

The Man Who Cut Off My Hair

My name is Judith Lee. I am a teacher of the deaf and dumb. I teach them by what is called the oral system—that is, the lip-reading system. When people pronounce a word correctly they all make exactly the same movements with their lips, so that, without hearing a sound, you only have to watch them very closely to know what they are saying. Of course, this needs practice, and some people do it better and quicker than others. I suppose I must have a special sort of knack in that direction, because I do not remember a time when, by merely watching people speaking at a distance, no matter at what distance if I could see them clearly, I did not know what they were saying. In my case the gift, or knack, or whatever it is, is hereditary. My father was a teacher of the deaf and dumb—a very successful one. His father was, I believe, one of the originators of the oral system. My mother, when she was first married, had an impediment in her speech which practically made her dumb; though she was stone deaf, she became so expert at lip-reading that she could not only tell what others were saying, but she could speak herself—audibly, although she could not hear her own voice.

So you see, I have lived in the atmosphere of lip-reading all my life. When people, as they often do, think my skill at it borders on the marvelous, I always explain to them that it is nothing of the kind, that mine is simply a case of “practice makes perfect.” This knack of mine, in a way, is almost equivalent to another sense. It has led me into the most singular situations, and it has been the cause of many really extraordinary adventures. I will tell you of one which happened to me when I was quite a child, the details of which have never faded from my memory.

My father and mother were abroad, and I was staying, with some old and trusted servants, in a little cottage which we had in the country. I

suppose I must have been between twelve and thirteen years of age. I was returning by train to the cottage from a short visit which I had been paying to some friends. In my compartment there were two persons beside myself—an elderly woman who sat in front of me, and a man who was at the other end of her seat. At a station not very far from my home the woman got out; a man got in and placed himself beside the one who was already there. I could see they were acquaintances—they began to talk to each other.

They had been talking together for some minutes in such low tones that you could not only not hear their words, you could scarcely tell that they were speaking. But that made no difference to me; though they spoke in the tiniest whisper I had only to look at their faces to know exactly what they were saying. As a matter of fact, happening to glance up from the magazine I was reading, I saw the man who had been there first say to the other something which gave me quite a start. What he said was this (I only saw the fag-end of the sentence):

“...Myrtle Cottage; it’s got a great, old myrtle in the front garden.”

The other man said something, but as his face was turned from me I could not see what; the tone in which he spoke was so subdued that hearing was out of the question. The first man replied (whose face was to me):

“His name is Colegate. He’s an old bachelor, who uses the place as a summer cottage. I know him well—all the dealers know him. He’s got some of the finest old silver in England. There’s a Charles II salt-cellar in the place which would fetch twenty pounds an ounce anywhere.”

The other man sat up erect and shook his head, looking straight in front of him, so that I could see what he said, though he spoke only in a whisper.

“Old silver is no better than new; you can only melt it.”

The other man seemed to grow quite warm.

“Only melt it! Don’t be a fool; you don’t know what you’re talking about. I can get rid of old silver at good prices to collectors all over the

world; they don't ask too many questions when they think they're getting a bargain. That stuff at Myrtle Cottage is worth to us well over a thousand; I shall be surprised if I don't get more for it."

The other man must have glanced at me while I was watching his companion speak. He was a fair-haired man, with a pair of light blue eyes, and quite a nice complexion. He whispered to his friend:

"That infernal kid is watching us as if she were all eyes."

The other said: "Let her watch. Much good may it do her; she can't hear a word—goggle-eyed brat!"

What he meant by "goggle-eyed" I didn't know, and it was true that I could not hear; but, as it happened, it was not necessary that I should. I think the other must have been suspicious, because he replied, if possible, in a smaller whisper than ever:

"I should like to twist her skinny neck and throw her out on to the line"

He looked as if he could do it too; such an unpleasant look came into his eyes that it quite frightened me. After all, I was alone with them; I was quite small; it would have been perfectly easy for him to have done what he said he would like to. So I glanced back at my magazine, and left the rest of their conversation unwatched.

