

The Going Out of Alessandro Pozzone

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Granthorne Avenue is a short turning off the Dulwich Road. On each side of the Avenue are a dozen houses or so; the houses are detached, and let for forty-five pounds a year. Each house has in front a pretty little piece of garden, and at the back a considerable piece of ground. At the end of the ground, to the rear, is a small green gate, opening upon a narrow private lane. This lane is for the exclusive use of the houses in Granthorne Avenue, there being no other buildings close to the lane on either side. At one end of Granthorne Avenue runs the Dulwich Road; at the other rises a black plank fence six feet high, cutting off the road from fields beyond, where in summer-time well-conditioned cows lie in the rich long grass. The ground at the backs of the houses is not cut up into beds, but each house owns a nice smooth grass-plot large enough for a modest croquet party, and skirted on both sides by a gravel path, at the bottom of the right-hand one of which stands the small green door into the lane.

It was the beginning of June. The month had come in with all the violence of March and all the inconsistency of April; the fourth of the month had been a remarkably inclement day. It blew a gale from the south, accompanied by occasional brilliant sunshine and deluging showers. As night drew on, the wind abated, but the rain was still heavy and frequent.

At ten o'clock the wind sprung up again, and blew steadily from the west, wailing and soughing through the trees at the back of Granthorne Avenue. At eleven o'clock a terrific shower fell. Most of the lights in Granthorne Avenue were now on the upper floors: the people were going to bed. The sound of the rain was positively alarming, and many persons came to their bedroom windows, drew up the blinds and curtains, and looked out. The rain beat into the fronts of the houses on the left-hand side of the Avenue.

All the basements and the ground-floor windows were dark on the

right-hand side of the Avenue. On the left-hand side a light burned in the hall of No. 17, and upon the Venetian blinds of the drawing-room on the ground floor of No. 7 shone a bright cheerful light, and from behind it came the sound of music, a piano and a man's voice, a high tenor flat voice; the tune and song were 'Robin Adair'.

The shower lasted no longer than ten minutes. The wind and the music outlasted the shower, and at a quarter past eleven the bedroom windows were deserted, and Granthorne Avenue was going to bed.

At a quarter to twelve, Mr Frederick Morley and Mr Charles Bell stepped out of a first-class smoking compartment of a train from town at the Herne Hill Station, and walked arm-in-arm to the end of Granthorne Avenue. While they stood a moment at the end of the Avenue, Mr Bell said, 'I go in the back way when I am late.' Heavy drops began to fall, 'Another shower. What weather for June! Let's get in quickly or we shall be wet through. Good-night.'

'I go in the front way,' said Mr Morley, adding, 'Good-night,' as he hastened up the Avenue in the rain, now once more falling in torrents, and beating noisily on the windows of the left-hand side of the way.

From the corner of the Avenue to its first house, extended about fifty yards of blank wall, enclosing the garden at the back of the house on the main road. When Mr Morley reached the door of No. 8, which was his house, he glittered all over with wet in the light of a lamp just opposite his door. In No. 7, at the other side, the light shone through the blind. Mr Morley fumbled in his pockets, muttered something to himself, then half aloud, 'Confound it, I've left my latch key behind me. I shall have to knock them up.' He rang and knocked, and drawing himself within the shelter of the porch patiently awaited the result.

Through the beating of the rain and the southing of the wind in the trees, he heard the music from the cheerfully lighted drawing-room of No. 7 opposite. Partly to beguile the time and partly that those in the house might recognize his voice and be not alarmed, he caught up the tune from No. 7 and commenced humming 'Robin Adair'.

For two or three minutes Mr Morley waited, but heard no stir within. Then he dropped his humming, knocked and rang again, and resumed 'Robin Adair' in a louder tone, keeping time with the instrument over the way.

He heard the bell in the servant's room ring. 'Now it's all right,' he muttered; 'but Matilda is so very nice in her notions, and so very slow in her movements, that she'll keep me here a good five minutes yet.'

After two or three minutes he grew a little impatient, and, to cool his haste, set up a whistling accompaniment to the music from No. 7, remarking, before he started, 'By Jove, our foreign friend opposite does stick to poor Robin!'

