

The COAST of CHANCE

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CHAMBERLAIN
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SYNOPSIS.

At a private view of the Chatworth personal estate, to be sold at auction, the Chatworth ring mysteriously disappears. Harry Cressy, who was present, describes the ring to his fiancée, Flora Gilbey, and her chaperon, Mrs. Clara Britton, as being like a heathen god, with a beautiful sapphire set in the head. Flora discovers an unfamiliar mood in Harry, especially when the ring is discussed. She attends "ladies' night" at the club and meets Mr. Kerr, an Englishman. It comes out that the missing ring has been known as the Crew idol.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

Flora had a bewildered feeling that this judicial summing up of facts wasn't the sort of thing the evening had led up to. She couldn't see, if this was what it amounted to, why Harry had changed his mind about telling them at the dinner table. She could not even understand where this belonged in the march of events in their story, but Clara took it up, clipped it out, and fitted it into its place.

"Then there will be pressure—enormous pressure, brought to bear to recover it?"

"Oh-oh!" Buller drew out the syllable with uncanny relish. "They'll rip the town inside out. They'll do worse. There'll be a string of detectives across the country—yes, and at intervals to China—so tight you couldn't step from Kalamazoo to Oshkosh without running into one. The thing is too big to be covered. The chap who took it will play a lone game; and to do that—Lord knows there aren't many who could—to do that he'd have to be a—"

"Farrell Wand?" Flora flung it out as a challenge among these prosaic people; but the effect of it was even sharper than she had expected. She fancied she saw them all start; that Harry squared himself, that Kerr met it as if he swallowed it with almost a facial grimace; that Judge Buller blinked it hard in the face—the most bothered of the lot. He came at it first in words.

"Farrell Wand?" "He felt it over, as if, like a doubtful coin, it might have rung false. "Now, what did I know of Farrell Wand?"

"Farrell Wand?" Kerr took it up rapidly. "Why, he was the great Johnnie who went through the Scotland Yard men at Perth in '94, and got off. Don't you remember? He took a great assortment of things under the most peculiar circumstances—took the Tilton emeralds off Lady Tilton's neck at St. James'."

"Why, Harry, you—" Flora began. "You told us that," was what she had meant to say, but Harry stopped her. Stopped her just with a look, with a nod; but it was as if he had shaken his head at her. His tawny lashes, half dropped over watching eyes, gave him more than the look of a great, still cat; a domestic, good-humored cat, but in sight of legitimate prey. Her eyes went back to Kerr with a sense of bewilderment. His voice was still going on, expansively, brilliantly, juggling his subject.

"He knew them all, the big-wigs up in Parliament, the big-wigs on 'change, the little duchesses in Mayfair, and they all liked him, asked him, dined him, and—great Scott, they paid! Paid in hereditary jewels, or the shock of their decency when the thing came out—but, poor devil, so did he!"

And through it all Buller gloomed unsmiling, with out-thrust underlip.

"No, no," he said slowly, "that's not my connection with Farrell Wand. What happened afterward. What did they do with him?"

Kerr was silent, and Flora thought his face seemed suddenly at its sharpest.

It was Clara who answered with another question. "Didn't he get to the colonies? Didn't he die there?"

Judge Buller caught it with a snap of his fingers. "Got it!" he triumphed, and the two men turned square upon him. "They ran him to earth in Australia. That was the year I was there—'96. I got a snapshot of him at the time."

It was now the whole table that turned on him, and Flora felt, with that unanimous movement, something crucial, the something that she had been waiting for; and yet she could in no way connect it with what had happened, nor understand why Clara, why Harry, why Kerr above all should be so alert. For more than all he looked expectant, poised, and ready for whatever was coming.

"What sort of a chap?" he mused and fixed the judge a moment with the same stare that Flora remembered to have first confronted her.

"What sort? Sort of a criminal," the judge smiled. "They all look alike."

the name was a queer one. It stuck in my mind."

"But then," Clara insisted, "what became of him?"

"Oh, gave them the slip," the judge chuckled. "He always did. Reported to have changed ships in mid-ocean. Ha! is that another bottle?"