But I had heard, or rather seen, enough to set me thinking. I knew Myrtle Cottage quite well and the big myrtle tree; it was not very far from our own cottage. And I knew Mr. Colegate and his collection of old silver—particularly that Charles II salt-cellar of which he was so proud. What interest had it for these two men? Had Mr. Colegate come to the cottage? He was not there when I left. Or had Mr. and Mrs. Baines, who kept house for him—had they come? I was so young and so simple that it never occurred to me that there could be anything sinister about these two whispering gentlemen.

They both of them got out at the station before ours. Ours was a little village station, with a platform on only one side of the line; the one at which they got out served for quite an important place—our local market

town. I thought no more about them, but I did think of Mr. Colegate and of Myrtle Cottage. Dickson, our housekeeper, said that she did not believe that anyone was at the cottage, but she owned that she was not sure. So after tea I went for a stroll, without saying a word to anyone—Dickson had such a troublesome habit of wanting to know exactly where you were going. My stroll took me to Myrtle Cottage.

It stood all by itself in a most secluded situation on the other side of Woodbarrow Common. You could scarcely see the house from the road—it was quite a little house. When I got into the garden and saw that the front-room window was open I jumped to the very natural conclusion that some one must be there. I went quickly to the window—I was on the most intimate terms with every one about the place; I should never have dreamt of announcing my presence in any formal manner—and looked in. What I saw did surprise me.

In the room was the man of the train—the man who had been in my compartment first. He had what seemed to me to be Mr. Colegate's entire collection of old silver spread out, on the table in front of him, and that very moment he was holding up that gem of the collection—the Charles II salt-cellar. I had moved very quietly, meaning to take Mr. Colegate—if it was he—by surprise; but I doubt if I had made a noise that that man would have heard me, he was so wrapped up in that apple of Mr. Colegate's eye.

I did not know what to make of it at all. I did not know what to think. What was that man doing there? What was I to do? Should I speak to him? I was just trying to make up my mind when some one from behind lifted me right off my feet and, putting a hand to my throat, squeezed it so tightly that it hurt me.

“If you make a sound I'll choke the life right out of you. Don't you make any mistake about it—I will!”

He said that out loudly enough, though it was not so very loud either—he spoke so close to my ear. I could scarcely breathe, but I could still see, and I could see that the man who held me so horribly by the

throat was the second man of the train. The recognition seemed to be mutual.

“If it isn’t that infernal brat! She seemed to be all eyes in the railway carriage, and, my word, she seems to have been all ears too.”

The first man had come to the window.

“What’s up?” he asked. “Who’s that kid you’ve got hold of there?”

My captor twisted my face round for the other to look at.

“Can’t you see for yourself? I felt, somehow, that she was listening”

“She couldn’t have heard, even if she was; no one could have heard what we were saying. Hand her in here.” I was passed through the window to the other, who kept as tight a grip on my throat as his friend had done.

“Who are you?” he asked. “I’ll give you a chance to answer, but if you try to scream I’ll twist your head right off you.”

He loosed his grip just enough to enable me to answer if I wished. But I did not wish. I kept perfectly still. His companion said:

“What’s the use of wasting time? Slit her throat and get done with it.”

He took from the table a dreadful-looking knife, with a blade eighteen inches long, which I knew very well. Mr. Colegate had it in his collection because of its beautifully chased, massive silver handle. It had belonged to one of the old Scottish chieftains; Mr. Colegate would sometimes make me go all over goose-flesh by telling me of some of the awful things for which, in the old, lawless, blood-thirsty days in Scotland, it was supposed to have been used. I knew that he kept it in beautiful condition, with the edge as sharp as a razor. So you can fancy what my feelings were when that man drew the blade across my throat, so close to the skin that it all but grazed me.

“Before you cut her throat,” observed his companion, “we’ll tie her up. We’ll make short work of her. This bit of rope will about do the dodge.”