He had been in all about five minutes at his door, when suddenly he threw up his head and listened with a look of alarm on his face, as it glittered with rain in the lamplight.

He listened intently. 'No, no. That was no low of a cow in her sleep. It was a human sound, a human groan.'

There again! There it was again! Confound the rain and the piano. Something wrong at the back of the opposite row of houses. It must have been a loud groan to carry so far. Confound that foreigner and his wretched piano and his everlasting 'Robin Adair'! Could anything have happened to Bell?

Without any more hesitation Mr Morley set off at a run down Granthorne Avenue, into the Dulwich Road, and turned up the lane at the back of the houses.

Here he shortened his stick in his hand, shook it to see that it and his arm were trustworthy, and advanced more slowly.

He reached the backs of the houses. All was very quiet and very dark. He passed one, two, three doors, and here was four, No. 7, and that interminable 'Robin Adair' wheezing through the window and the rain! But nothing noteworthy or suspicious.

Five, six, seven, eight, nine. This ought to be the back of No. 17, Bell's house. Yes, no doubt.

Bell's door ajar! And, O God! what is this? A dead or stunned man across the threshold, as though he had fallen the moment he entered! 'Help here! Lights, I say! Help! Murder!'

For a moment all was silent save the rain and the wind, and the instrument now faintly heard by Morley. Soon after his cry the tune ceased, the back door of No. 7 opened, a man stepped out and asked in a foreign accent, 'What noise is this? Who called? There is no one hurt, I hope!'

Morley heard the voice and called out, 'Yes, come here, sir, and help me. I fear he is dead.'

'Where are you?'

'At Mr Bell's back gate. Come and knock his people up. For heaven's sake come. I won't leave him lest the villains come back. I can feel the blood. Feel, it is warm and—salt.'

By this time the foreigner was by the side of Mr Morley. 'Blood,' said the foreigner, 'hot and salt. Leave me to mind him. I do not know his people. You go tell them of this sadness. No fear of anyone coming back. It seems to be his head that is hurt. Poor man, hot and salt. So it is. You are right, sir. Go at once, I will stay. Go with speed.'

In a short time Mr Bell's household, consisting of a son and daughter and maid-servant, were aroused, the wounded man was carried into the house by Mr Morley, Sig. Cordella, the foreigner, and Mr John Bell, son of the victim. A little later came surgeons and the police. The doctors gave little hope; the junior of the two sat up all night; and in the morning, at six o'clock, Mr Charles Bell passed away without having had one moment of consciousness.

Next day, that is on June 6, the inquest was opened, and the facts disclosed were briefly these:

Mr Morley, the last person known to have seen the deceased before he had received the fatal blow, swore that he had known the late Mr Bell about five years. Had become acquainted with him in a railway carriage, soon after deceased came to live at Granthorne Avenue. They both went into town by the same train every morning. So they had grown to be quite intimate. Rarely came out with deceased in the evening or at night. Witness usually got home about 7 p.m., and, he understood, deceased not until nine or ten usually; and often not until midnight: the deceased had told him this. On only two or three previous occasions had he and deceased come home together so late as on the night of the 4th. His memory was quite clear on every event connected with that night. Witness then described his parting from the murdered man at the end of the Avenue, the wind and rain, the delay at his own door; how free from all suspicion of danger to his friend he was, for, while waiting for his door to be opened, he caught up the tune his neighbour Sig. Cordella was playing, and was whistling it, when his attention was attracted by the groan. How he ran round to be back lane, found the injured man, knew Sig. Cordella was up and celled for help. How the Signore came and supported the injured man until further help arrived, and they carried the dying man into the house.

Next came Sig. Roberto Cordella, of No. 7, a native of Italy, who swore that towards midnight on the 4th, he being then enjoying some music, heard a cry from the back of the houses, and going out found matters as described by the former witness. Sig. Cordella had lived only a few months, about five, in Granthorne Avenue, during which time he had had no intercourse of any kind with deceased. Witness was a retired music master. Did not remember ever seeing deceased. This was partly explained by the fact that, as a rule, Mr Bell came home late of nights, and, as the last witness swore, usually went in the back way, as on the night of the murder. The witness said he had been greatly shocked and shaken by the melancholy occurrence. Being a foreigner he knew little of such legal proceedings as the present; and in conclusion he asked the coroner if he were now free to retire. The coroner told him he might go down; and, although there was no great likelihood of his being required further, still he had better remain within hearing; there was no knowing but they might have to recall him. Sig. Cordella bowed and stepped down.

