

and they went across Paris to the old magician's little studio in the Rue Vavin.

It was a small room, and very simply furnished; but the paintings and sculptures would have made the fame of any museum. Each was the gift of a master to Simon Iff.

"We shall wait for the young man," said the mystic, as they seated themselves; you will see that I have no difficulty in forcing him to confess."

"I'll never believe it," insisted Major.

"Don't believe it till you hear it!" was the abrupt retort.

#### IV.

A quarter of an hour elapsed; then the slim figure of the boy appeared. In his arms was the picture.

Simon took it and placed it upon the mantel. Major was right; there was nothing in the room to equal it. The magician went to his desk, and wrote out a check for fourteen thousand francs, which he handed to the young painter. "If you would sign this receipt?" De Bry complied.

"Do not go!" said Simon. "I have much to say to you. You really like the picture? You think it worthy of you?"

"I wouldn't have sold it if I didn't."

"Yet you were in sore straits? You were denying yourself food to pay your model?"

"I shouldn't have sold it to you if I didn't think it mine."

"That too is worthy. But now, sit down. There are others to consider in this matter. I am going to ask my friends to remain absolutely silent while we talk."

"I know what you are going to say," said the boy. "I think it unnecessary and cruel."

"Wait till I have done. It is not only necessary and kind, but it is very urgent."

"I can't refuse the first man who has appreciated my work."

"Listen while I tell you a story. Many years ago I knew a man named Thornley, a wealthy manufacturer of biscuits. He had one son, Joseph. He asked me one day to recommend a tutor for the lad. I told him of a clergyman named Drew, a man of deep scholarship, great culture, and intense love of art. He worked on the ambition of Joseph Thornley, and the boy, after a year's tuition from Drew, decided to be a painter. The tutor died suddenly; but the boy's ambition remained. He persuaded his father to let him go to various art schools, where he studied incessantly, with the most praiseworthy diligence."

"Damn it!" roared Major, "he had no more capacity for art than this chair I am sitting on!"

"I asked you not to interrupt," returned Simon mildly. "I never said he had! To continue. Backed with ample wealth and influence, and fortified with determination to succeed, Thornley's career was one long series of triumphs. Although primarily a marine painter, he also did other work, notably portraits. His picture of the king in the uniform of a British Admiral caught the public taste more than any other of his efforts. It was in that year that he was not only elected to the presidency of the Royal Academy of Arts, but raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Cudlipp. His only sorrow was the death of his wife two years after the birth of his children."

The magician turned to André. "Good! Now—how did you spend the week of the great storm?"

"Billiards, mostly," stammered André, taken by

surprise. "Chess, too, and some card games. I sketched, of course, nearly all day. Eleanor had some needlework. Poor Harry was very bored; he did nothing much."

"And Cudlipp buried himself a good deal in anthropology?"

"Yes; he had Frazer's 'Golden Bough' all the time—" The boy broke off, and stared. "How did you know that?" he said, aghast.

"A little bird told me," said Simon lightly.

All of a sudden Major sprang to his feet. "Then Cudlipp killed his son," he shouted, "Oh! Simple Simon, what a fool I've been!" And he suddenly broke down in spasms of sobs.

"I promised these gentlemen," said Simon, taking no notice of the outburst, "that I would force a confession from you this afternoon. I think this is the moment. Come, we are all attention."

"I certainly cannot hear this senseless slander against my protector without—"

"Hush!" said Simon. "I told you this matter was urgent. I meant what I said. You must catch the nine o'clock train for London."

"Why?" said the boy, defiantly; "who are you to say this?"

"I am a person who is going to put a letter in the post in an hour's time; and you had better arrive before the letter."

"I don't understand."

"I was explaining to these gentlemen at lunch that all crime was the result of conflict; that perverse crime, in particular, was caused by conflict of the conscious and unconscious wills."

"Don't you see?" said Major, mastering himself, "it couldn't be you. You were supremely happy; you had the girl you loved; you had found yourself as an artist. But Cudlipp had thwarted his own inner will all his life; he was meant to bake biscuits; and he had forced himself to do those eye-destroying horrors. But—go on, master!—I still don't see the whole story."

"I haven't told you all the facts yet. Cudlipp's family was originally Armenian, for one thing, the offshoot of some old Babylonian tribe. Then there was the 'Golden Bough' with its detailed description of various savage rites, especially the sacrifice of the first-born, an idea, by the way, which the Jews only adopted at third or fourth hand from older and autochthonous races. Then the newspapers were filled with long arguments about the Chesidim and ritual murder, the trial of that man somewhere in Russia—can't think of his name—begins with a B—was on at this time. Well, when the suppressed genius of the man for baking biscuits—which may be a passion like another—when that broke out, probably under the strain of the long storm, and the wildness of the whole scene, and possibly some sudden realization that this boy here could paint, and he himself never could, why, then his brain snapped. The recent impressions combined with some far strain of atavism, and he resolved upon the murder."

"I still can't see why murder," said Flynn. "Why should not this biscuit-baking genius go into the kitchen and bake biscuits?"

"I want you to recognize the fact, you dear good simple soul, that madmen are a thousand times more logical than the sane. The conclusions of normal men are always balanced by other considerations; we criticize our ideas of proper tailoring,