He had what looked to me like a length of clothes-line in his hand. With it, between them, they tied me to a great oak chair, so tight that it

seemed to cut right into me, and, lest I should scream with the pain, the man with the blue eyes tied something across my mouth in a way which made it impossible for me to utter a sound. Then he threatened me with that knife again, and just as I made sure he was going to cut my throat he caught hold of my hair, which, of course, was hanging down my back, and with that dreadful knife sawed the whole of it from my head.

If I could have got within reach of him at that moment I believe that I should have stuck that knife into him. Rage made me half beside myself. He had destroyed what was almost the dearest thing in the world to me—not because of my own love of it, but on account of my mother's. My mother had often quoted to me, "The glory of a woman is her hair," and she would add that mine was very beautiful. There certainly was a great deal of it. She was so proud of my hair that she had made me proud of it too—for her sake. And to think that this man could have robbed me of it in so hideous a way! I do believe that at the moment I could have killed him.

I suppose he saw the fury which possessed me, because he laughed and struck me across the face with my own hair.

"I've half a mind to cram it down your throat," he said. "It didn't take me long to cut it off, but I'll cut your throat even quicker—if you so much as try to move, my little dear."

The other man said to him :

"She can't move and she can't make a sound either. You leave her alone. Come over here and attend to business."

"I'll learn her," replied the other man, and he lifted my hair above my head and let it fall all over me.

They proceeded to wrap up each piece of Mr. Colegate's collection in tissue paper, and then to pack the whole into two queer-shaped bags—pretty heavy they must have been. It was only then that I realized what they were doing—they were stealing Mr. Colegate's collection; they were going to take it away. The fury which possessed me as I sat there, helpless, and watched them! The pain was bad enough, but my rage was

worse. When the man who had cut off my hair moved to the window with one of the bags held in both his hands—it was as much as he could carry—he said to his companion, with a glance towards me: “Hadn’t I better cut her throat before I go?”

“You can come and do that presently,” replied the other; “you’ll find her waiting.” Then he dropped his voice and I saw him say: “Now you quite understand?” The other nodded. “What is it?”

The face of the man who had cut my hair was turned towards me. He put his lips very close to the other, speaking in the tiniest whisper, which he never dreamed could reach my ears: “Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway.”

The other whispered, “That’s right. You’d better make a note of it; we don’t want any bungling.”

“No fear, I’m not likely to forget.” Then he repeated his previous words, “Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway.”

He whispered this so very earnestly that I felt sure there was something about the words which was most important; by the time he had said them a second time they were printed on my brain quite as indelibly as they were on his. He got out of the window and his bag was passed to him; then he spoke a parting word to me.

“Sorry I can’t take a lock of your hair with me; perhaps I’ll come back for one presently.”

Then he went. If he had known the passion which was blazing in my heart! That allusion to my desecrated locks only made it burn still fiercer. His companion, left alone, paid no attention to me whatever. He continued to secure his bag, searched the room, as if for anything which might have been overlooked, then, bearing the bag with the other half of Mr. Colegate’s collection with him, he went through the door, ignoring my presence as if I had never existed. What he did afterwards I cannot say; I saw no more of him; I was left alone—all through the night.

What a night it was. I was not afraid; I can honestly say that I have seldom been afraid of anything—I suppose it is a matter of tempera-

ment—but I was most uncomfortable, very unhappy, and each moment the pain caused me by my bonds seemed to be growing greater. I do believe that the one thing which enabled me to keep my senses all through the night was the constant repetition of those mystic words: “Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway.” In the midst of my trouble I was glad that what some people call my curious gift had enabled me to see what I was quite sure they had never meant should reach my understanding. What the words meant I had no notion; in themselves they seemed to be silly words. But that they had some hidden, weighty meaning I was so sure that I kept saying them over and over again lest they should slip through my memory.

