CHAPTER X.

TUDOR BROWN, ESQUIRE.

One morning in May the doctor was in his office, when his servant brought him a visitor's card. This card, which was small as is usual in America, had the name of "Mr. Tudor Brown, on board the 'Albatross'" printed upon it.

"Mr. Tudor Brown," said the doctor, trying to remember whom he had ever known who bore this name.

"This gentleman asked to see the doctor," said the servant.

"Can he not come at my office-hour?" asked the doctor.

"He said his business was about a personal matter."

"Show him in, then," said the doctor, with a sigh.

He lifted his head as the door opened again, and was surprised when he beheld the singular person who answered to the feudal name of Tudor, and the plebeian name of Brown.

He was a man about fifty years of age, his forehead was covered with a

profusion of little ringlets, of a carroty color, while the most superficial examination betrayed that they were made of curled silk; his nose was hooked, and surmounted with an enormous pair of gold spectacles; his teeth were as long as those of a horse, his cheeks were smooth, but under his chin he wore a little red beard. This odd head, covered by a high hat which he did not pretend to remove, surmounted a thin angular body, clothed from head to foot in a woolen suit. In his cravat he wore a pin, containing a diamond as large as a walnut; also a large gold chain, and his vest buttons were amethysts. He had a dozen rings on his fingers, which were as knotty as those of a chimpanzee. Altogether he was the most pretentious and grotesque-looking man that it was possible to behold. This person entered the doctor's office as if he had been entering a railway station, without even bowing. He stopped to say, in a voice that resembled that of Punch, its tone was so nasal and guttural:

"Are you Doctor Schwaryencrona?"

"I am," answered the doctor, very much astonished at his manners.

He was debating in his mind whether he should ring for his servant to conduct this offensive person to the door, when a word put a stop to his intention.

"I saw your advertisement about Patrick O'Donoghan," said the stranger, "and I thought you would like to know that I can tell you something

about him."

"Take a seat, sir," answered the doctor.

But he perceived that the stranger had not waited to be asked.

After selecting the most comfortable arm-chair, he drew it toward the doctor, then he seated himself with his hands in his pockets, lifted his feet and placed his heels on the window-sill, and looked at the doctor with the most self-satisfied air in the world.

"I thought," he said, "that you would listen to these details with pleasure, since you offer five hundred pounds for them. That is why I have called upon you."

The doctor bowed without saying a word.

"Doubtless," continued the other, in his nasal voice, "you are wondering who I am. I am going to tell you. My card has informed you as to my name, and I am a British subject."

"Irish perhaps?" asked the doctor with interest.

The Granger, evidently surprised, hesitated a moment, and then said:

"No, Scotch. Oh, I know I do not look like a Scotchman, they take me

very often for a Yankee--but that is nothing--I am Scotch."

As he gave this piece of information, he looked at Dr. Schwaryencrona as much as to say:

"You can believe what you please, it is a matter of indifference to me."

"From Inverness, perhaps?" suggested the doctor, still clinging to his favorite theory.

The stranger again hesitated for a moment.

"No, from Edinburgh," he answered. "But that is of no importance after all, and has nothing to do with the matter in hand. I have an independent fortune and owe nothing to anybody. If I tell you who I am, it is because it gives me pleasure to do so, for I am not obliged to do it."

"Permit me to observe that I did not ask you," said the doctor, smiling.

"No, but do not interrupt me, or we shall never reach the end of this matter. You published an advertisement to find out what became of Patrick O'Donoghan, did you not?--you therefore have some interest in knowing. I know what has become of him."

"You know?" asked the doctor, drawing his seat closer to that of the

stranger.

"I know, but before I tell you, I want to ask you what interest you have in finding him?"

"That is only just," answered the doctor.

In as few words as possible, he related Erik's history, to which his visitor listened with profound attention.

"And this boy is still living?" asked Tudor Brown.

"Assuredly he is living. He is in good health, and in October next he will begin his studies in the Medical University at Upsal."

"Ah! ah!" answered the stranger, who seemed lost in reflection. "Tell me," he said at length, "have you no other means of solving this mystery of his birth except by finding Patrick O'Donoghan?"

"I know of no other," replied the doctor. "After years of searching I only found out that this O'Donoghan was in possession of the secret, that he alone could reveal it to me, and that is why I have advertised for him in the papers. I must confess that I had no great hopes of finding him by this means."

"How is that?"

"Because I had reasons for believing that this O'Donoghan has grave motives for remaining unknown, consequently it was not likely that he would respond to my advertisement. I had the intention of resorting to other means. I have a description of him. I know what ports he would be likely to frequent, and I propose to employ special agents to be on the lookout for him."

