



***ELIZABETH
BURGOYNE
CORBETT***

***WHEN
THE SEA
GIVES
UP ITS
DEAD***

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When the Sea Gives Up Its Dead

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CHAPTER I.

“THE DIAMOND ROBBERY.”

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“Confound that upset! I shall be two minutes behind time—I wish I had walked all the way, instead of trusting to the supposed extra speed of a ’bus, when the streets are so slippery that horses cannot keep their feet.”

Thus soliloquised Harley Riddell, ruefully, as he hurriedly picked his way through the somewhat aggressive conglomeration of wagons, hansoms, ’buses and fourwheelers, which threatened to still further belate his arrival at the establishment of his employers, Messrs. Stavanger, Stavanger and Co., diamond merchants, of Hatton Garden.

By dint of an extra spurt from the corner of Holborn Viaduct, he managed to be less unpunctual than he had expected; but, somewhat to his surprise, he fancied that the assistants whom he encountered betrayed signs of suppressed excitement, which were not at all in keeping with the usual decorous quietude of Messrs. Stavanger’s aristocratic establishment. Still more astonished was he to notice that, whatever the reason for the unusual excitement may have been, it became intensified by his arrival. But there was just a tinge of alarm mingled with his astonishment when he perceived that both the Brothers Stavanger and Mr. Edward Lyon, who was the “Co.” in the business, were here before him. As not one of these gentlemen had ever been known to come to business before

eleven o'clock in the forenoon, Harley may be excused for thinking it odd that they should all be here on this particular morning before the city clocks had boomed ten, and that, furthermore, they should all stand gazing at him with expressions which suggested suspicion and anathema.

"Nothing wrong, I hope, sirs?" was Harley's impulsive question.

"You are no doubt the best judge of that," said Mr. David Stavanger, who, being a vicar's churchwarden, systematically cultivated a dignified bearing and an impressive mode of speech. "Probably the atrocious injury to which we have been subjected has been exposed to the light of detection sooner than you bargained for. You perceive, Mr. Detective," he continued, turning to a short, but very well-built man of middle age, who was also contemplating our hero with unusual interest, "you perceive the instantaneous working of an evil conscience! No sooner does this ingrate see us here a few moments before our usual time than he jumps to the very natural conclusion that he is at the end of his criminal tether."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted the detective, whose name was John Gay. "Your deductions, Mr. Stavanger, are possibly more decided than correct. We have yet to hear what this gentleman has to say for himself, and you will perhaps let me remind you that it is dangerous to make statements that we perhaps may be unable to prove."

"Gentleman, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. David.

"Yes sir, with your permission, gentleman—until we have proved him otherwise."

“That will be an easy matter,” put in Hugh Stavanger, the son of the senior partner. “Everything points to him, and him alone, as the thief.”

Harley had not noticed Hugh Stavanger’s presence until he thus unpleasantly made it apparent. He had, in fact, been stupefied by the extraordinary words and behaviour of those around him. But at the word “thief” every fibre of his body thrilled with passion, and he strode hastily forward to the side of Hugh Stavanger, exclaiming “Retract that word! or, by Heaven——”

“Ah! he would add violence to his other crimes,” said Mr. David, hastily sheltering himself behind Mr. Samuel Stavanger’s more portly person. “Take care, Hugh, my boy! There is never any knowing how far these desperadoes will go when they are aroused. Mr. Gay, I insist upon your duty being done at once.”

By this time Harley was calm again outwardly, but his calm was as that of the ocean which a deluge of rain is beating into a surface smoothness which the still heaving waters below would fain convert into mountainous breakers.

Thief! Desperado! Was it possible that he was alluded to? He looked at the faces of those around him, and read condemnation in them all. Nay, there was at least one countenance which was impassive, one breast in which a trace of fairplay seemed to linger. He would appeal to the detective for an explanation of this horrible mystery.

“Will you,” he began, in a voice whose steadiness and quietness surprised even himself, “will you tell me what is the matter? and why I am glared at as if I were a wild beast?”