Harry stretched his hand for it, but it stayed suspended—and, for an instant, it seemed as if the whole table waited expectant. Had Buller's camera caught the clear face of Farrell Wand, or only a dim figure? Flora wondered if that was the question Harry wanted to ask. He wanted—and yet he hesitated, as if he did not quite dare touch it. He laughed and filled the glasses. He had dropped his question, and there was no one at the table who seemed ready to put another.

And yet there were questions there, in all the eyes, but some impassable barrier seemed to have come between these eager people, and what, for incalculable reasons, they so much wanted to know. It was not the general indifference with which Buller had dropped the subject for the approaching bottle. It seemed rather their own timidity that withheld them from touching this subject which at every turn produced upon some one of the eager three some fresh startling effect the others could not understand. They were restless; Clara notably, even under her calm.

Flora knew she was not giving up the quest of Farrell Wand, but only setting it aside with her unflinching thrift, which saved everything. But why, in this case? And Harry, who had been so merry with the mystery at dinner—why had he suddenly tried to suppress her, to want to ignore the whole business; why had he hesitated over his question, and finally let it fall? And why, above all, was Kerr so brilliantly talking to Ella, in the same way he had begun at Flora herself? Talking at Ella as if he hardly saw her, but like some magician flinging out a brilliant train of pyrotechnics to hypnotize the senses, before he proceeds with his trick. And the way Ella was looking at him—her bewildered alacrity, the way she struggled with that was being so rapidly shot at her—appeared to Flora the prototype of her own struggle to understand what reality these appearances around her could possibly shadow.

Often enough in the crowds she moved among she had felt herself lonely and not wondered at it. But now and here, sitting among her close, intimate circle, her friends and her lover, it seemed like a horrible obsession—yet it was true. As clear as if it had been shown her in a revelation she saw herself absolutely alone.

CHAPTER III.

Encounters on Parade.

Flora, before the mirror, gayly stabbing in her long hat-pins, confessed to herself that last night had been queer, as queer as queer could be; but this morning, luckily, was real again. Her fancy last night had—yes, she was afraid it really had—run away with her. And she turned and held the hand-mirror high, to be sure of the line of her tilted hat, gave a touch to the turn of her wide, close belt, a flirt to the frills of her bodice.

The wind was lightly ruffling and puffing out the muslin curtains of the windows, and from the garden below came the long silvery clash of eucalyptus leaves. She leaned on the high window-ledge to look downward over red roofs, over terraced green, over steep streets running abruptly to the broken blue of the bay. She tried to fancy how Kerr would look in this morning sun. He seemed to belong only beneath the high artificial lights, in the thicker atmosphere of evening. Would he return again, with renewed potency, with the same singular, almost sinister charm, as a wizard who works his will only by moonlight? When she should see him again, what, she wondered, would be his extraordinary mood?

It was Clara, standing at the foot of the stairs, who belonged to the morning, so brisk, so fresh, so practical she appeared. She held a book in her hand. The door, open for her immediate departure, showed, beyond the descent of marble steps, the landau glistening black against white pavements. It was unusual for this formal vehicle to put in an appearance so early.

"I am going to drive over to the Purdies," Clara explained. "I have an errand there."

Flora smiled at the thought of how many persons would be having errands to the Purdies' now. It was refreshing to catch Clara in this weakness. She felt a throb of it herself when she recalled the breathless moment at the supper table last evening. "Oh, that will be a heavenly drive," she said. "Please ask me to go with you. My errand can wait."

"Why, certainly. I should like to have you," said Clara. But if she had returned a flat "no," Flora would not have had a dryer sense of unwelcome. Still, she had gone too far to retreat.

Mischievous reflections of the doctrine the Englishman had started her with the night before flickered in her mind as they drove from the door. Was this part of "the big red game," not being accommodating, nor so very polite? The streets were still wet with early fog, and, turning in at the Presidio gate, the cypresses dripped



"Harry, I Believe You Are Out Here About the Crew Idol, Too."

dankly on their heads, and hung out cobwebs beaded with dew. She was sure, even under their drippings, that the "damnable dust" was alive.