The medical evidence was simplicity itself. Deceased had died from injuries to the back of the skull. Two blows had been inflicted. One apparently as the deceased was entering the garden gate; the other as he lay on the ground. The former had smashed in the poll, and would have been quite sufficient to cause death. The second had battered in the right temple and cheek-bone, leaving on the wet earth the impression of the left side of the face. The injuries from which the man died were, no doubt, inflicted by the stone produced by the police. [The stone was a piece of flag eighteen inches long, six inches wide, and three inches deep.] On the stone human hair, human blood, and particles of flesh corresponding with wants in the head of deceased were to be seen. All the organs in deceased's body were healthy, and he had been a powerful man notwithstanding that he must have been past sixty years of age.

The evidence of the police followed:

The stone produced by them was one of many similar in the lane. They had found nothing else of any consequence. There were upon the clothes of Mr Morley and Sig. Cordella such blood-stains as would be accounted for by the succour they had given the deceased. No suspicious people or person had been seen lurking about the place. Supposing the assassin had run from the back door of No. 17

to the Dulwich Road end of the lane, starting at the same moment as Mr Morley from his house, Mr Morley would surely have seen him, as the Road was quite straight, well lighted, and at this point afforded no shelter or means of concealment.

Mr Morley: 'I saw no one.'

It was true that from the back of No. 17 to the board fence at the field end of the lane was a less distance than from the same point to the Road, and that the murderer would have had time to reach that fence, scale it, and drop into the field at the other side before Mr Morley could have come round the other end of the lane.

Up to this point the whole inquiry had gone on without exciting any exceptional interest, and the majority of people present seemed to have made up their minds that the criminal, having given the fatal blows, had run down the lane, scaled the fence, and escaped through the fields. The further evidence of the police produced a profound sensation, bordering upon dismay; and those closely connected with the case began to regard one another half in suspicion, half in fear. The officer continued:

But it was quite certain that neither on the night of the murder nor the day before it had anyone crossed the fence; the reasons for thinking so were conclusive. On 3 June ten cart-loads of fine building sand had been backed against that wooden fence on the field side, and on the morning of the 5th no trace whatever of footsteps or disturbance could be found in this sand. The walls of the lane were of smooth brick and high, thirteen feet, for wall-fruit, and no man could possibly reach their summit without a ladder; and not only was no ladder found, but not the smallest fresh scratch upon the walls, the surface of which was soft from moisture and would show the scratch of even a thumb-nail. On the field side, the sand, intended for a wall to be built in place of the wooden fence, overlapped the end of the lane many feet. Through interstices between the planking of this black plank fence some sand had percolated into the lane and lay in a fine smooth mat, four feet wide from the planking. From this sand the rain falling at the time of the murder might obliterate, or at least deaden, footmarks; but the sand in the lane was examined with lamps in less than an hour after the fatal blow was struck, and when the rain had been falling only about ten minutes after the blow, and yet no footmarks had been found. The sand at the other side of the lane was sheltered by two large chestnuts and showed perfect shovel

marks of the day before, but no trace of footsteps whatever. No arrests had been made yet.

The son of the deceased was next called. He had not much to tell; such as it was the substance is as follows:

His father had passed his sixty-third year. Had been at one time an outdoor officer of Customs; last stationed at Avonford. About fifteen years ago he had been obliged to leave the Customs owing to a severe rheumatic affection contracted while on duty. At that time and for many years afterwards, witness, who was now seven-and-thirty years of age, was in Australia and did not know details. After retiring from the Customs, deceased came from Avonford to London, and set up a grocery business in Baroda Street, Oxford Street. The business had been prosperous; and some years ago deceased had taken his present house, where deceased, being a widower, lived with his daughter and a maid-servant until now. Witness upon coming home on leave last year joined his father's household and had lived at No. 17 ever since.