"Yes, pray go through the mockery of an explanation," cried Mr. David.

"Sir," replied Mr. Gay, "it is by no means certain that an explanation would be a mockery in this case."

"Why, you yourself said everything pointed to this man's guilt," contended Mr. David.

"Very likely," was the dry reply. "I said that everything seemed to point to your manager's guilt. But I did not say that it proved it. That is another thing, and slightly out of my province."

"And meanwhile," said Harley, "I am still in the dark."

"There has been a robbery of a serious and extensive nature, and you are suspected of being the thief," said the detective, carefully watching the face of the stricken Harley. "It is my duty to arrest you in the name of the law, and I warn you against saying anything that may be construed against you at the trial."

"Since when has this tremendous robbery taken place?" asked Harley. "Everything was secure when I left the premises last night at seven o'clock."

"Who was here when you left?" asked Mr. Lyon, taking part in the conversation for the first time.

"No one, sir. The members of the firm had all left early. Mr. Hugh, to whom I usually hand the keys, being also gone, I locked all the cases up, lighted the gas, padlocked the door, delivered the door-key to the night-watchman, and took the keys of the safes to Mr. David Stavanger's house. I put them into his own hands."

"That is quite true, so far as the delivery of the keys goes," said Mr. David. "What I want to know is this—What

have you done with the stones you abstracted before you locked the safes?"

"Excuse me once more," interrupted the detective, "you will have all necessary questions fully answered at the preliminary inquiry. Meanwhile Mr. Harley Riddell must consider himself a prisoner."

"You will permit me to send a message to my brother?"

"Certainly."

One of the shopmen, to whom Harley had always been kind, hurriedly produced a piece of paper and a pencil, and Harley, in whom surprise at his own calmness was still the dominant sensation, quickly wrote as follows:—"Dear Lad, I believe I am under arrest for wholesale robbery. It would be too absurd to protest my innocence to my twin soul. Ascertain where I am taken to, and break the news gently to the dear mother, before it reaches her in some other way. Tell her that the mystery is bound to be cleared up soon. As for Annie—God help her and me, for how can she ally herself to a man who has been under arrest?—Harley."

CHAPTER II.

FIRM FAITH IS NOT IDLE.

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Harley Riddell was duly charged before a magistrate with having feloniously abstracted gems to the value of four thousand pounds from the premises of Messrs. Stavanger, Stavanger, and Co., diamond merchants. After hearing all the evidence obtainable, the legal luminary thought it his duty to commit the prisoner to the Assizes, and during that time Harley was condemned to undergo the miseries of confinement and mental torture, without being able to do anything to help himself out of the abyss of disgrace into which he had been plunged.

But though he was powerless himself, others were working bravely for him. At first they also worked hopefully, until it became evident that whoever had concocted the plot of which he was the victim, had neglected no precaution against the failure of their plans. Mr. David Stavanger, the senior partner of the firm, deposed that, influenced by the invariable steadiness, industry, and ability of the prisoner, he had been induced to place more trust in him than he had ever placed in any of the subordinates of the firm. He had been eight years in the employment of Messrs. Stavanger, Stavanger, and Co., and had never given the firm any cause to complain of his conduct until now. "In fact," continued Mr. David, "he has so wormed himself into our confidence that it has been a very easy matter for him to steal those jewels, and there is no knowing——"

Considerably to Mr. David's chagrin, however, he was not permitted to continue his remarks, and his evident determination to take accused's guilt for granted was sharply reprimanded. Fellow employees gave similar evidence to that of Mr. David, but were all so evidently convinced of Harley's innocence, that counsel for the prosecution no longer felt quite sure of winning the case, until Mr. Gay produced the most damning evidence that could be forthcoming against a man accused of theft. He had, duly armed with a warrant, searched the belongings of Harley Riddell at his own home, and, inside the lining of the light topcoat that he had worn the day before the occurrence of the robbery, the detective had found three of the missing jewels set as rings, which were identified by Mr. Hugh Stavanger, who had seen them in their cases on the 17th of May.