Down the broad slopes that were swept by the drive all was green to the water's edge. The long line of barracks, the officers' quarters, the great parade-ground, set in the flat land between hills and bay, looked like a child's toy, pretty and little. They heard the note of a bugle, thin and silver clear, and they could see the tiny figures mustering; but in her preoccupation it did not occur to Flora that they were arriving just in time for parade. But when the carriage had crossed the viaduct, and swung them past the acacias, and around the last white curve into the white dust of the parade-ground, Clara turned, as if with a fresh idea.

"Wouldn't you like to stop and watch it?"

"Why, yes," Flora assented. The brilliance of light and color, the precision of movement, the sound of the brasses under the open sky were an intermezzo in harmony with her spirited mood.

The carriage stopped under the scanty shadow of trees that bordered the walk to the officers' quarters. Clara, book in hand, alertly rose.

"I'll just run up to the Purdies' and leave this," she said.

"Then she really did want to be rid of me," Flora mused, as she watched the brisk back moving away; "and how beautifully she has done it!" Her eyes followed Clara's little figure retreating up the neat and narrow board walk, to where it disappeared in overarching depths of eucalyptus trees. Further on, beyond the trees, two figures, smaller than Clara's in their greater distance, were coming down. Flora almost grinned as she recognized the large linen umbrella that Mrs. Purdie invariably carried when abroad in the reservation, and presently the trim and bounding figure of Mrs. Purdie herself, under it. The Purdies were coming down to parade—at least Mrs. Purdie was. But the tall figure beside her—that was not the major. She took up her lorgnon—it was no—it could not be—yet surely it was Harry! Lazy Harry, up and out, and squiring Mrs. Purdie to the review at half-past ten in the morning! "Are we all mad?" Flora thought.

The three little figures, the one going up, the two coming down, touched opposite fringes of the grove—disappeared within it. On which side would they come out together? Flora wondered. They emerged on her side with Harry a little in advance. He came swingingly down the walk straight toward her, and across the road to the carriage, his hat lifted, his hand out.

"Well, Flora," he said, "this is luck!"

"What in the world has got you out so early?" she rallied him.

"Come out to see Purdie on business, and here you are all ready to drive me back."

"That's your reward."

He brushed his handkerchief over his damp forehead. "Well, there's one coming to me, for I haven't found Purdie."

chief. "Harry, I believe you're out here about the Crew Idol, too!"

He shook his head at her, smiling. "I wouldn't talk too much about that, Flora. It flicks poor Purdie on the raw every time that—" His sentence trailed off into something else, for Mrs. Purdie and Clara had come up.

The book had changed hands, together, evidently, with several explanations, and Mrs. Purdie, with her foot on the carriage step, was ready to make one of these over again.

"The major'll be so sorry. He's gone in town. It's so unusual for him to get off at this hour, but he said he had to catch a man. As Mrs. Britton and I were saying, he's likely to be very busy until this dreadful affair is straightened out. If you can only wait a little longer, Mr. Cressy," she went on, "I am expecting him every moment."

"Oh, it's of no importance," said Harry, but he looked at his watch with a fold between his brows, and then at the car that was coming in.

"Well, at least, you'll have time to see the parade," said Mrs. Purdie. "I always think it's a pretty sight, though most of the women get tired of it."

Clara's face showed that she belonged to the latter class; but Flora, too keenly attuned to sounds and sights not to be swayed by outward circumstances, was content for the time to watch, in the cloud of dust, the wheeling platoons and rhythmic columns.

Yet through all—even when she was not looking at him—she was aware of Harry's restlessness, of his impatience; and as the last company swung backward, and the cloud began to settle over the empty field, he snapped his watchcase smartly, and remarked, "Still no major."

"Why, there he is now!" Mrs. Purdie screamed, pointing across the parade ground.

Flora looked. Half-way down on the adjoining side of the parallelogram, back toward her, the redoubtable Kerr was standing. She recognized him on the instant, as if he were the most familiar figure in her life. Yet she was more surprised to see him here than she had been to see Harry. She felt inclined to rub her eyes. It took a moment for her to realize that his companion was indeed Maj. Purdie.