Evidently the disquieting discovery of the police caused the coroner to proceed with much more care and deliberation than he had employed in the earlier stage of the inquiry, and he examined the son with great fullness and most minutely. In answer to further interrogation the son went on:

On the morning of the 4th, Mr Bell left home for town at the usual hour, half-past eight. He ate a hearty breakfast and seemed in excellent spirits. The last words witness heard his father utter were said just as deceased was leaving: 'Don't wait up. I shall be late tonight. Leave the dining-room door open.' The last sentence referred to the door from the dining-room into the back garden. This door opened on a little exterior landing which communicated by means of a flight of steps with the garden. By 'Leave the dining-room door open,' deceased meant on the latch or spring lock, for which deceased had a key. It was deceased's habit when he returned late to come in by the door, bolt it, eat a little supper, have a glass of grog and a smoke before going to bed. On the night in question, witness went to bed as usual at a little after eleven, fell asleep, and was soon roused by Mr Morley knocking at the kitchen door and calling for help. Witness got up, put on some clothes hastily, and came down. That was all he could say of the whole affair. The police had found his father's purse and watch upon the person of the injured man. Didn't think this father had a personal enemy in the world. As far as witness knew not

a soul but he himself would benefit by his father's untimely death. His sister would be a loser by it.

The maid-servant and the daughter of deceased were briefly examined as to the events on the night of the murder and dismissed; and, it being then evening, the inquiry was adjourned for a week to give the police an opportunity of investigating the case further. Before rising, the coroner made an order for the interment of the body.

Next day John Bell was busy about the funeral. Many of the friends and acquaintances of the deceased made visits of condolence and all the neighbourhood was full of horror at the awful deed, regret for the pleasant inoffensive man who had been done to death, and sympathy for the son and daughter.

It was midnight before John Bell found himself alone. He was a tall, powerful man, with red-brown beard, brown eyes, a bronzed face, and brown strong hands. When at rest in ordinary times his face had a stern expression. You could see he was not a man to be trifled with. In movement he was slow, ponderous. No matter what he did it seemed as though he had fully considered it before commencing to move; once action begun, there was such an evidence of the means to the end that few would think of trying to stand between him and his object. As he sat in the hideous stiffness of his new black clothes, a cruel smile played upon his features alternately with a look of profound and passionless thought. He sat by the open dining-room door through which Mr Morley, Sig. Cordella, and himself had carried the dying man on the night of the 4th. This night there was neither wind nor rain. The houses all round were still, and Nature slept like a weary child, without a cry or a sigh.

The police had carefully examined Mr Bell's house in the hope of getting a clue to the murderer. They had asked to see Mr Bell's private papers, and these had been shown to them. They had read some of the documents, and, having made notes, felt no further need of the papers, and gave them back to Mr John Bell. These letters, diaries, memoranda, etc., were now lying in a confused heap on the dining-room table. For an hour John Bell had been sitting at the open window in a profound reverie. He now aroused himself, turned up the gas fully (it had been half turned down), drew a chair close to the table, and commenced turning over the papers, now reading one through, now merely glancing at another. At last he came to one which seemed to interest and excite him greatly.

It was a lengthy document in his father's writing, and was battered a good deal and showed signs of wear and tear and age. He did not wait to finish reading it, but got up hastily, left the room, went into the hall, pulled out the drawer in the hall table, took from the drawer a small slip of paper on which were written a few words, came back to the room, held the slip of paper and the document he had been reading, one in each hand, under the gaslight, and compared one line of the old document with the slip; then let both fall from his hands, shivered, covered his face with his hands, and sank down into a chair.

He remained for half an hour absolutely motionless, save for the regular rising and falling of his broad back. At the end of that time he rose, finished the reading of the sheets of old paper, folded them up, put them in his breast pocket, and placed the small slip which he had taken from the drawer in his watch pocket. When this was done he put his hand under his coat-tails for a moment, as if to tighten the back strap of his waistcoat, did not tighten the strap, went and got his hat, descended the steps from the dining-room into the garden, opened the garden gate, and went out into the lane.

It was then about half-past one in the morning.