Asked how, if Harley Riddell was the manager, and consequently of considerable importance in the business, it came to pass that the full extent of the robbery was discovered before the arrival of the latter on the scene, Mr. Hugh Stavanger stated that it was usual for Riddell to see to the safety of everything at the shop and to deliver the keys to the senior partner. At nine in the morning these were fetched by the leading shopman, whose duty it was to see that all was in readiness to receive customers at ten o'clock. As Mr. David Stavanger wished to present his eldest daughter with a birthday gift, Mr. Hugh had volunteered to fetch several articles of jewellery for her to choose from, and had, therefore, contrary to his usual custom, gone to the shop at nine o'clock. He had himself unlocked the safes,

and on comparing the contents with the inventory which was with them, had at once seen that a great number of valuable stones were missing, and had telegraphed to the members of the firm to come at once. The detective, who was immediately sent for, could find no evidence that any part of the premises had been feloniously entered, or that the safes had been tampered with.

There was much other evidence, some of it of not too relevant a nature, but all of it conducive to the annihilation of any hope of acquittal for the prisoner. His defence was considered feeble, his guilt indisputable, and he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

Five years' penal servitude! Is any pen powerful enough to picture all that it means to a man like Harley Riddell? One day on the summit of bliss, and the next in the abyss of degradation and despair! One day revelling in love and happiness; the next loaded with misery, desperation, and isolation from all his beloved ones! It is terrible for those who are guilty of crime. But for those who are innocent—God help them!

There was a farewell scene between Harley and his mother, who was passionately indignant at the monstrous injustice of which one of her twin sons was the victim. The poor soul, mindful in her misery of Harley's solicitude on her behalf, bravely hid her agonising grief under a show of mingled anger and hopefulness, while for the first time in all her long years of widowhood she felt resigned to the fact that the father of her boys no longer lived to witness the disgrace that had fallen upon his name. What though the disgrace was unmerited! It was none the less bitter, and

Harley, who knew his mother's indomitable nature, felt cheered and hopeful in his turn when he heard her vow to use every means, whether they were evidently possible or apparently impossible, to vindicate his character, and bring the guilt of the robbery home to the real perpetrators. Hilton Riddell, his twin brother, cheered him much, too, by his faith in the chances of a speedy unravelment of the plot of which he was evidently the victim.

There was also another with whom a parting interview was permitted, although Harley would almost have preferred to be spared the anguish of mind which it cost him. For the presence of winsome Annie Cory, who was to have been his bride ere long, only brought the more vividly to his mind the picture of all that cruel fate had bereft him of.

She, like the true girl she was, vowed to wait for his release, and to wed none but him. He, being sensitive and refined, vowed just as positively that nothing but the most incontrovertible proofs of his innocence would ever permit him to take advantage of her love.

Mr. Cory was very magnanimous, and he had cordially approved of the engagement of his only child to a man whose combined resources only amounted to £400 a year. For was not he himself wealthy enough to provide very handsomely for his daughter, and were not the various qualities of Harley Riddell far beyond riches alone?

Still, although he liked the young fellow, and would, under happier conditions, have gladly welcomed him as a son-in-law, he fully endorsed Harley's protestations to the effect that only as a man who could stand before the world

unshamed would he ever permit a woman to share his life. For he would not like his daughter to marry an ex-convict, whom folks would look askance at, even though the ex-convict's friends were all convinced of his innocence and of the injustice of his punishment.

But he deemed it wise to offer no violent opposition to Annie's determination to be true to the man she loved. He trusted to time to weaken her love, and show her the folly of allying herself to poverty and disgrace. Meanwhile, as he really liked Harley, and fully believed in his innocence, he meant to do all in his power to promote a certain plan which Hilton had confided to him, whereby it was hoped to divert the weight of punishment on to the shoulders that deserved it.

The interview had proved trying to Annie as well as to Harley, and Mr. Cory was very thankful when he arrived at his own house with his daughter, who certainly looked as if she had borne as much as she could.

