**CHAPTER 14x At Port Stowe**

Ten o'clock the neist mornin fand Mr. Mervel, stibble chikked, clarty, an

traivel-merked, sittin wit the buiks aside him an his hauns deep in his pooches, luikin verra trauchelt, jittery, an uncomfy, an pluffin oot his chikks at antrin whyles, on the bench ootside a wee howf ootbye Port Stowe. Aside him wir the buiks, bit noo they wir rowed up wi towe. The bunnle hid bin tint in the pine-wids ayont Bramblehurst, in keepin wi a cheenge in the plans o the Inveesible Chiel. Mr. Mervel sat on the bench, an tho naebody tuik the slichtest tent o him, his wirry bedd fever hett. His hauns wid gae ower an ower tae his antrin pooches wi a fey jittery fummlin.

Fin he’d bin sittin fur the best pairt o an oor, hoosaeiver, an auld sailor, cairryin a paper, cam ooto the howf an sat doon aside him. "Pleisunt day," quo the sailor.

Mr. Mervel keekit aboot him wi somethin verra like unca fleg. "Verra," quo he.

"Jist sizzonable weather fur the time o year," reponed the sailor, cairryin on.

"Aye," quo Mr. Mervel.

The sailor tuik oot a teethpowk, an (savin his regaird) wis eident thereby fur a wheen meenits. His een betimes wir free tae owerluik Mr. Mervel's stoory corp, an the buiks aside him. As he’d cam up tae Mr. Mervel he’d heard a soun like the drappin o coins intae a pooch. He wis struck bi the contrast o Mr. Mervel's luik wi thon hint o siller. Sae his thochts wannered back again tae a topic that hid taen a fey ticht haud o his harns.

"Buiks?" speired he o a suddenty, loodly feenishin wi the teethpowk.

Mr. Mervel jinkit an luiked at them. "Och, aye," quo he . "Ae, they're buiks."

"There's some by-ordnar ferlies in buiks," reponed the sailor.

"I believe ye," quo Mr. Mervel.

"An some extra-ordnar ferlies ooto them," the sailor carried.

"True as weel," quo Mr. Mervel. He eed his back speirer, an syne keeked aboot him.

"There's some extra-ordnar ferlies in papers, fur example," quo the sailor.

"There are."

"In this paper," spak the sailor.

"Ach!" quo Mr. Mervel.

"There's a tale," reponed the sailor, fixin Mr. Mervel wi an ee that wis firm an cannie; "there's a tale aboot an Inveesible Chiel, fur instance."

Mr. Mervel pued his mou agley an scrattit his chikk an felt his lugs reiddenin. "Fit’ll they be screivin neist?" he speired dweebly . "Austria, or America?"

"Neither," quo the sailor. "Here."

"Loshty!" spak Mr. Mervel, stertin.

"Fin I say here," reponed the sailor, tae Mr. Mervel's strang relief, "I dinna

of coorse mean here in this placie, I mean hereaboots."

"An Inveesible Chiel!" quo Mr. Mervel. "An fit's he bin up tae?"

"Aathin," spak the sailor, controllin Mervel wi his ee, an syne amplifeein, "ilkie--blessed--ferlie."

"I hinna seen a paper thon fower days," quo Mervel.

"Iping's the placie he stertit at," reponed the sailor.

"In-deed!" quo Mr. Mervel.

"He stertit thonner. An far he cam frae, naebody seems tae ken. Here it is: Fey Tale frae Iping.' An it sez in this paper that the pruif is byordnar strang—byordnar."

"Loshty!" cried Mr. Mervel.

"Bit syne, it's a byordnar tale. There’s a meenister an a sawbanes witnesses--saw him aa richt an fair--or leastways didnae see him. He wis bidin, it sez, at the 'Cairraige an Shelts,' an naebody seems tae hae bin awaur o his misfortune, it sez, awaur o his misfortune, until in a set-tee in the howf, it sez, his bandages on his heid wis rugged aff. It wis syne noted that his heid wis inveesible. Warssles wir aince vrocht tae catch him, bit haivin aff his claes, it sez, he succeeded in winnin awa, bit nae until efter a strang tulzie, in which he’d vrocht sair hurts, it sez, on oor wirthy an able polis chiel, Mr. J. A. Jaffers. Gey fey tale, eh? nemmes an aathin."

"Loshty!" quo Mr. Mervel, luikin jittery aboot him, ettlin tae coont the siller in his pooches bi his unaided sense o finnin, an fu o a fey an unca idea. "It souns maist byordnar."

"Disn’t it? Byordnar, I caa it. Niver heard spikk o Inveesible Chiels afore, I hinna, bit nooadays a body hears sic a heeze o byordnar ferlies--that--"

"Thon aa he did?" speired Mervel, ettlin tae seem at his ease.

"It's eneuch, is it nae?" quo the sailor.

"Didnae gae back bi ony chaunce?" socht Mervel. "Jist escaped an thon's aa, eh?"

"Aa!" quo the sailor. "Fyauch!—is it nae eneuch?"

"Quite eneuch," spakk Mervel.

"I should think it wis eneuch," quo the sailor. "I should think it wis eneuch."

"He didnae hae ony friens--it didnae say he’d ony friens, dis it?" socht Mr. Mervel, jittery.

"Is ane a thon sort nae eneuch fur ye?" speired the sailor. "Na, thank Heiven, as a body micht say, he didnae."