Dr. Schwaryencrona did not say this lightly. He spoke with the intention of seeing what effect these words would produce on the man before him. And as he watched him intently, he saw that in spite of the affected coolness of the stranger his eyelids fell and the muscles of his month contracted. But almost immediately Tudor Brown recovered his self-possession, and said:

"Well, doctor, if you have no other means of solving this mystery, except by discovering Patrick O'Donoghan, I am afraid that you will never find it out. Patrick O'Donoghan is dead."

The doctor was too much taken aback by this disappointing announcement to say a word, and only looked at his visitor, who continued:

"Dead and buried, three hundred fathoms beneath the sea. This man, whose past life always appeared to me to have been mysterious, was employed three years on board my yacht, the 'Albatross.' I must tell you that my yacht is a stanch vessel, in which I often cruise for seven or eight

months at a time. Nearly three years ago we were passing through the Straits of Madeira, when Patrick O'Donoghan fell overboard. I had the vessel stopped, and some boats lowered, and after a diligent search we recovered him; but though we spared no pains to restore him to life, our efforts were in vain. Patrick O'Donoghan was dead. We were compelled to return to the sea the prey which we had snatched from it. The accident was put down on the ship's log, and recorded in the notary's office at the nearest place we reached. Thinking that this act might be useful to you, I have brought you a certified copy of it."

As he said this, Mr. Tudor Brown took out his pocket-book and presented the doctor with a paper stamped with a notarial seal.

The latter read it quickly. It was a record of the death of Patrick O'Donoghan, while passing through the Straits of Madeira, duly signed and sworn to, before two witnesses, as being an exact copy of the original--it was also registered in London, at Somerset House, by the commissioners of her Britannic Majesty.

This instrument was evidently authentic. But the manner in which he had received it was so strange that the doctor could not conceal his astonishment. He took it, however, with his habitual courtesy.

"Permit me to ask one question, sir," he said to his visitor.

"Speak, doctor."

"How is it that you have this document in your pocket duly prepared and certified? And why have you brought it to me?"

"If I can count, you have asked two questions," said Tudor Brown. "I will answer them, however--I had this paper in my pocket, because I read your advertisement two months ago, and wishing to furnish you with the information which you asked for, I thought it better to give it to you, in the most complete and definite form that lay in my power. I have brought it to you personally, because I happened to be cruising in these waters; and I wished at the same time to gratify your curiosity and my own."

There was nothing to answer to this reasoning--this was the only conclusion the doctor could draw.

"Yon are here, then, with the 'Albatross'?" he asked, eagerly.

"Without doubt."

"And you have still on board some sailors who have known Patrick O'Donoghan?"

"Yes, several."

"Would you permit me to see them?"

"As many as you please. Will you accompany me on board now?"

"If you have no objection."

"I have none," said the stranger, as he arose.

Dr. Schwaryencrona touched his bell, and they brought him his fur pelisse, his hat, and his cane, and he departed with Mr. Tudor Brown.

Fifteen minutes later they were on board the "Albatross."

They were received by an old gray-headed seaman, with a rubicund face, whose open countenance betrayed only truth and loyalty.

"Mr. Ward, this gentleman wishes to make some inquiries about the fate of Patrick O'Donoghan," said Mr. Tudor Brown.

"Patrick O'Donoghan," answered the old sailor, "God rest his soul. He gave us trouble enough to pick him up the day he was drowned in the Straits of Madeira. What is the use of inquiries now that he has gone to feed the fishes?"

"Had you known him for a long time?" asked the doctor.

"The rascal--no--for a year or two perhaps. I believe that it was at

Zanzibar that we took him on board--am I right, Tommy Duff?"

"Is any one hailing me?" asked a young sailor, who was busily employed in polishing a copper bowl.

"Come here," said the other--"Was it at Zanzibar that we recruited Patrick O'Donoghan?"

"Patrick O'Donoghan," repeated the young sailor, as if his remembrance of the man was not very good. "Oh yes, I remember him. The man who fell overboard in the Straits of Maderia. Yes, Mr. Ward, it was at Zanzibar that he came on board."

Dr. Schwaryencrona made him describe Patrick O'Donoghan, and was convinced that it was the same man whom he was seeking. Both these men seemed honest and sincere. They had honest and open countenances. The uniformity of their answers seemed a little strange, and almost preconcerted; but after all it might be only the natural consequence of relating facts. Having known Patrick O'Donoghan only a year at the most, they would have but little to say about him, except the fact of his death.

Besides the "Albatross" was a yacht of such large proportions, that if she had been furnished with some cannon she might easily have passed for a man-of-war. The most rigorous cleanliness was observed on board. The sailors were in good condition, well clothed, and under perfect

discipline. The general appearance of the vessel insensiby acted upon the doctor, and carried conviction of the truth of the statement which he had just heard. He therefore declared himself perfectly satisfied, and could not leave without inviting Mr. Tudor Brown to dine with him. But Mr. Tudor Brown did not think it best to accept this invitation. He declined it in these courteous terms:

"No--I can not--I never dine in town."

