and sleepy eyed, and so, with his hand in Anthea’s, went drowsily up to bed.

Wherefore, seeing that Miss Priscilla had bustled away into the kitchen, Bellew sauntered out into the rose-garden to look upon the beauty of the night. The warm air was fragrant with dewy scents, and the moon, already high above the tree-tops, poured down her gentle radiance upon the quaint, old garden with its winding walks, and clipped yew hedges, while upon the quiet, from the dim shadow of the distant woods, stole the soft, sweet song of a nightingale.

Bellew walked a path bordered with flowers, and checkered with silver patches of moon-light, drinking in the thousand beauties about him, staring up at the glory of the moon, the indigo of the sky, and listening to the voice of the lonely singer in the wood. And yet it was of

none of these he was thinking as he paused under the shadow of “ King Arthur,” — nor of Small Porges, nor of any one or anything in this world but only of the sudden, light touch of a warm, soft hand upon his. “ Be that you, sir?” Bellew started and now he found that he had been sitting, all this while, with an empty pipe between his teeth, yet content therewith; wherefore he shook his head, and wondered.

“ Be that you, Mr. Beloo, sir?”

“ Yes Adam, it is I.”

“ Ah! an’ how might you be feelin’ now — arter your exercise wi’ the pitch-fork, sir?”

“ Very fit, I thank you, Adam. Sit down, and smoke, and let us converse together.”

“ Why thankee sir,” answered Adam, producing the small, black clay pipe from his waistcoat pocket, and accepting Bellew’s proffered pouch. “ I’ve been up to the ’ouse a visitin’ Prudence, the cook, — an’ a rare cook she be, too, Mr. Beloo sir!”

“ And a rare buxom girl into the bargain, Adam!”

“ Oh, ah! — she’s well enough, sir; I won’t go for to deny as she’s a fine, up-standing, well-shaped, tall, an’ proper figure of a woman as ever was, sir, — though the Kentish lasses be a

tidy lot, Mr. Beloo sir. But, Lord! when you come to think of her gift for Yorkshire Puddin', likewise jam-rollers, and seed-cake, — (which, though mentioned last, ain't by no manner o' means least), — when you come to think of her brew o' ale, an' cider, an' ginger wine, — why then — I'm took, sir, I'm took altogether, an' the 'Old Adam' inside o' me works hisself into such a state that if another chap — 'specially that there Job Jagway gets lookin' her way too often, why it's got to get took out o' him, or took out o' me in good 'ard knocks, Mr. Belloo, sir."

"And when are you going to get married, Adam?"

"Well sir, we was thinkin' that if Miss Anthea has a good season, this year, we'd get it over an' done wi' some time in October, sir, — but it's all accordin'."

"According to what?"

"To the 'ops, sir, — the H O P S — 'ops, sir. They're comin' on fine, — ah! scrumptuous they be! If they don't take the blight, sir, they'll be the finest 'ops this side o' Maidstone. But then, if they do take the blight, — why then my 'opes is blighted likewise sir, — B-L-I-T-E-D, — blighted, Mr. Belloo sir!"

which said, Adam laughed once, nodded his

head several times, and relapsed into puffing silence.

"Mr. Cassilis was over to-day, Adam," said Bellew, after a while pursuing a train of thought.

"Ah sir! — I seen him, — 'e also seen me. 'E told me as Job Jagway was up and about again, — likewise Job Jagway will be over 'ere to-morrow, along wi' the rest of 'em for the sale, sir."

"Ah yes, — the sale!" said Bellew, thoughtfully.

"To think o' that there Job Jagway a coming over here to buy Miss Anthea's furnitur' do set the Old Adam a workin' inside o' me to that amazin' extent as I can't sit still, Mr. Belloo sir! If that there Job crosses my path to-morrer — well — let 'im — look out, that's all!" saying which, Adam doubled up a huge, knotted fist and shook it at an imaginary Job.

"Adam," said Bellew, in the same thoughtful tone, "I wonder if you would do something for me?"