The major had recognized his wife's signaling umbrella. Now he turned toward it, but Kerr, with a quick motion of hand toward hat, turned in the opposite direction. In her mind Flora was with the major who ran after him. The two men stood for a little, expostulating. Then both walked toward the landau and the linen umbrella.

The carriage group waited, watching with flagging conversation, which finally fell into silence. But the two approaching strolled easily and talked. Even in cold daylight Kerr still gave Flora the impression that the open was not big enough to hold him, but she saw a difference in his mood, a graver eye, a colder mouth, and when he finally greeted them, a manner that was brusque. It showed uncivil beside the major's urbanity.

The major was glad, very glad, to see them all. He was evidently also a little hurried. He seemed to know they had all met Kerr before. Had it

been at the moment of his attempted departure that Kerr had told him, Flora wondered? And had he given them as his excuse for going away? It hurt her; though why should she be hurt because a stranger had not wanted to cross the parade-ground to shake hands with her? He was less interested in her than he was in Harry, at whom he had looked keenly.

But Harry's nervousness had left him, now that Purdie was within his reach. He returned the glance indifferently. He stood close to the major—his hand on his shoulder. The major, with his bland blue eyes twinkling from Clara to Flora, seemed the only man ready to devote himself to the service of the ladies.

"And what's the news from the front?" said Clara gayly. Kerr gave her a rapid glance; but the major blinked as if the allusion had got by him.

"I mean the mystery—the Chatworth ring," she explained.

"No news whatever, my dear Mrs. Britton."

She smiled. "We're all rather interested in the mystery. Flora has made a dozen romances about it."

"Oh, yes, yes," said the major indulgently. "It will do for young ladies to make romances about. It'll be a two days' wonder, and then you'll suddenly find out it's something very tame indeed."

"Why, have they fixed the suspicion?" said Clara.

There was a restless movement from Kerr.

"No, no, nothing of that sort," said the major quickly.

Harry passed his hand through his arm. "May I see you for five minutes, major?"

The excellent major looked harassed.

"Suppose we all step up to the house," he suggested. "Why, you're not going, man?" he objected, for Kerr had fallen back a step, and, with lifted hat and balanced cane, was signaling his farewells.

"Do let us go up to the house," said Clara. "And Mrs. Purdie, won't you drive up with me? Flora wants to walk."

Flora stood up. She had a confused impression that she had expressed no such desire, and that there was room for three in the landau; but the mental shove that Clara had administered gave her an impetus that carried her out of the carriage before she realized what she was about.

Harry was already moving off up the board walk with the major. The carriage was turning. Kerr looked at the backs of the two women being driven away, and then at Flora. "Very good," he said, raising her parasol; "you are the deposed heir, and I am your faithful servant."

"But indeed I do want to walk," she protested, a little shy at the way he read her case.

"But you didn't think of it until she gave you the suggestion, eh?" he quizzed.

Her cheeks were hot behind her thin veil. They were strolling slowly up the board walk, and for a moment she could not look at him. She could only listen to the flutter of the fringes of the parasol carried above her head. She felt herself small and stupid. She could not understand what he could see in her to come back to. Then she gave a side glance at him. She saw an unsmiling profile. The lines in his face were indeed extraordinary, but none was hard. She liked that wonderful mobility that had survived the batterings of experience.

As if he were conscious of her eyes, he looked down and smiled; but vaguely. He did not speak; and she was aware that it was at her appearance he had smiled, as if that only reached him through his preoccupation and pleased him.

But what was he thinking about so seriously between those smiling glances? Not her problem, she was sure.

They had almost reached the major's gate, and it was now or never to find out what he thought of her. She looked up at him suddenly, with inquiring eyes.

"Do you think I am weak?" she demanded.

The lines of his face broke up into laughter. "No," he said, "I think you are mislabeled."

She knitted her brows in perplexity, but his hand was on the white picket gate, and she had to walk through it ahead of him as he set it open for her.

Of their party only the two women were in sight waiting on the diminutive veranda. Clara had a mild domestic appearance, rocking there behind the potted geraniums. All the windows were open into the little shell of a house. Trunks still stood in the hall, though the Purdies had been quartered at the Presidio for nine months.

