

"No, no; not that! Shish! be quiet! I'm sure I heard Dr. Vereker's voice——"

"How could you? He's home by now."

"Do be quiet, child!" She continues listening.

"Why not look round the corner and see if it isn't him?"

"Well, I was going to; only you and the sparrows make such a chattering. . . . There, I knew it would be that! Why doesn't he bring him back here, at once?" For at the end of the short road are Dr. Vereker and Fenwick, the latter with his hand on the top of a post, as though resting. They must have been there some minutes.

"Fancy their having got no further than the fire-alarm!" says Sally, who takes account of her surroundings.

"Of course, I ought never to have let him go." Thus her mother, with decision in her voice. "Come on, child!"

She seems greatly relieved at the matter having settled itself—so Sally thinks, at least.

"We got as far as this," Dr. Vereker says—rather meaninglessly, if you come to think of it. It is so very obvious.

"And now," says Mrs. Nightingale, "how is he to be got back again? That's the question!" She seems not to have the smallest doubt about the question, but much about the answer. It is answered, however, with the assistance of the previous police-constable, who reappears like a ghost. And Mr. Fenwick is back again within the little white villa, much embarrassed at the trouble he is giving, but unable to indicate any other course. Clearly, it would never do to accept the only one he can suggest—that he should be left to himself, leaning on the fire-alarm, till the full use of his limbs should come back to him.

Mrs. Nightingale, who is the person principally involved, seems quite content with the arrangement. The doctor, in his own mind, is rather puzzled at her ready acquiescence; but, then, the only suggestion he could make would be that he should do precisely the same good office himself to this victim of an electric current of a good deal too many volts—too many for private consumption—or cab him off to the police-station or the work-house. For Mr. Fenwick continues quite unable to give any account of his past or his belongings, and can only look forward to recollecting himself, as it were, to-morrow morning.

## CHAPTER IV

HOW THE STRANGER STOPPED ON AT KRAKATOA VILLA. OF THE FREAKS OF AN EXTINGUISHED MEMORY. OF HOW THE STRANGER GOT A GOOD APPOINTMENT, BUT NONE COULD SAY WHO HE WAS, NOR WHENCE

WE must suppose that the personal impression produced by the man so strangely thrown on the hands of Mrs. Nightingale and her daughter was a pleasant one. For had the reverse been the case, the resources of civilisation for disposing of him elsewhere had not been exhausted when the decision was come to that he should remain where he was; till next morning, at any rate. The lady of the house—of course the principal factor in the solution of the problem—appeared, as we have seen, to have made up her mind on the subject. And probably her daughter had been enough influenced by the stranger's manner and appearance, even in the short period of the interview we have just described, to get rid of a feeling she had of self-reproach for her own rashness. We don't understand girls, but we ask this question of those who do: Is it possible that Miss Sally was impressed by the splendid arm with the name tattooed on it—an arm in which every muscle told as in a Greek statue, without infringing on its roundness—the arm of Theseus or Ilissus? Or was it the tone of his voice—a musical one enough? Or merely his generally handsome face and courteous manner?

He remained that night at the house, but next day still remembered nothing. He wished to go on his way—destination not known; but *somewhere*—and would have done so had it not been for Mrs. Nightingale, whose opposition to his going was, thought Dr. Vereker, almost more decisive than the case called for. So he remained on, that day and the next, slowly regaining the use of his right hand. But his memory continued a blank; and though he was not unable to converse about passing events, he could not fix his attention, or only with a great effort. What was very annoying to Sally was that he was absolutely unable to

account for his remark about her name and her mother's in the railway-carriage. He could not even remember making this. He could recall no reason why he should have made it, from any of the few things that came back to his mind now—hazily, like ghosts. Was he speaking the truth? Why not? Mrs. Nightingale asked. Why not forget that as readily as anything else?

His distress at this inability to remember, to account for himself, to himself or any one else, was almost painful to witness. The only consolatory circumstance was that his use and knowledge of words remained intact; it was his memory of actual incidents and people in the past that was in fault. Definite effort to follow slight clues remaining in his mind ended in failure, or only served to show that their origin was traceable to literary fiction. But his language-faculty seemed perfectly in order. It came out that he spoke French fluently, and a little Spanish, but he was just as ready with German. It seemed as if he had been recently among French people, if one could judge from such things as his calling his hostess "Madame" when he recovered. These facts came to light in the course of next day, the second of his stay in the house. The favourable impression he had produced on Miss Sally did not diminish, and it seemed much easier and more natural to acquiesce in his remaining than to cast about for a new whereabouts to transfer him to. So his departure was deferred—for a day, at least, or perhaps until the room he occupied should be wanted for other purposes. The postponements on the days that followed were a natural sequence so long as there remained any doubt of his ability to shift for himself.