"Anything you ax me, sir, so long as you don't want me to —"

"I want you to buy some of that furniture for me."

"What!" exclaimed Adam, and vented his

great laugh again, "well, if that ain't a good 'un, sir! why that's just w'ot I'm a going to do! Ye see, I ain't w'ot you might call a rich cove, nor yet a millionaire, but I've got a bit put by, an' I drew out ten pound, yesterday. Thinks I,—'here's to save Miss Anthea's old side-board, or the mirror as she's so fond of, or if not—why then a cheer or so,—they ain't a going to get it all,—not while I've got a pound or two,' I sez to myself."

"Adam," said Bellew, turning suddenly, "that sentiment does you credit, that sentiment makes me proud to have knocked you into a ditch,—shake hands, Adam." And there, beneath the great apple tree, while the moon looked on, they very solemnly shook hands.

"And now, Adam," pursued Bellew, "I want you to put back your ten pounds, keep it for Prudence,—because I happen to have rather more than we shall want,—see here!" And, with the words, Bellew took out a leathern wallet, and from this wallet, money, and bank-notes,—more money, and more bank-notes than Adam had ever beheld in all his thirty odd years, at sight of which his eyes opened, and his square jaw relaxed, to the imminent danger of his cherished clay pipe.

"I want you to take this," Bellew went on, counting a sum into Adam's nerveless hand, "and to-morrow, when the sale begins, if any one makes a bid for anything, I want you to bid higher, and, no matter what, you must always buy—always, you understand?"

"But sir,—that there old drorin'-room cabinet wi' the—carvings—"

"Buy it!"

"An' the silver candle-sticks,—and the four-post bed-stead,—an' the—"

"Buy 'em, Adam,—buy everything! If we haven't enough money there's plenty more where this came from,—only buy!—You understand?"

"Oh yes sir, I understand! 'Ow much 'ave you give me? Why, here's—forty-five,—fifty,—sixty,—Lord!—"

"Put it away, Adam,—forget all about it till to-morrow,—and not a word, mind!"

"A hundred pound!" gasped Adam, "Lord!—Oh I won't speak of it, trust me, Mr. Belloo, sir! But to think of me a walking about wi' a hundred pound in my pocket,—Lord! I won't say nothin',—but to think of Old Adam wi' a hundred pound in his pocket, e'Cod! it do seem that comical!" saying which, Adam buttoned the money into a capacious pocket,

slapped it, nodded, and rose. "Well sir, I'll be going, — there be Miss Anthea in the garden yonder, and if she was to see me now there's no sayin' but I should be took a laughin' to think o' this 'ere hundred pound."

"Miss Anthea! — where?"

"Comin' through the rose-gardin. She be off to see old Mother Dibbin. They call Mother Dibbin a witch, an' now as she's down wi' the rheumatics there ain't nobody to look arter 'er, — 'cept Miss Anthea, — she'd ha' starved afore now if it 'adn't been for Miss Anthea, but Lord love your eyes, an' limbs, Mr. Belloo sir! Miss Anthea don't care if she's a witch, or fifty witches, not she! So good-night, Mr. Belloo sir, an' mum's the word!"

Saying which, Adam slapped his pocket again, nodded, winked, and went upon his way.

CHAPTER XI

Of the "Man with the Tiger Mark"

It is a moot question as to whether a curl can be more alluring when it glows beneath the fiery kisses of the sun, or shines demurely in the tender radiance of the moon. As Bellew looked at it now, — that same small curl that nodded and beckoned to him above Anthea's left ear, — he strongly inclined to the latter opinion.

"Adam tells me that you are going out, Miss Anthea."

"Only as far as Mrs. Dibbin's cottage, — just across the meadow."

"Adam also informs me that Mrs. Dibbin is a witch."

"People call her so."

"Never in all my days have I seen a genuine, old witch, — so I'll come with you, if I may?"

"Oh, this is a very gentle old witch, and she is neither humpbacked, nor does she ride a broom-stick, — so I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, Mr. Bellew."

"Then, at least, I can carry your basket, — allow me!" And so, in his quiet, masterful