In this easy atmosphere, how was it that the thread of restraint ran so sharply defined? Clara and Mrs. Purdie were matching crews; and, sitting on the top step Flora instructed Kerr as to the composition of the tropical glacier they were drinking. Ten girls had probably as instructed him before, but it would do to fill up the gap.

Like a stone plumped into a pool the major and Harry re-entered this stagnation. They were brisk and buoyant. Harry, especially, had the air of a man who sees stimulating business before him. Immediately all talked at once.



"Now that we've got you here, you must all stay to luncheon," Mrs. Purdie determined.

It looked as if they were about to accept her invitation unanimously, but Harry demurred. He had to be at Montgomery street and Jackson by one o'clock. "I hoped," he added, glancing at Flora, "that some one was to drive me—part of the way, at least."

Flora, with an unruly sense of disappointment, yet opened her lips for the courteous answer. But Clara was quicker. She rose.

"Yes," she said, "I'll drive you back with pleasure."

Harry's glimmer of annoyance was comic.

"I have to be at the house for luncheon," Clara explained to her hostess as she buttoned her glove, "but there is no reason why Flora shouldn't stay."

"Oh, I should love to," Flora murmured, not knowing whether she was more embarrassed or pleased at this high-handed dispensation which placed her where she wanted to be.

But the way Clara had leaped at her opportunity! Flora looked curiously at Harry.

He seemed uneasy at being pounced upon, but that might be merely because he was balked of a tete-a-tete with herself. For while Clara went on to the gate with their hostess he lingered a moment with Flora.

"May I see you to-night?"

"All you have to do is to come."

She gave him an oblique, upward glance, and had a pleasant sense of power in seeing his face relax and smile. She had a dance for that evening; but she thrust it aside without regret. For suppose Harry should have something to tell her about the Chatworth ring? She wondered if Clara would get it out of him first on the way home.

The four left on the veranda watched the two driving away with a sudden clearing of the social atmosphere. In vain Flora told herself it was only the relief she always felt in getting free of Clara. For in the return of the major's elderly blandishments, in Kerr's kindlier mood, as well as in her own lightened spirits, she had the proofs that, with them all, some tension had relaxed. It seemed to her as if those two, departing, were bearing away between them the very mystery of the Crew idol.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

MUMMY THAT OF ROYAL COOK

Importation That Has Interested Egyptologists Evidently Was Wrongly Labeled.

It develops that the mummy, the importation of which has aroused public interest, is not that of Rameses II., but of his cook.

The discovery need not occasion disappointment. Cook or conqueror, they are now alike, and, indeed, the desiccated remains of the chef of the monarch who from all accounts was the Louis XIV. of Egypt are in many respects a more valuable antiquarian possession than the mummified body of Pharaoh. Antiquity has bequeathed us a surplus of memorials of kings, but only too few of cooks. We could well spare a bust of Caesar or exchange any amount of dry-as-dust chronology for an effigy of Lucullus' cook or of that Vatel of his day for whose supplies Apicius found \$400,000 too little.

The interest of the modern world in history is concerned less with the great conquerors than with the lesser lights, the artists and craftsmen who planned aqueducts and built cathedrals, even those who were charged with the preparation of Caesar's cutlets. The world is tired of kings, but what would it not give for a cuneiform tile containing the menu of Belshazzar's feast? Meantime a cook of the Rameses dynasty is something.

First Newspaper Had Short Life.

The first newspaper ever published in America never got beyond its first issue. It was called Public Occurrences and appeared in Boston, September 25, 1639. It contained a promise to publish in its next issue the names of all the Bards in Boston, and the authorities, taking cognizance of the threat, wisely forbade the publication. The Boston News Letter was the first journal to be regularly published on this continent. It was started in 1704 and was followed by the American Weekly Mercury, in Philadelphia, in 1719. English journalism is only 35 years older than American, the London Gazette, an official publication, having been founded in 1665.

Bath Street, Bath, in Danger.

Some time ago great indignation was expressed by antiquarians and artists throughout the country at the threatened destruction of one side of Bath street, Bath, with its Georgian colonnade, and it was hoped that the threatened danger had been averted, says the London Standard. On Saturday morning, however, a firm of local contractors, acting on an order from the owners of the property, began the work of demolition.