I do not know if I ever closed my eyes; I certainly never slept. I saw the first gleams of light usher in the dawn of another morning, and I knew the sun had risen. I wondered what they were doing at home—between the repetitions of that cryptic phrase. Was Dickson looking for me? I rather wished I had let her know where I was going, then she might have had some idea of where to look. As it was she had none. I had some acquaintances three or four miles off, with whom I would sometimes go to tea and, without warning to anyone at home, stay the night. I am afraid that, even as a child, my habits were erratic. Dickson might think I was staying with them, and, if so, she would not even trouble to look for me. In that case I might have to stay where I was for days.

I do not know what time it was, but it seemed to me that it had been light for weeks, and that the day must be nearly gone, when I heard steps outside the open window. I was very nearly in a state of stupor, but I had still sense enough to wonder if it was that man who had cut my hair come back again to cut my throat. As I watched the open sash my heart began to beat more vigorously than it had for a very long time. What, then, was my relief when there presently appeared, on the other side of it, the face of Mr. Colegate, the owner of Myrtle Cottage. I tried to scream—with joy, but that cloth across my mouth prevented my uttering a sound.

I never shall forget the look which came on Mr. Colegate's face when he saw me. He rested his hands on the sill as if he wondered how the window came to be open, then when he looked in and saw me, what a jump he gave.

“Judith!” he exclaimed. “Judith Lee! Surely it is Judith Lee!”

He was a pretty old man, or he seemed so to me, but I doubt if a boy could have got through that window quicker than he did. He was by my side in less than no time; with a knife which he took from his pocket was severing my bonds. The agony which came over me as they were loosed! It was worse than anything which had gone before. The moment my mouth was free I exclaimed—even then I was struck by the funny, hoarse voice in which I seemed to be speaking:

“Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway.”

So soon as I had got those mysterious words out of my poor, parched throat I fainted; the agony I was suffering, the strain which I had gone through, proved too much for me. I knew dimly that I was tumbling into Mr. Colegate's arms, and then I knew no more.

When I came back to life I was in bed. Dickson was at my bedside, and Dr. Scott, and Mr. Colegate, and Pierce, the village policeman, and a man who I afterwards knew was a detective, who had been sent over post-haste from a neighbouring town. I wondered where I was, and then I saw I was in a room in Myrtle Cottage. I sat up in bed, put up my hands—then it all came back to me.

“He cut off my hair with MacGregor's knife!” MacGregor was the name of the Highland chieftain to whom, according to Mr. Colegate, that dreadful knife had belonged.

When it did all come back to me and I realized what had happened, and felt how strange my head seemed without its accustomed covering, nothing would satisfy me but that they should bring me a looking-glass. When I saw what I looked like, the rage which had possessed me when the outrage first took place surged through me with greater force than ever. Before they could stop me, or even guess what I was going to do, I

was out of bed and facing them. That cryptic utterance came back to me as if of its own initiative; it burst from my lips.

“‘Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway!’ Where are my clothes? That’s where the man is who cut off my hair.”

They stared at me. I believe that for a moment they thought that what I had endured had turned my brain, and that I was mad. But I soon made it perfectly clear that I was nothing of the kind. I told them my story as fast as I could speak; I fancy I brought it home to their understanding. Then I told them of the words which I had seen spoken in such a solemn whisper, and how sure I was that they were pregnant with weighty meaning.

“‘Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway’—that’s where the man is who cut my hair off—that’s where I’m going to catch him.”

The detective was pleased to admit that there might be something in my theory, and that it would be worth while to go up to Victoria Station to see what the words might mean. Nothing would satisfy me but that we should go at once. I was quite convinced that every moment was of importance, and that if we were not quick we should be too late. I won Mr. Colegate over—of course, he was almost as anxious to get his collection back as I was to be quits with the miscreant who had shorn me of my locks. So we went up to town by the first train we could catch—Mr. Colegate, the detective, and an excited and practically hairless child.

When we got to Victoria Station we marched straight up to the cloak-room, and the detective said to one of the persons on the other side of the counter: “Is there a parcel here for the name of Cotterill?” The person to whom he had spoken did not reply, but another man who was standing by his side.

“Cotterill? A parcel for the name of Cotterill has just been taken out—a hand-bag, scarcely more than half a minute ago. You must have seen him walking off with it as you came up. He can hardly be out of sight now.” Leaning over the counter, he looked along the platform.