The place was still as death; the trees stood up silently in the darkness; the dark violet vault of heaven hung spread with myriads of pale stars overhead. John Bell looked warily up and down the lane. 'It is very dark and very late,' he thought, as he closed the garden door behind him, 'but it will be darker and later before the dawn.'

He turned towards the Dulwich Road, and walked very slowly down the lane. He reached the end of the lane, turned to his left, and again to his left. He was now in the Avenue, and taking the left-hand footway he commenced ascending the Avenue. He passed by the blank wall and the houses 1, 3, and 5. These were all dark. In the drawing-room window of No. 7 there was a light. Not a ray in any other house in the Avenue. John Bell drew back the bolt on the garden gate, entered the garden, went up the steps, and knocked very softly. In a few seconds the door was unchained, unlocked, and unbolted, and Sig. Cordella, recognizing him at once, cried, 'Ah, Mr Bell, is it you? There is nothing more wrong, I hope?'

'There is nothing new wrong,' answered the visitor; adding, 'I know this is a most extraordinary time for making a call on a comparative stranger, but seeing your light burning, and being greatly troubled and disturbed in my mind, I ventured to knock.'

'Come in,' said the foreigner, 'come in. I always sit up late. Come in and rest with me for some time.' He led the way into the drawing-room.

The room was furnished in good taste. The colours were all cool and grey, rather French than Italian. There were no pictures on the pearl-grey walls. The drapery and upholstery were of a delicate shade of deep fawn; the carpet a dull amber. Against one wall stood a cottage piano, on which lay a guitar. In a corner was a violin case, and upon a table opposite the door a large musical box and a silver flute. A couch was drawn halfway across the window, and at the foot of the couch stood a small inlaid table. Scattered about were a few ordinary drawing chairs, and at the table one easy-chair. Upon the inlaid table were placed cigars, a tobacco jar, a cigarette book, an ashtray, and a box of matches. Although the room was a small one, three gas jets were at their full height, and John Bell was compelled to shade his eyes for a moment.

'You will sit down?' said the Italian, waving his hand to the chair by the table and sinking softly on the couch himself.

Bell hesitated a moment, looked slowly round the room, and then said, 'I will.'

The Italian rolled up a cigarette, lighted it, and threw himself into the arm of the couch. He was a low-sized man of about five-and-forty years of age, bald, dark-skinned, black-bearded, black-eyed, with black heavy eyebrows—not at all a pleasant face. Although there was always a faint smile on the features, it seemed a smile the motive for which had passed away, and that the smile itself ought to have passed away too. It was the fag end of a stale smile, and the face would have been much improved if it had been swept off altogether. Notwithstanding this unpleasant smile the Italian's face was handsome, eminently handsome.

John Bell was evidently a little perplexed, for he paused awhile before even attempting to offer an explanation or apology for his late visit. At last he spoke:

'As you may fancy, Mr Cordella, nothing but a matter of great importance could induce me to intrude upon you at this time of night.'

'Pray, no apology. I know how troubled you must be in your mind. I sympathize with you; I sympathize with you out of my heart, indeed, Mr Bell. In your trouble you no doubt could find no sleep, so you

come out for a walk, for fresh air, and you see my light, a neighbour's light, and you come in. Make nothing of it. I always sit up till late—these times till daylight. Will you smoke?

'I will smoke, thank you. But, Mr Cordella, it was not accident brought me here tonight; I came on purpose. I came on most important business. I owe you thanks for your great kindness on that awful night—I have come now to make but a poor return. I am sorry to say that I find it absolutely necessary to ask you some questions which, though they may seem impertinent at the outset, are of vital consequence to me. You will answer me without taking offence for what must seem an unpardonable and outrageously ill-timed intrusion and an unwarrantable inquisitiveness.'

'Indeed you may ask, and indeed I will answer,' said the Italian, waving his hand softly through the smoke of his cigarette.

'Remember before I begin that I will ask you no question which is not of importance, and that I have excellent cause to risk seeming impertinent in order to get the information I require.'

Speaking through a veil of smoke the Italian answered: 'I have told you, Mr John Bell, that I will answer you. What is it that I have to conceal?'

'Nothing, no doubt, about yourself, but I am not come to speak about yourself. I want to ask you some questions about another. First and foremost, you and I are in this room; who else is in this house?'