But in about a month's time the effects of the nervous shock had nearly disappeared, and he had almost recovered the use of his hand—could, in fact, write easily. Besides, as long as he remained, it would be impossible for an old friend of Mrs. Nightingale's, who frequently stayed the night, when he came on an evening visit, to follow a custom which was in the winter almost invariable. In the summer it was less important; and as soon as this friend, an old military gentleman spoken of as "the Major," could be got to understand exactly what had taken place, he readily gave up his quarters at Krakatoa Villa, and returned to his own, at the top of a house in Ball Street, Mayfair.

Nevertheless, the inevitable time came for looking Fenwick's future in the face. It was difficult, as he was unable to contribute a solution of the question, except by his readiness to go out and find work for himself, promising not to come back till he found it.

"You'll see I shall come back to dinner," said he. "I shan't make you late."

Sally asked him what sort of work he should look for.

"I have a sort of inner conviction," he replied, "that I could do almost anything I turned my hand to. Probably it is only a diseased confidence bred of what you might call my artificial inexperience. Every sharp young man's *bona fide* inexperience lands him in that delusion."

"But you must have *some* kind of preference for *something*, however much you forget."

"If I were to choose, I think I should like horse-training. . . . Oh no, of course I can't recall the training of any specific horse. But I know I know all about it, for all that. I can feel the knowledge of it itching in my finger-ends. Yes—I could train horses. Fruit-farming would require capital."

"Who said anything about fruit-farming?"

Fenwick laughed aloud. It was a great big laugh, that made Rosalind, who was giving directions in the kitchen, just across the passage, call out to know what they were laughing at.

"I'll be hanged if I know," said he, "*why* I said fruit-farming—I must have had something to do with it. It's all very odd."

"But the horses—the horses," said Sally, who did not want him to wander from the point. "How should you go about it? Should you walk into Tattersall's without a character, and ask for a place?"

"Not a bit of it! I should saunter into 'Tat's' like a swell, and ask them if they couldn't find me a raw colt to try my hand on for a wager. Say I had laid a hundred I would quiet down the most vicious quadruped they could find in an hour."

"But that would be fibs."

"Oh no! I could do it. But I don't know why I know . . ."

"I didn't mean that. I meant you wouldn't have laid the wager."

"Yes, I should. I lay it you now! Come, Miss Sally!—a hundred pounds to a brass farthing I knock all the vice out of the worst beast they can find in an hour. I shouldn't say the wager had been accepted, you know."

"Well, anyhow, I shan't accept it. You haven't got a hundred pounds to pay with. To be sure, I haven't got a brass farthing that I know of. It's as broad as it is long."

"Yes, it's that," he replied musingly—"as broad as it is long. I *haven't* got a hundred pounds, that I know of." He repeated this twice, becoming very absent and thoughtful.

Sally felt apologetic for reminding him of his position, and immediately said so. She was evidently a girl quite incapable of any reserves or concealments. But she had mistaken his meaning.

"No, no, dear Miss Sally," said he. "Not that—not that at all! I spoke like that because it all seemed so strange to me. Do you know?—of all the things I can't recollect, the one I can't recollect *most*—can you understand?—is ever being in want of money. I *must* have had plenty. I am sure of it."

"I dare say you had. You'll recollect it all presently, and what a lark that will be!" Sally's ingenious optimism made matters very pleasant. She did not like to press the conversation on these lines, lest Mr. Fenwick should refer to a loan she knew her mother had made him; indeed, had it not been for this the poor man would have been hard put to it for clothes and other necessaries. All such little matters, which hardly concern the story, had been landed on a comfortable footing at the date of this conversation.

But Mr. Fenwick did not lend himself to the agreeable anticipation of Sally's "lark." There was a pained distraction on his handsome face as he gave his head a great shake, tossing about the mass of brown hair, which was still something of a lion's mane, in spite of the recent ministrations of a hairdresser. He walked to the window-bay that looked out on the little garden, shaking and rubbing his head, and then came back to where he had been sitting—always as one wrestling with some painful half-memory he could not trace. Then he spoke again.

