

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE ADVANTAGE OF A DAY

That evening Le Drieux appeared in the lobby of the hotel and sat himself comfortably down, as if his sole desire in life was to read the evening paper and smoke his after-dinner cigar. He cast a self-satisfied and rather supercilious glance in the direction of the Merrick party, which on this occasion included the Stantons and their aunt, but he made no attempt to approach the corner where they were seated.

Maud, however, as soon as she saw Le Drieux, asked Arthur Weldon to interview the man and endeavor to obtain from him the exact date when Jack Andrews landed in New York. Uncle John had already wired to Major Doyle, Patsy's father, to get the steamship lists and find which boat Andrews had come on and the date of its arrival, but no answer had as yet been received.

Arthur made a pretext of buying a cigar at the counter and then strolled aimlessly about until he came, as if by chance, near to where Le Drieux was sitting. Making a pretense of suddenly observing the man, he remarked casually:

"Ah, good evening."

"Good evening, Mr. Weldon," replied Le Drieux, a note of ill-suppressed triumph in his voice.

"I suppose you are now content to rest on your laurels, pending the formal examination?" said Arthur.

"I am, sir. But the examination is a mere form, you know. I have already cabled the commissioner of police at Vienna and received a reply stating that the Austrian ambassador would make a prompt demand for extradition and the papers would be forwarded from Washington to the Austrian consul located in this city. The consul has also been instructed to render me aid in transporting the prisoner to Vienna. All this will require several days' time, so you see we are in no hurry to conclude the examination."

"I see." said Arthur. "Is it, then, your intention to accompany the prisoner to Vienna?"

"Of course. I have not mentioned the fact to you before, but I hold a commission from the Chief of Police of Vienna authorizing me to arrest Jack Andrews wherever I may find him, and deliver him up for trial. My firm procured for me this commission, as they are very anxious to recover the lost pearls."

"Why?"

"Well, to be frank, sir, the countess still owes our firm a large sum for

purchases. She had almost her entire fortune tied up in that collection, and unless it is recovered--."

"I can well appreciate the anxiety of your firm. But aside from that, Mr. Le Drieux, I suppose a big reward has been offered?"

"Not big; just a fair amount. It will repay me, quite handsomely, for my trouble in this affair; but, of course, my firm gets half of the reward."

"They are not too generous. You deserve it all."

"Thank you. It has been an interesting episode, Mr. Weldon."

"It has been more than that. I consider this escapade of Andrews quite a romance; or is it more of a tragedy, in your opinion?"

"It will be a tragedy for Andrews, before he's through with it," replied Le Drieux grimly. "They're pretty severe on the long-fingered gentry, over there in Europe, and you must remember that if the fellow lives through the sentence they will undoubtedly impose upon him in Vienna, he has still to answer for the Paris robbery and the London murder. It's all up with Andrews, I guess; and it's a good thing, too, for he is too clever to remain at large."

"I do not consider him so clever as his captor," said Arthur smoothly.

"It did not take you long to discover where he had hidden. Why, he has

only returned to America about fifteen months ago."

"Eleven months ago--even less than that, I think," retorted Le Drieux, with much pride. "Let me see," taking out a notebook, "Andrews landed from the Princess Irene on the twenty-seventh of January last."

"Oh, the twenty-seventh? Are you sure of that?" said Arthur.

"Of course."

"I was under the impression he landed on the twenty-fifth."

"No; you are wrong. Why, I met the boat myself, but missed him, although he was on the passenger list. He disembarked very slyly, I afterward learned, being doubtless afraid he would be arrested. But at that time I had no positive evidence against him."

Arthur asked a few more questions of no importance and then bade Le Drieux good night and rejoined the girls.

"You win, Maud," he remarked as he sat down. "That clew of yours was an inspiration. Andrews arrived in America on January twenty-seventh, just one day after Jones had a motion picture of himself taken at the stockholders' meeting of the Continental Film Company."

"Then we needn't worry over Ajo any longer!" asserted Patsy joyfully.

"With this evidence and the testimony of Captain Carg and his pearls, the most stupid judge on earth would declare the boy innocent. Why, Beth, we shall get our theatres built, after all!"