The Italian took his cigarette slowly from his lips with his left hand, emerged from the smoke, and leaned towards John Bell until his left elbow rested on the couch. Then thrusting his right hand softly between his waistcoat and shirt at the breast he looked up into John Bell's face with an expression of playful surprise. 'Why?'

John Bell took his cigar from his mouth and moved only his eyes towards the other. For a moment the two men regarded one another as though neither had the faintest clue to what was in the mind of the other, and each was very desirous to get some insight into the thought of the other before proceeding further. Said Bell, 'That is not a very clear answer to my question, is it?'

'No; but you come to me telling me you are curious to know some things. You come at two o'clock in the morning; that is strange. Then you ask me a strange question; that, too, is strange. You make me feel, like yourself, curious. You must not feel angry with me if I feel curious, and ask you why do you want to know who else is in this house?'

'You are quite right,' said John Bell. 'I was most unreasonable in expecting that I, who am almost a complete stranger to you, had any right to question you about your household without giving ample reason. I'll give you the reason now, and repeat the question when I have done so.'

'It is so kind of you,' said the Italian, drawing his hand out from under his waistcoat, and gently resuming his old pose in the arm of the couch. As he lay back he touched his chest, and said with an apologetic smile, 'I have the heart disease, and any shock or thing gives me, ah! such great pain. When you asked me that strange question I thought I should die. You will pardon me; your father's sad fate has quite unnerved me for a moment. Ah! you will pardon me! I feared—well, I feared you wished to know whether—cannot you understand?' He closed his eyes and drew back his lips from his teeth, and inhaled painfully through his set teeth.

'I am very sorry that you suffer from heart disease, and I am very sorry I have caused you pain. I can now see my question in another light, and that it was equal to an enquiry into your means of defence. I am sorry I was so abrupt. I hope you will forgive me and hear me out, Mr Cordella?'

The Italian opened his eyes with an expression of pain and effort, answering very gently, 'Do not make any further apologies, Mr Bell; please go on. I am quite able and most willing to listen.' He closed his eyes again and gradually grew paler.

John Bell shook himself back into his chair. 'It will take some time,' he said, 'and I shall have to go back to the 4th of June. My father left home as usual at half-past eight. You may remember on that day in the forenoon a particular letter was dropped in the box of No. 17, my father's house. That letter was not for anyone we knew, being addressed to' (here John Bell took the slip of paper out of his watch-pocket and read from it) 'Sig. Alessandro Pozzone, 17 Granthorne Avenue, Dulwich, Londra.' 'Knowing that you were an Italian, and being ignorant of your name, and seeing how easily the mistake between 7 and 17 might arise, and finding the post-mark of "Torino" on the envelope, I wrote a line to "The Owner of No. 7," enclosing the foreign letter and asking you if it were for you.'

'You were most thoughtful.'

'To my note I signed my name. You returned a verbal message, saying that the foreign letter was not for you; that you knew nothing whatever of the person, Alessandro Pozzone, to whom it was ad-

dressed; and that you yourself would return it to the postman when next he called. You gave your message verbally, accompanied by your card. This was about noon. By your card and from your evidence at the inquest I learned that your name is Roberto Cordella. You will, I hope, pardon my great minuteness, but all this is really of prime importance.'

The Italian was rolling up another cigarette; he paused, opened his half-closed eyes, and signified by a gracious gesture that he was paying attention and held himself completely at the disposal of the other.

'At twelve o'clock that night my father was murdered.'

'Yes,' through a dense cloud of tobacco smoke.

'About an hour ago I came on a document which I will now take the liberty of reading to you. It is in my father's handwriting and relates to an event in his own experience—I fear I'd better stop. Your heart seems to trouble you again.'

'It is nothing; pressing it thus relieves it. Please go on.'

John Bell drew the paper out of his breast coat pocket and began to read. When the foreigner saw the document he nestled still more cosily into the arm of the couch, rolled up another cigarette and, when it was closed, replaced his hand over his heart.

'This paper,' began Bell, 'is apparently the rough draft of a report, to whom furnished it does not say. It is dated Avonford, 18 September 1865:

Sir,—At the earliest moment my health will allow I hasten to furnish you with a report of the events connected with the loss of the customs boat, *Swift* and two men on the 14th ult.