“There he is—some one is just going to speak to him.”

I saw the person to whom he referred—a shortish man in a light grey suit, carrying a brown leather hand-bag. I also saw the person who was going to speak to him; and thereupon I ceased to have eyes for the man with the bag. I broke into exclamation.

“There’s the man who cut my hair!” I cried. I went rushing along the platform as hard as I could go. Whether the man had heard me or not I cannot say; I dare say I had spoken loudly enough; but he gave one glance in my direction, and when he saw me I have no doubt that he remembered. He whispered to the man with the bag. I was near enough to see, though not to hear, what he said. In spite of the rapidity with which his lips were moving, I saw quite distinctly.

“Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street.” That was what he said, and no sooner had he said it than he turned and fled—from me; I knew he was flying from me, and it gave me huge satisfaction to know that the mere sight of me had made him run. I was conscious that Mr. Colegate and the detective were coming at a pretty smart pace behind me.

The man with the bag, seeing his companion dart off without the slightest warning, glanced round to see what had caused his hasty flight. I suppose he saw me and the detective and Mr. Colegate, and he drew his own conclusions. He dropped that hand-bag as if it had been red-hot, and off he ran. He ran to such purpose that we never caught him—neither him nor the man who had cut my hair. The station was full of people—a train had just come in. The crowd streaming out covered the platform with a swarm of moving figures. They acted as cover to those two eager gentlemen—they got clean off. But we got the bag; and, one of the station officials coming on the scene, we were shown to an apartment where, after explanations had been made, the bag and its contents were examined.

Of course, we had realized from the very first moment that Mr. Colegate’s collection could not possibly be in that bag, because it was not nearly large enough. When it was seen what was in it, something like a

sensation was created. It was crammed with small articles of feminine clothing. In nearly every garment jewels were wrapped, which fell out of them as they were withdrawn from the bag. Such jewels! You should have seen the display they made when they were spread out upon the leather-covered table—and our faces as we stared at them.

“This does not look like my collection of old silver,” observed Mr. Colegate.

“No,” remarked a big, broad-shouldered man, who I afterwards learned was a well-known London detective, who had been induced by our detective to join our party. “This does not look like your collection of old silver, sir; it looks, if you’ll excuse my saying so, like something very much more worth finding. Unless I am mistaken, these are the Duchess of Datchet’s jewels, some of which she wore at the last Drawing Room, and which were taken from her Grace’s bedroom after her return. The police all over Europe have been looking for them for more than a month.”

“That bag has been with us nearly a month. The party who took it out paid four-and-sixpence for cloak-room charges—twopence a day for twenty-seven days.”

The person from the cloak-room had come with us to that apartment; it was he who said this. The London detective replied:

“Paid four-and-sixpence, did he? Well, it was worth it—to us. Now, if I could lay my hand on the party who put that bag in the cloak-room, I might have a word of a kind to say to him.”

I had been staring, wide-eyed, as piece by piece the contents of the bag had been disclosed; I had been listening, open-eared, to what the detective said; when he made that remark about laying his hands on the party who had deposited that bag in the cloak-room, there came into my mind the words which I had seen the man who had cut my hair whisper as he fled to the man with the bag. The cryptic sentence which I had seen him whisper as I sat tied to the chair had indeed proved to be full of meaning; the words which, even in the moment of flight, he had felt

bound to utter might be just as full. I ventured on an observation, the first which I had made, speaking with a good deal of diffidence.

“I think I know where he might be found—I am not sure, but I think.”

All eyes were turned to me. The detective exclaimed:

“You think you know? As we haven’t got so far as thinking, if you were to tell us, little lady, what you think, it might be as well, mightn’t it?”

I considered—I wanted to get the words exactly right.

“Suppose you were to try”—I paused so as to make quite sure—
“Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street.”

“And who is Bantock?” the detective asked. “And what do you know about him, anyhow?”

