

those lost cottages with a garden in the middle of a block of houses. Well, this man, or rather boy, he's not 20 yet, is, or wants to be, a marine painter like Cudlipp—"

"God forbid!" groaned Major.

"Shut up! the boy's name is André de Bry; he's half French, half English, I believe, a pretty hot combination."

"So I've noticed," remarked Iff, as they turned into Lapérouse, crept up the narrow stair, and found a table by the window in the Salle des Miroirs.

"Harry and Eleanor were born seventeen years ago, twins—"

"Which is dead?" interrupted Iff. The others stared.

"Excuse an old man's vanity!" laughed the mystic. "I really have to show off sometimes! You see, I know Jack's passion for precision of language. He wouldn't say the simple thing, 'They are twins,' or 'They are seventeen years old,' and he wouldn't say 'They were twins,' or 'were seventeen years old,' so I knew that one, and one only, was dead."

"I hope your acuteness will continue through dinner," laughed the editor. "We need it. Now, then, to business. Cudlipp had sort of adopted André de Bry, used him to prepare his bigger canvases, and so on. De Bry had fallen in love with Eleanor. She returned his passion. De Bry was hopelessly poor—no, not hopelessly, for he had a rich uncle, who had a fad of independence. He wouldn't give André a farthing; but if the boy succeeded in making himself a career, he promised to leave him every penny he had. The family is noble, much better than Cudlipp's; so the boy was not a bad match for Eleanor, and, contingently, a very good one. He and Harry were perfectly good friends. There was, in short, no element of disagreement worth notice. The days passed pleasantly, either in painting or fishing, and the evenings in games. One can hardly imagine a more harmonious group.

"On the 18th of August the yacht, which supplied the island with stores from the mainland, called and left provisions for the party. To avert false conjecture from the start, I may say that it is absolutely impossible that some mysterious stowaway could have landed from the yacht and hidden somewhere on the island. The police subsequently went through the place with a fine tooth comb. It is thirty miles from the nearest land, is barely a quarter of a mile in its greatest length, has neither a cave nor a tree on it. So don't talk about that! Well, the yacht weighed anchor on the afternoon of the 18th; that night a storm came up from the Atlantic, and raged for a whole week. It is physically impossible that any one should have landed on the rock during that period. Furthermore, the Big House stands on a quite unclimbable pinnacle—I'm a rock climber, as you know, and I went to see it, and there's not a crack anywhere. It was only connected with the rest of the island by a wooden bridge of the cantilever type; and the violence of the wind was such that on the second night of the storm it carried it away. This was inconvenient for them, as will be seen; but it simplifies the matter a good deal for us. Well, on the 25th the storm abated, and the fishermen were about to put to sea when they observed Lord Cudlipp on the edge of the cliff, firing his shotgun. Seeing he was noticed, he signalled and shouted to them to come up. He met them, so far as he could, at the chasm where the bridge had been. "There has been murder done here," he said shortly,

"take this message and telegraph it at once." He flung a stone to them, with a paper wrapped about it. The telegram asked for the police; also for a gang of men with materials to build up the bridge. The following noon relief arrived.

"The rest of the story needs little detail. It is as astonishingly simple as it is perplexing. The naked body of the boy Harry was found on the morning of the 23d in the big room used by the other men as a studio—Harry and Eleanor took not the slightest interest in art. Death had been caused by a small deep wound in the femoral artery; a penknife might have made it. But there was no blood; and at the post-mortem was revealed the utterly astonishing fact that there was no blood in the whole body—when I say no blood, I mean, not enough for a rabbit! It had been systematically drained. I need hardly tell you that the whole island went wild with stories of vampires and witches; I won't bother you with that sort of rubbish.

"But the horror of the circumstances cannot be easily matched. Imagine to yourselves that lonely crag, itself a monument of desolation, towering from sea to sky, bleak, bare, barren and heartless as sea and sky themselves. Such a place has always bred strange stories—and strange crimes.

"But think of the feelings of the people in the house, one of them certainly a murderer!

"However, the police were easily able to narrow down the possibilities. The boy had been chloroformed or otherwise rendered unconscious, without doubt, for there could have been no struggle. The wound was clean, and obviously inflicted by some one with first rate anatomical knowledge. It was, too, a highly civilized crime, so to speak.

"This really restricted the field of inquiry to the two painters. Common sense excluded the father, whose main hope of an illustrious line was thus cut off. On the other hand, de Bry was a doubtful character. In Paris he had been accustomed to frequent the lowest haunts—the sort of place one finds in these little streets about here—and as a matter of fact, he was usually called the 'Apache' as a sort of nickname. But no one had ever heard of anything very definite, except an alleged duel with knives in a shop off the Boulevard St. Germain called Tout à la Joie, a low drinking cellar. This came out in court later, and sounded nasty, though it was proven that he had been attacked without provocation, and the police had not even arrested him. Still, a man so ready with a knife—it impressed the jury badly, I could see that.

"To cut a long story short, they arrested André. He refused to enter the witness box; he had no story to tell; nor, indeed, had any of the others. Harry had gone to bed alive; he was found dead in the morning. No quarrel anywhere. No motive for anybody.

"The jury was out for twenty-four hours; they came back with that joy which only Scotland offers to its jurymen—the Verdict of the Sitter on the Fence: "Not proven." They all thought he did it, but they couldn't make up their minds to hang him; so there was the way out. Therefore, André de Bry is at large again; and, by the same token, I came over on the boat with him. He was muffled to the eyes, but I knew him. So he's probably within a mile of us at this minute."

"What do you think of the story?" asked Major, a little anxiously.

"Oh, I agree with the natives," replied the