"Margaret," he said to his sister, who had been his housekeeper ever since his wife died, eight years before the opening of our story, "I believe the child is dead beat, and I don't feel too clever myself. Have you anything in the way of a pick-me-up ready?"

"You shall have some hot milk, with a touch of brandy in it, in a few minutes. That will do you both good, and serve to put you off until dinner is ready, which will be another half hour yet. How did the child bear it?"

"Very bravely. Vowed eternal fidelity, and all that sort of thing. But Riddell is too much of a man to take her at her word, and swears to be nobody's husband until he is proved

innocent. And quite right, too. In fact, I hope Annie will get over her infatuation in any case, for I have no fancy for being pointed at as the father-in-law of a man who has been in gaol. You see, although we never for a moment believe that the poor lad had anything to do with the robbery, and are sure that he is the victim of a vile plot, it will be difficult to get the world to think as we do, and, to tell the truth, it's a deucedly nasty business all round."

While Mr. Cory had been speaking, Annie had gone up to her own room, and Miss Cory had rung her bell in order to give some directions to a servant before she followed her niece upstairs.

"Williamson," she said, "bring two glasses of hot milk here as quickly as possible."

She delivered herself of this order very quietly. But no sooner was the servant's back turned than she emptied the vials of her wrath on to her brother's devoted head.

"John Cory," she said, drawing her really majestic figure up to its full height, and speaking with a solemn deliberation which she only affected on serious occasions. "I'm ashamed of you! I never expected to see the day when my father's son would deliberately contemplate the desertion and permanent abandonment of a man whose sole sin is his betrayal by some villain who has cunningly contrived to divert suspicion from himself to an innocent man. John Cory, if I could believe that you would do this vile thing, I would leave your roof for ever."

"But, my dear girl——"

"Don't 'my dear girl' me! You never do it except when you want to talk me over, and at fifty-six I'm too old to

swallow gross flattery. Just tell me this—Do you mean to turn your back on young Riddell now that he is powerless to help himself, or do you mean to act like a man?”

“Of course, I mean to do all I can for him.”

“I knew you did. All the same, the bare thought that you could dream of revoking what you promised just before the poor lad’s calamity overtook him, made me feel as if I could shake you. Oh, here’s your milk. Just put your brandy in yourself and drink it, while I go upstairs to Annie.

Williamson, see that we have dinner punctually.”

Williamson, having acknowledged her mistress’s order with due deference, hurried away to expedite matters in the lower regions, and Miss Margaret Cory lost no more time in visiting her niece, whom she found sobbing as though her heart was breaking. At this sight, even Miss Margaret, stolid though she usually was, found herself considerably upset. She made a faint attempt to dissuade Annie from crying, but was convinced that her efforts were woefully inadequate, and eventually administered the truest consolation by breaking down herself and mingling her tears with those of the girl whom she loved more than any other being on earth.

“There, auntie, I won’t be so foolish again,” said Annie at last. “But I could not help myself when I thought of all the horrors poor Harley is doomed to endure.”

“And no wonder, my dear. But, please God, we’ll put an end to his misery by freeing him before long.”

“But how can that be? Have you forgotten that he is sentenced to five years’ imprisonment?”

“No, I have not forgotten. Neither have I forgotten a speech that his brother Hilton uttered last night. He said: —‘Heaven helping me, I will leave no stone unturned to run the author of all this misery to earth. He may be very cunning, but I defy him to elude my watchfulness, when once I have set eyes upon him. The mystery is not so great as it perhaps seems to some. The onus of criminality rests between very few people, and I have good reasons for believing that my suspicions are centring themselves round the right man. It is but a question of time, for, if there is a God in Heaven, the guilty coward who really stole those diamonds shall be brought to justice!’ Annie, when I heard the fervour with which those words were uttered, and marked the deliberate determination of Hilton Riddell’s mien, I shared his confidence in the future, and resolved to afford him every facility for achieving his purpose. He will need money, for without money very little can be done. For your sake, my darling, I will give all I can to prove your lover’s innocence.”