On the afternoon of the 13th ult., the Italian barque *San Giovanni Batista* being then cleared out and hauled out into the tide-way ready for sea, I received information that the customs officer in charge was in some way or other to be tampered with, the seals on the ship's stores broken, and the twenty-six thousand cigars under seal run ashore as soon as it was dark. I immediately ordered four men—namely, James Archer, John Brown, William Flynn, and John Plucknett—into the *Swift* and pulled down to the *San Giovanni*, myself steering; and she being then about a mile to the westward of Dockyard point with her anchor hove short ready to trip before she tended on the first of the ebb.

It was dark before we made her out; the night was clear with a new moon but not much light. The wind was then pretty much up and down the mast, but any little air there was being off the land. All the barque's sails were

hanging loose. As soon as we got within half a mile or so we heard the windlass going. I stood up to watch her. I saw her head come up with a jerk and then I saw her veer when the anchor hung free. They began setting the sails, and the wind freshening a little the canvas commenced to fill, and she began to forge ahead. But I knew we could overhaul her, hand over hand, and we were overhauling her, for we were pulling two feet to her one.

We were coming up on her starboard quarter, and I saw a boat (not one of her own, they were all painted white, and this one was black and British built) by the starboard main-chains. 'The cigars are in that boat,' I thought, and I said to the men, 'Give way, men, give way with a will.'

My men gave way with a will, and I kept the *Swift* heading for the starboard mizen chains of the barque. There was fair steerage way on the barque now.

When we were about three cables' length astern I hailed the barque. She did not answer. A man came and looked over the taffarel and I heard an order given on deck. Upon the order being given the barque ported her helm until her head looked two points to port, then there was another order and the barque steadied her helm and kept on. This brought us right astern of the barque. The sails were now beginning to draw better every stroke we pulled, and as I did not like to lose any time I kept head on to her stern, although I did not a bit like her manœuvre.

As soon as we were about a cable's length off I hailed again. Still no answer. When we were half a cable's length I sang out once more. Said we were revenue officers and told them to come round and let us board.

'What do you want the ship to stop for?' asked the man at the tafferel whom I now knew quite well and who was not one of the crew of the *San Giovanni Batista*.

'Whose boat is that alongside?'

'The Vice-Consul's.'

'Send the customs' officer in charge aft.'

'He's gone ashore in the pilot's boat.'

'It's not time for either pilot or the customs' officer to go ashore yet. Who's taking the vessel out?'

'The channel pilot.'

'Come round, I say, I must board. I must see the captain and I must see the Vice-Consul's boat go ashore before I leave the ship.'

We were now only a couple of boats length from the stern post, dead astern. I did not like to yaw the boat to get round to the mizen chains, as it was easier to keep in the back water of the wake, and beside the barque had got more legs under her by this time, and I could do little more than keep up to her.

Foot by foot we drew up on the barque until at last we were right under the stern. I sang out again:

'If you won't come about heave us a line.'

'Ay, ay!' cried the man on the taffarel.

For a moment I saw him rise up, standing on the taffarel; he leaned forward with a heavy three-tackle block in his hand—I saw the moonlight through the block—and then dropped the block into the *Swift*. It came aboard on the foremost bow thwart, broke it in two, and stove out the bottom of the boat.

Before we could do anything the boat was full of water and turned bottom up. As long as we could we shouted. The barque kept her course until we could not even see her, and there was no other vessel in sight. James Archer, John Plucknett, and I clung on the bottom of the boat until morning, when the fishing boat *Toby* of Avonford saw us and took us off.

After the boat filled and turned over I never saw either John Brown or William Flynn alive. I saw the body of William Flynn when it was washed ashore next morning.

John Bell stopped reading, folded up the paper and replaced it in his breast pocket. As he did so he glanced at the recumbent Italian. The attitude of the latter was unchanged. Still the right hand thrust between the waistcoat and the breast of the shirt in the region of the heart; still the luxurious pose in the soft arm of the chair; still the everlasting cigarette and the cloud of ascending blue smoke. The foreigner now spoke in a voice of one who suffered not a little, and caught his breath uneasily.