It now only remained for Dr. Schwaryencrona to retire. This he did without having obtained even the slightest bow from this strange individual.

The doctor's first thought was to go and relate his adventure to Mr. Bredejord, who listened to him without saying a word, only promising himself to institute counter inquiries.

But he, with Erik, who had been told the whole story upon his return from school, repaired to the vessel to see if they could elicit any further information, but the "Albatross" had left Stockholm, without leaving word where she was going, and they could not, therefore, obtain even the address of Mr. Tudor Brown.

All that resulted from this affair was the possession of the document, which legally proved the death of Patrick O'Donoghan.

Was this paper of any value? This was the question that Mr. Bredejord could not help doubting, in spite of the evidence of the British consul at Stockholm, whom he questioned, and who declared that the signatures and stamp were perfectly authentic. He also caused inquiries to be made at Edinburgh, but nobody knew Mr. Tudor Brown, which he thought looked suspicious.

But it was an undeniable fact that they obtained no further intelligence of Patrick O'Donoghan, and all their advertisements were ineffectual.

If Patrick O'Donoghan had disappeared for good, they had no hope of penetrating the mystery that surrounded Erik's birth. He himself saw this, and was obliged to recognize the fact that, for the future, the inquiries would have to be based upon some other theory. He therefore made no opposition about commencing his medical studies the following autumn at the university at Upsal, according to the doctor's wishes. He only desired, first, to pass his examination as a captain, but this sufficed to show that he had not renounced his project of traveling.

Besides, he had another trouble which lay heavy at his heart, and for which he saw no other remedy but absence.

Erik wished to find some pretext for leaving the doctor's house as soon as his studies were completed; but he wished to do this without exciting any suspicion. The only pretext which he could think of was this plan of traveling. He desired to do this because of the aversion of Kajsa, the

doctor's niece. She lost no occasion of showing her dislike; but he would not at any price have had the excellent man suspect this state of affairs between them. His relations toward the young girl had always been most singular. In the eyes of Erik during these seven years as well as on the first day of his arrival at Stockholm, the pretty little fairy had always been a model of elegance and all earthly perfections. He had bestowed on her his unreserved admiration, and had made heroic efforts to overcome her dislike, and become her friend.

But Kajsa could not make up her mind calmly to see this "intruder," as she called Erik, take his place in the doctor's home, be treated as an adopted son, and become a favorite of her uncle and his friends. The scholastic success of Erik, his goodness and his gentleness, far from making him pleasing in her eyes, were only new motives of jealousy.

In her heart Kajsa could not pardon the young man for being only a fisherman and a peasant. It seemed to her that he brought discredit upon the doctor's household and on herself, who, she liked to believe, occupied a very high position in the social scale.

But it was worse when she learned that Erik was even less than a peasant, only a child that had been picked up. That appeared to her monstrous and dishonorable. She thought that such a child had a lower place in society than a cat or a dog; she manifested these sentiments by the most disdainful looks, the most mortifying silence, and the most cruel insults. If Erik was invited with her to any little social

gathering at the house of a friend, she would positively refuse to dance with him. At the table she would not answer anything he said, nor pay any attention to him. She tried on all occasions, and in every possible way, to humiliate him.

Poor Erik had divined the cause of this uncharitable conduct, but he could not understand how ignorance of his family, and of the land of his birth, could be regarded by her as such a heinous crime. He tried one day to reason with Kajsa, and to make her understand the injustice and cruelty of such a prejudice, but she would not even deign to listen to him. Then as they both grew older, the abyss which separated them seemed to widen. At eighteen Kajsa made her début in society. She was flattered and noticed as the rich heiress, and this homage only confirmed her in the opinion that she was superior to common mortals.

Erik, who was at first greatly afflicted by her disdain, ended by becoming indignant, and vowing to triumph over it. This feeling of humiliation had a great share in producing the passionate ardor with which he pursued his studies. He dreamed of raising himself so high in public esteem, by the force of his own industry, that every one would bow before him. But he also vowed that he would go away on the first opportunity, and that he would not remain under a roof where every day he was exposed to some secret humiliation.

Only the good doctor must be kept in ignorance of the cause of his departure. He must attribute it solely to a passion for traveling. And

Erik therefore frequently spoke of his desire, when his studies were completed, of engaging in some scientific expedition. While pursuing his studies at Upsal, he prepared himself by work, and the most severe exercise, for the life of fatigue and danger which is the lot of great travelers.