“How good you are, auntie!” cried the girl, kissing her relative affectionately. “You always make me feel better. This time, besides comforting me, you have made me a little bit ashamed of myself. Henceforth I will work, instead of giving way to useless repining. If there is any part I can take in the unravelment of this mystery, I will show myself a ready and capable helper.”

“That’s right, dear girl. The police started with the conviction that Harley Riddell was guilty, and hunted up no end of facts to prove themselves in the right. We will start with equally positive convictions in the other direction, and

it will be odds if our labour of love does not bear the fruit we desire.”

“Oh, auntie! I am all anxiety to begin! Do let me run down and tell the dad all about it.”

“Not so fast, my dear. If Mrs. Riddell, who has been terribly prostrated by this blow, is able to bear being left an hour or two this evening, her son will call here, by appointment with me, to consult as to what will be the best plans for us to adopt.”

“You dear old thing! You have been actually working already!”

“Certainly. The sooner we begin operating, the better chance we have of being successful, and the sooner we may hope to see Harley justified and at liberty. In fact, you need not be surprised if Hilton Riddell has already made considerable progress. And now, dear, you must make yourself a little presentable, and I expect you to partake of a substantial meal, even as I mean to do, for we must make ourselves strong if we mean to do anything useful.”

The result of Miss Margaret’s tact and management was that Annie was not nearly so downcast that evening as her father had feared she would be, and when Hilton Riddell made his appearance at eight o’clock, he found every member of the Cory family ready and willing to second all his endeavours on Harley’s behalf.

“And how did you leave your mother?” asked Miss Margaret.

“Stronger and better than I could have believed possible,” was the reply. “She is brave and hopeful, and firmly believes that I shall succeed in tracing the real

delinquent. One thing troubles me a good deal about my mother. It may be necessary for me to travel, or some other contingency may arise which will render it impossible to be with her much, and I fear that, if left to herself, she may succumb to her troubles."

"She shall not be left to herself," cried Miss Margaret, emphasising her remarks by a vigorous shake of the handsome lace lappets which adorned her cap. "She must come and live here while you are away. That is just what you would have proposed yourself, isn't it, John?"

"Certainly, just the very thing," echoed John, warmly. "Sorry you got the suggestion out before I did, though. And now, Mr. Riddell, about your means and employment. Don't think me impertinent or intrusive, but——"

"Pray don't apologise," said Hilton, hastily. "I will, as you so kindly take such an interest in us, explain exactly how we stand. My mother, who is an officer's widow, has a life pension, which the vicissitudes in the career of Harley or myself cannot touch. My employers, Messrs. Treadonem and Co., have magnanimously given me my liberty, and have not been afraid to mention their true reason for discarding the services of the brother of a convict. My time, therefore, is my own, to use as I please. Needless to say, it will be used in my brother's service. Fortunately, I have a couple of hundred pounds saved, and Harley, during the last six years, has saved a few hundreds also. He has some inkling of my intended course of procedure, and has arranged for me to draw his money, if I require it. But I hope to run my quarry to earth without encroaching upon Harley's savings,

for it will go hard with him at first, especially if he has no money to fall back upon."

"His money shall not be touched," put in Mr. Cory in a very decided tone. "I have a nice sum available for unexpected contingencies like the present."

"And so have I," answered Miss Margaret.

"You are very kind; I hardly know how to thank you," said Hilton, very much moved.

"And how can I help?" inquired Annie, piteously. "I have no money of my own, but I am anxious to do some real work, and I am sure you would find me clever and capable."

"I should only be too glad of your help," said Hilton, with animation in his mien and entreaty in his voice, "but the only way in which you can help seems too preposterous to suggest to you."

"Out with it, man," cried Mr. Cory; "if it is something that cannot be undertaken, no harm will be done."