'I have not the least dislike to tell you the answer to the question which I did not answer a while ago. There is at present none in this house but you, I, and the old woman, my servant and housekeeper. I am a bachelor, and there is no relative or friend or guest of mine under this roof now. Having answered you so far, and, as far as you have shown, answered you without knowing how the painful history you have read may be connected with your question, will you permit me to say that it is very late, and that I am far from well. I am most ill.'

'I am exceedingly sorry you should feel so poorly. I will not intrude much longer if you will permit me to explain.'

The Italian smiled languidly, signified that the other might proceed, and closed his eyes with an expression of great pain and exhaustion.

'I shall soon be done. The man who murdered the two men in the boat that night was interpreter to the Vice-Consul at Avonford. He

was never found to answer for that crime. My father knew that this man was to endeavour to run the cigars. Next day the Vice-Consul's boat with the cigars untouched was found in a bight of the Avon bay. But the Vice-Consul's interpreter, the murderer, was never found. The barque, bound to Callao, never arrived in any port; it is believed she foundered in mid-ocean.

'Now this Vice-Consul's clerk or interpreter, knew my father well by name and appearance, often had business intercourse with my father. On the night of the 4th of this month my father was murdered by this self-same Vice-Consul's clerk. As sure as I live here he murdered my poor father, Mr Cordella.'

'Why are you so sure of that? and what can I do for you in this sad case?' demanded the foreigner, in a tone so languid and so faint that John Bell was compelled to draw near and bend low in order to hear.

'In the forenoon of the 4th that letter came to No. 17, mis-addressed, intended to be left for Alessandro Pozzone at No. 7. You, Mr Cordella, forwarded my note to Pozzone with his own one; he recognized the name Bell, found out who my father was, lay in wait for my father and killed him before my poor father could get home and recognize the name of the man who fifteen years ago failed to do for him—for that Vice-Consul's clerk who let fall the block was Alessandro Pozzone.'

'I am completely prostrated by the news you tell me,' whispered the reclining man. 'Get me a little wine from the chiffonier. Since this matter is so dreadful I will now admit that I know Pozzone well. He represented to me his dangers were political, and I was sworn to divulge nothing about him.'

John Bell put an arm under the other man; from the fingers of the foreigner dropped the end of the half-smoked cigarette.

Bell held the wine to the recumbent man's lips. He drank a little and then whispered, 'Put down the wine. I can swallow no more. I am better—I am better, thank you; I shall be all right soon.' His right hand fell out of his breast, and lay upon the floor. 'Go on,' he whispered, 'I am most anxious to hear what you want me to do.'

'Tell me where Pozzone is.'

'I can, and I will. It is only right you should know, and at once. I will place him in your grasp in less than an hour. Ah! Ah, my breath once more—I am suffocating! Put your two strong arms round me and raise me.'

John Bell did as he was requested.

'Wait a second,' said the Italian, resting his two arms on the shoulders of the other.

'I can speak once more,' whispered the Italian. 'Your ear now. So. Now I will tell you where Pozzone is—In your arms! Now I will tell you where his knife is—In your heart!'

The Englishman drew himself up with a powerful effort, shook himself clear of his assailant, slipped his hand beneath his waistcoat as though to loose its strap, drew out the hand—

Bang!

But Pozzone had seen his action, and, suspecting it, dashed the hand aside. The ball struck the musical box, and with a loud crash smashed off the brake-end, the barrel began to revolve, and the teeth to vibrate—'Robin Adair'!

A superstitious fear seemed to seize upon Pozzone, and he whispered through his white lips, 'I played that air on the piano, and then I set the box to it and went out—'

Bang!

This time Pozzone staggered to his feet and steadied himself for an instant. He raised his hand to his forehead. His hand grew suddenly red.

'Warm and salt,' he cried; 'I set the box to "Robin Adair" and—went out. Curse it! What's this? Ah you'll never lift that revolver again, John Bell. Bell! Bell! "Robin Adair". I set the—there's "Robin Adair" again! Am I never to hear anything else here or in—— I set it to "Robin Adair" and went out—I am going out again! Am I to be always going out to the tune of "Robin Adair," here and in—hell?'