“I don’t know anything at all about him, but I saw the man who cut my hair whisper to the other man just before he ran away, ‘Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street’—I saw him quite distinctly.”

“You saw him whisper? What does the girl mean by saying she saw him whisper? Why, young lady, you must have been quite fifty feet away. How, at that distance, and with all the noise of the traffic, could you hear a whisper?”

“I didn’t say I heard him; I said I saw him. I don’t need to hear to know what a person is saying. I just saw you whisper to the other man, ‘The young lady seems to be by way of being a curiosity.’”

The London detective stared at our detective. He seemed to be bewildered.

“But I—I don’t know how you heard that; I scarcely breathed the words.”

Mr. Colegate explained. When they heard they all seemed to be bewildered, and they looked at me, as people do look at the present day, as if I were some strange and amazing thing. The London detective said: “I never heard the like to that. It seems to me very much like what old-fashioned people called ‘black magic.’”

Although he was a detective, he could not have been a very intelli-

gent person after all, or he would not have talked such nonsense. Then he added, with an accent on the “saw”:

“What was it you said you *saw* him whisper?”

I bargained before I told him.

“I will tell you if you let me come with you.”

“Let you come with me?” He stared still more. “What does the girl mean?”

“Her presence,” struck in Mr. Colegate, “may be useful for purposes of recognition. She won’t be in the way; you can do no harm by letting her come.”

“If you don’t promise to let me come I shan’t tell you.”

The big man laughed. He seemed to find me amusing; I do not know why. If he had only understood my feeling on the subject of my hair, and how I yearned to be even with the man who had wrought me what seemed to me such an irreparable injury. I dare say it sounds as if I were very revengeful. I do not think it was a question of vengeance only; I wanted justice. The detective took out a fat note-book.

“Very well; it’s a bargain. Tell me what you saw him whisper, and you shall come.” So I told him again, and he wrote it down. “‘Bantock, 13 Harwood Street, Oxford Street.’ I know Harwood Street, though I don’t know Mr. Bantock. But he seems to be residing at what is generally understood to be an unlucky number. Let me get a message through to the Yard—we may want assistance. Then we’ll pay a visit to Mr. Bantock—if there is such a person. It sounds like a very tall story to me.”

I believe that even then he doubted if I had seen what I said I saw. When we did start I was feeling pretty nervous, because I realized that if we were going on a fool’s errand, and there did turn out to be no Bantock, that London detective would doubt me more than ever. And, of course, I could not be sure that there was such a person, though it was some comfort to know that there was a Harwood Street. We went four in a cab—the two detectives, Mr. Colegate and I. We had gone some distance before the cab stopped. The London detective said:

“This is Harwood Street; I told the driver to stop at the corner—we will walk the rest of the way. A cab might arouse suspicion; you never know.”

It was a street full of shops. No. 13 proved to be a sort of curiosity shop and jeweller’s combined; quite a respectable-looking place, and sure enough over the top of the window was the name “Bantock.”

“That looks as if, at any rate, there were a Bantock,” the big man said; it was quite a weight off my own mind when I saw the name.

Just as we reached the shop a cab drew up and five men got out, whom the London detective seemed to recognize with mingled feelings.

“That’s queered the show,” he exclaimed. I did not, know what he meant. “They rouse suspicion, if they do nothing else—so in we go.”

And in we went—the detective first, and I close on his heels. There were two young men standing close together behind the counter. The instant we appeared I saw one whisper to the other:

“Give them the office—ring the alarm-bell—they’re ’tecs!”

I did not quite know what he meant either, but I guessed enough to make me cry out:

“Don’t let him move—he’s going to ring the alarm-bell and give them the office.”

Those young men were so startled—they must have been quite sure that I could not have heard—that they both stood still and stared; before they had got over their surprise a detective—they were detectives who had come in the second cab—had each by the shoulder.

There was a door at the end of the shop, which the London detective opened.

“There’s a staircase here; we’d better go up and see who’s above. You chaps keep yourselves handy, you may be wanted—when I call you come.”