"Then here you are, sir. It is necessary that I should gain a little insight into the doings of the family of Mr. David Stavanger, for I am convinced that either he or his son knows where the still missing diamonds could be found. There is an advertisement in to-day's paper for a holiday governess to the youngest Miss Stavanger, a girl of twelve. To-morrow morning I intended going to the office of Messrs. Bell and White, private inquiry agents, to ask them to send their principal lady detective, Miss Dora Bell, to try for the appointment, as a governess has many means of gaining information concerning what is going on in a household. Now, if you——"

“Not another word, I will turn detective, and beard these lions in their own den,” was Annie’s exclamation.

“But how about references? Besides, they would know your name, perhaps,” objected Mr. Cory.

“You dear innocent,” remarked Miss Margaret, with the calmness born of superior wisdom; “when one takes up detective work, one has not to be too squeamish about ways and means, and you may trust us to devise some scheme to circumvent these villains. If Annie can’t get the post, I’ll try to make myself look more youthful, and make a bid for the appointment.”

Somehow, any lurking objections which Mr. Cory might have had were all overcome, and when Hilton went home that night, many arrangements for the future had been made. Subject to Mrs. Riddell’s own consent, it had been decided that it would be best for her to live with Miss Margaret for a while. Mr. Cory, very much to his own surprise, found himself enrolled as an amateur detective, liable to be called upon for active service at any time. Annie, instead of moping at home and giving way to melancholy, was bent upon yielding efficient help as a lady detective, and Hilton meant to be guided by the exigencies of the moment.

The avowed end and aim of all these good people was to bring the man who was responsible for Harley Riddell’s imprisonment to justice.

The progress of our story will show how they went about their new employment, and what were the results of their endeavours as amateur detectives.

CHAPTER III.

“MISS ANNIE CORY IS CONFIDENTIAL.”

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A few days after the events narrated in the last chapter, Miss Margaret Cory was reading aloud from some manuscript which she had just received by post. Her audience was small, being composed of two individuals with whom we are already acquainted—to wit, her brother, Mr. Cory, and Hilton Riddell, who both listened to her with curious interest.

You and I too, dear readers, will take the liberty of hearing what Miss Cory had to say.

“My darling Auntie,” she read, “I am now fairly installed here, but, would you believe it? there are signs already that it will be unnecessary for me to remain here very long. I shall, however, do my utmost to retard my exit until I have learned all I want to know. Short as my time here has been, it has already revealed much to me. Perhaps I had better begin my story at the beginning, and then you can form your own opinion. I must also be as lucid and explicit as possible, since upon what I learn and describe Hilton Riddell’s actions in the near future are dependent.

“On presenting myself here yesterday morning, according to arrangement, I was admitted by a middle-aged servant, who regarded me with what I considered pure effrontery.

“‘I wish to see Mrs. Stavanger,’ I said.

“‘Very likely,’ was the woman’s answer. ‘But you may prepare yourself for a long wait first.’

“‘Why? Is she not in?’

“‘Oh yes, she’s in. But she thinks people wouldn’t believe her to be a swell if she didn’t keep folks waiting a good bit.’

“‘Perhaps you will be good enough to tell her that I am here.’

“‘I suppose you are the new governess?’

“‘I am.’

“‘Oh well, you won’t be here long, if you’ve no more patience than the others. But come inside; you can wait in the hall.’

“Saying this, the extraordinary specimen of a servant permitted me to cross the threshold. The cabman had become impatient, and began to bring my bit of luggage in at once. It was quite ten minutes before the woman, who, I learned afterwards, is called Wear, made her reappearance, and requested me to follow her to the drawing-room. By this time the cabman had been paid and had gone away.

“Still smarting under the peculiar treatment of the servant, it was with some trepidation that I approached the mistress. She was sitting in an easy chair, and did not rise to greet me, as I naturally expected she would do. From this trifling circumstance I instantly deduced the opinion that Mrs. Stavanger was totally devoid of those finer instincts which go to make up the being described by the term ‘lady.’ Subsequent observations have confirmed me in this opinion. Personal beauty of a strong, showy type, must at one time have been Mrs. Stavanger’s to a great degree. She would be handsome yet, but for the expression of mingled ill-temper