"Whether the sort of flash that comes in my mind of writing my name in a cheque-book is really a recollection of doing so, or

merely the knowledge that I *must* have done so, I cannot tell. But it is disagreeable—thoroughly disagreeable—and *strange* to the last degree. I cannot tell you how—how torturing it is, always to be compelled to stop on the threshold of an uncompleted recollection."

"I have the idea, though, quite!" said Sally. "But of course one never remembers signing one's name, any particular time. One does it mechanically. So I don't wonder."

"Yes! But the nasty part of the flash is that I always know that it is not *my* name. Last time it came—just now this minute—it was a name like Harrington or Carrington. Oh dear!" He shook and rubbed his head again, with the old action.

"Perhaps your name isn't Fenwick, but Harrington or Carrington?"

"No! That cock won't fight. In a flash, I know it's not my *own* name as I write it."

"Oh, but I see!" Sally is triumphant. "You signed for a firm you belonged to, of course. People *do* sign for firms, don't they?" added she, with misgivings about her own business capacity. But Mr. Fenwick did not accept this solution, and continued silent and depressed.

The foregoing is one of many similar conversations between Fenwick and Sally, or her mother, or all three, during the term of his stay at Krakatoa Villa. They were less encouraged by the older lady, who counselled Fenwick to accept his oblivion passively, and await the natural return of his mental powers. They would all come in time, she said; and young Dr. Vereker, though his studious and responsible face grew still more studious and responsible as time went on, and the mind of this case continued a blank, still encouraged passivity, and spoke confidently—whatever he thought—of an early and complete recovery.

When, in Fenwick's absence, Sally reported to Dr. Vereker and her mother the scheme for applying to "Tat's" for a wild horse to break in, the latter opposed and denounced it so strongly, on the ground of the danger of the experiment, that both Sally and the doctor promised to support her if Fenwick should broach the idea again. But when he did so, it was so clear that the dis-favour Mrs. Nightingale showed for such a risky business would be sufficient to deter him from trying it that neither thought it

necessary to say a word in her support; and the conversation went off into a discussion of how it came about that Fenwick should remember Tattersall's. But, said he, he did not remember Tattersall's even now. And yet hearing the name, he had automatically called it "Tat's." Many other instances showed that his power of imagery, in relation to the past, was paralysed, while his language-faculty remained intact, just as many fluent speakers and writers spell badly. Only it was an extreme case.

A fortunate occurrence that happened at this time gave its quietus to the unpopular horse-breaking speculation. It happened that, as Mrs. Nightingale was shopping at a big "universal providing" stores not far away, one of the clerks had some difficulty in interpreting a French phrase in a letter just received from abroad. No one near him looked more likely to help than Mrs. Nightingale, but she could do nothing when applied to; although, she said, she had been taught French in her youth. But she felt certain Mr. Fenwick could be of use—at her house. French idiom was evidently unfamiliar in the neighbourhood, for the young gentleman from the office jumped at the opportunity. He went away with Mrs. Nightingale's card, inscribed with a message, and came back before she had done shopping (not that that means such a very short time), not only with an interpretation, but with an exhaustive draft of an answer in French, which she saw to be both skilful and scholarly. It was so much so that a fortnight later an inquiry came to know if Mr. Fenwick's services would be available for a firm in the City, which had applied to be universally provided with a man having exactly his attainments and no others. In less than a month he was installed in a responsible position as their foreign correspondent and in receipt of a very respectable salary. The rapidity of phrasing in this movement was abnormal—*prestissimo*, in fact, if we indulge our musical vocabulary. But the instrumentation would have seemed less surprising to Sally had she known the lengths her mother had gone in the proffer of a substantial guarantee for Fenwick's personal honesty. This seeming rashness did not transpire at the time; had it done so, it might have appeared unintelligible—to Sally, at any rate. She would not have been surprised at herself for backing the

interests of a man nearly electrocuted over her half-crown, but why should her mother endorse her *protégé* so enthusiastically?