He mounted the stairs—as before, I was as close to him as I could very well get. On the top of the staircase was a landing, on to which two doors opened. We paused to listen; I could distinctly hear voices coming

through one of them.

“I think this is ours,” the London detective said.

He opened the one through which the voices were coming. He marched in—I was still as close to him as I could get. In it were several men, I did not know how many, and I did not care; I had eyes for only one. I walked right past the detective up to the table round which some of them were sitting, some standing, and stretching out an accusatory arm I pointed at one.

“That’s the man who cut off my hair!”

It was, and well he knew it. His conscience must have smitten him; I should not have thought that a grown man could be so frightened at the sight of a child. He caught hold, with both hands, of the side of the table; he glared at me as if I were some dreadful apparition—and no doubt to him I was. It was only with an effort that he seemed able to use his voice.

“Good night!” he exclaimed, “it’s that infernal kid!”

On the table, right in front of me, I saw something with which I was only too familiar. I snatched it up.

“And this is the knife,” I cried, “with which he did it!”

It was; the historical blade, which had once belonged to the sanguinary and, I sincerely trust, more or less apocryphal MacGregor. I held it out towards the gaping man.

“You know that this is the knife with which you cut off my hair,” I said. “You know it is.”

I dare say I looked a nice young termagant with my short hair, rage in my eyes, and that frightful weapon in my hand. Apparently I did not impress him quite as I had intended—at least, his demeanour did not suggest it.

“By the living Jingo!” he shouted, “I wish I had cut her throat with it as well!”

It was fortunate for him that he did not. Probably, in the long run, he would have suffered for it more than he did—though he suffered pretty badly as it was. It was his cutting my hair that did it. Had he not done

that I have little doubt that I should have been too conscious of the pains caused me by my bonds—the marks caused by the cord were on my skin for weeks after—to pay such close attention to their proceedings as I did under the spur of anger. Quite possibly that tell-tale whisper would have gone unnoticed. Absorbed by my own suffering, I should have paid very little heed to the cryptic sentence which really proved to be their undoing. It was the outrage to my locks which caused me to strain every faculty of observation I had. He had much better have left them alone.

That was the greatest capture the police had made for years. In one haul they captured practically every member of a gang of cosmopolitan thieves who were wanted by the police all over the world. The robbery of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver shrank into insignificance before the rest of their misdeeds. And not only were the thieves taken themselves, but the proceeds of no end of robberies.

It seemed that they had met there for a sort of annual division of the common spoil. There was an immense quantity of valuable property before them on the table, and lots more about the house. Those jewels which were in the bag which had been deposited at the cloak-room at Victoria Station were to have been added to the common fund—to say nothing of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver.

The man who called himself Bantock, and who owned the premises at 13 Harwood Street, proved to be a well-known dealer in precious stones and jewellery and bric-à-brac and all sorts of valuables. He was immensely rich; it was shown that a great deal of his money had been made by buying and selling valuable stolen property of every sort and land. Before the police had done with him it was made abundantly clear that, under various *aliases*, in half the countries of the world, he had been a wholesale dealer in stolen goods. He was sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. I am not quite sure, but I believe that he died in jail.

All the men who were in that room were sent to prison for different terms, including the man who cut my hair—to say nothing of his companion. So far as the proceedings at the court were concerned, I never

appeared at all. Compared to some of the crimes of which they had been guilty, the robbery of Mr. Colegate's silver was held to be a mere nothing. They were not charged with it at all, so my evidence was not required. But every time I looked at my scanty locks, which took years to grow to anything like a decent length—they had reached to my knees, but they never did that again—each time I stood before a looking-glass and saw what a curious spectacle I presented with my closely clipped poll, something of that old rage came back to me which had been during that first moment in my heart, and I felt—what I felt when I was tied to that chair in Myrtle Cottage. I endeavoured to console myself, in the spirit of the Old World rather than the New, that, owing to the gift which was mine, I had been able to cry something like quits with the man who, in a moment of mere wanton savagery, had deprived me of what ought to be the glory of a woman.