He noddit his heid slawly. "It makks me reg’lar uncomfy, the bare thocht o thon chiel rinnin aboot the kintra! He is eenoo gaun aboot, an frae certain pruifs it’s jeloused that he’s--taen--taen, I jelouse they mean--the road tae Port Stowe. Ye see we're richt on it! Nane o yer American winners, thon time. An jist think o the ferlies he micht dae! Far'd ye be, gin he tuik a drap ower an abune, an hid a notion tae gae fur ye? Suppose he wints tae chore--fa can stop him? He can trespass, he can chore, he could wauk throwe a cercle o polis chiels as easy as me or ye could jink a blin body! Easier! Fur thon here blin bodies hear byordnar sherp, I'm telt. An fariver there wis drink he fancied--"

"He's got a michty advauntage, o a certainty," quo Mr. Mervel.

"An--weel..."

"Ye're richt," quo the sailor. "He his."

Aa thon time Mr. Mervel hid bin teetin aboot him cannily, lippenin fur feint fitfaas, ettlin tae takk tent o a hint o meevements. He seemed on the pynt o some muckle deceesion. He hoastit ahin his haun.

He luikit aboot him again, lippened, booed tae the sailor, an laighered his vyce: "The fack o it is--I happen--tae ken jist a thing or twa aboot this Inveesible Chiel. Frae private soorces."

"Ma Certes!" quo the sailor, interestit. "Ye?"

"Aye," quo Mr. Mervel. "Me."

"Loshty!" spakk the sailor. "An micht I speir--"

"Ye'll be bumbazed," reponed Mr. Mervel ahin his haun. "It's a stammygaster."

"Ma Certes!" repeatit the sailor.

"The fack is," stertit Mr. Mervel eager like in a secret fusper. O a suddenty his luik cheenged mervellously. "Ooya!" he cried. He raise stiff in his seat. His face wis fu o pheesical sufferin."Ooya!" quo he.

"Fit's up?" quo the sailor, consarned.

"Teethache," spakk Mr. Mervel, an pit his haun tae his lug. He catched haud o his buiks. "I maun be gettin on, I think," quo he. He hodged in a fey wey alang the seat awa frae hisback speirer.

"Bit ye wis jist gaun tae tell me aboot the Inveesible Chiel!"

girned the sailor.

Mr. Mervel seemed tae check maitters wi himsel.

"Hoax," quo a Vyce.

"It's a hoax," spakk Mr. Mervel.

"Bit it's in the paper," reponed the sailor.

"Hoax aa the same," quo Mervel. "I ken the billie that stertit the lee. There’s nae Inveesible Chiel at aa--Loshty."

"Bit fit aboot this paper? D'ye mean tae say--?"

"Nae a wird of it," quo Mervel, stootly.

The sailor glowered, paper in haun. Mr. Mervel yarked faced aboot.

"Wyte a bittie," cried the sailor, risin an spikkin slaw, "D'ye mean tae say--?"

"I dae," quo Mr. Mervel.

"Syne foo did ye lat me gae on an tell ye aa this dashed styte, efter? Fit d'ye mean bi lattin a chiel makk a gype o himsel like that fur? Eh?"

Mr. Marvel blew oot his chikks. The sailor wis o a suddenty verra reid indeed; he grippit his hauns. "I’ve bin spikkin here this ten meenits," quo he ; "an ye, ye wee creashie, leathery-faced loon o an auld buit, couldnae hae the basic mainners--"

"Dinna ye cam flingin wirds at me," quo Mr. Mervel.

"Flingin wirds! I've a richt guid mind--"

"Cam up," cried a Vyce, an Mr. Mervel wis o a suddenty furled aboot

an stertit merchin aff in a fey yarkin mainner.

"Ye'd better meeve on," quo the sailor.

"Fa's meevin on?" speired Mr. Mervel. He wis reversin in a fey wey wi a glekit hashin mainner, wi the antrin forcie yarks forrit. Some wey alang the road he stertit a mummlin spikk, girns an blames.

"Gypit deil!" quo the sailor, shanks wide apairt, elbucks up, watchin the recedin corp. "I'll shaw ye, ye glekit neep—hoaxin me! It's here--in the paper!"

Mr. Mervel spakk in a ramblin wey an, recedin, wis happpit bi a turn in the road, bit the sailor still stude grand in the mids o the wey, until the oncam o a butcher's cairt meeved him. Syne he turned himsel tae Port Stowe. "Fu o byordnar gypes," quo he saftly tae himsel. "Jist tae takk me doon a bittie—thon wis his daft gemme--It's inn the paper!"

An there wis anither byordnar ferlie he wis sune tae hear, that hid happened richt near tae him. An thon wis a veesion o a "neive fu o siller" (nae less) traivellin withoot veesible help, alang bi the waa at the neuk o St. Michael's Lane. A brither sailor hid seen this winnerfu sicht thon verra mornin. He’d cleukit at the siller furthwith an hid bin caad heidlang, an fin he’d won tae his feet the butterflee siller hid vanished. Oor sailor wis in the mood tae believe onythin, quo he, bit thon wis a bittie ower stiff. Efterwirds, hooesaever, he stertit tae think things ower.

The tale o the fleein siller wis true. An aa aboot thon neeborhood, even frae the prood Lunnon an Kintra Bankin Company, frae the tills o shoppies an howfs—yetts staunin thon sunny weather aathegither ajee-- siller hid bin quaetly an deftly makkin aff thon day in haunfus an rolls, floatin quaetly alang bi waas an shady placies, jinkin faist frae the oncamin een o chiels. An it hid, tho nae chiel hid follaed it, aywis eyndit its fey flicht in the pooch o thon vrocht up chiel in the auld farrant silk hat, sittin ootside the wee howf on the ootskirts o Port Stowe.

It wis ten days efter--an forbye anely fin the Burdock tale wis already auld--that the sailor mulled ower thon facks an stertit tae unnerstaun foo near he’d bin tae the winnerfu Inveesible Chiel.