It is perhaps hardly necessary for us to dwell on the unsuccessful attempts that were made to recover touch with other actors on the stage of Fenwick's vanished past. Advertisement—variously worded—in the second column of the "Times," three times a week for a month, produced no effect. Miss Sally frequently referred with satisfaction to the case of John Williams, reported among the Psychological Researches of the past years, in which a man who vanished in England was found years after carrying on a goods-store in Chicago under another name, with a new wife and family, having utterly forgotten the first half of his life and all his belongings. Her mother seemed only languidly interested in this illustration, and left the active discussion of the subject chiefly to Sally, who speculated endlessly on the whole of the story; without, however, throwing any fresh light on it—unless indeed, the Chicago man could be considered one. And the question naturally arose, as long as his case continued to hold out hopes of a sudden return of memory, and until we were certain his condition was chronic, why go to expense and court publicity? By the time he was safely installed in his situation at the wine-merchant's, the idea of a police-inquiry, application to the magistrates, and so forth, had become distasteful to all concerned, and to none more so than Fenwick himself.

When Dr. Vereker, acting on his own account, and unknown to Mrs. Nightingale and Fenwick, made confidential reference to Scotland Yard, that Yard smiled cynically over the Chicago storekeeper, and expressed the opinion that probably Fenwick's game was a similar game, and that things of this sort were usually some game. The doctor observed that he knew without being told that nine such cases out of ten had human rascality at the bottom of them, but that he had consulted that Yard in the belief that this might be a tenth case. The Yard said very proper, and it would do its best, and no doubt did, but nothing was elucidated.

It is just possible that had Mr. Fenwick communicated *every* clue he found, down to the smallest trifle, Dr. Vereker might have been able to get at something through the Criminal In-

vestigation Department. But it wasn't fair to Sherlock Holmes to keep anything back. Fenwick, knowing nothing of Vereker's inquiry, did so; for he had decided to say nothing about a certain pawn-ticket that was in the pocket of an otherwise empty purse or pocket-book, evidently just bought. He would, however, investigate it himself, and did so.

It was quite three weeks, though, before he felt safe to go about alone to any place distant from the house, more especially when he did not know what the expedition would lead to. When at last he got to the pawnbroker's, he found that that gentleman at the counter did not recognise him, or said he did not. Fenwick, of course, could not ask the question: "Did I pawn this watch?" It would have seemed lunacy. But he framed a question that answered as well, to his thinking.

"Would you very kindly tell me," he asked, dropping his voice, "whether the person that pawned this watch was at all like me—like a brother of mine, for instance?" Perhaps he was not a good hand at pretences, and the pawnbroker outclassed him easily.

"No, sir," replied he, without looking to see; "that I most certainly can *not* tell you." Fenwick was not convinced that this was true, but had to admit to himself that it might be. This man's life was one long record of an infinity of short loans, and its problem was the advancing of the smallest conceivable sums on the largest obtainable security. Why *should* he recollect one drop in the ocean of needy applicants? The only answer Fenwick could give to this was based on his belief that he looked quite unlike the other customers. More knowledge would have shown him that there was not one of those customers, scarcely, but had a like belief. It is the common form of human thought among those who seek to have pawns broked. They are a class made up entirely of exceptions.

Fenwick came away from the shop with the watch that *must have been* his. That was how he thought of it. As soon as he wore it again, it became *his* watch, naturally. But he could remember nothing about it. And its recovery from the pawnbroker's he could not remember leaving it at became an absurd dream. Perhaps in Sherlock Holmes's hands it would have provided a valuable clue. Fenwick said nothing further about it;

put it in a drawer until all inquiries about him had died into the past.

Another little thing that might have helped was the cabman's number written on his wristband. But here Fate threw investigation off her guard. The ciphers were, as it chanced, 3,600; and an unfortunate shrewdness of Scotland Yard, when Dr. Vereker communicated this clue, spotted the date in it—the third day of the sixth month of 1900. So no one dreamed of the cabby, who could at least have shown where the hat was lost that might have had a name or address inside it, and where he left its owner in the end. And there was absolutely no clue to anything elsewhere among his clothes. The Panama hat might have been bought anywhere; the suit of blue serge was ticketless inside the collar, and the shirt unmarked—probably bought for the voyage only. Fenwick had succeeded in forgetting himself just at a moment when he was absolutely without a reminder. And it seemed there was nothing for it but to wait for the revival of memory.

This, then, is how it came about that, within three months of his extraordinary accident, Mr. Fenwick was comfortably settled in an apartment within a few minutes' walk of Krakatoa Villa; and all the incidents of his original appearance were getting merged in the insoluble, and would soon, no doubt, under the influence of a steady ever-present new routine of life, be completely absorbed in the actual past.