**CHAPTER XVIx**

**In The "Blythe Cricketers"**

The "Blythe Cricketers" is jist at the boddom o the knowe, far the tram-lines stert. The bar cheil raxxed his creashie reid airms on the coonter an blethered o shelts wi an peely wally cabbie, while a blaik-bearded body in grey snappit up biscuit an cheese, suppit Burton, an newsed in American wi a bobby aff wark.

"Fit's the skreichin aboot!" quo the peely wally cabbie, gaun aff at anither coorse, ettlin tae see up the knowe ower the clarty yalla blind inthe laigh windae o the howf. Some cheil ran by ootbye. "Lowe, mebbe,"spakk the bar spakk.

Fitsteps cam nearhaun, rinnin wechtily, the yett wis dang lowsed forcey, an Mervel, greetin an bumshayvelt, his bunnet gaen, the neck o his jaiket torn lowse, breenged in, made a faist furl, an ettled tae steek the yett. It wis held hauf ajee bi a strap.

"Camin!" he skirled, his voyce skreichin wi fleg. "He's camin.The 'Veesible Cheil! Efter me! Fur God's sake! Help! Help! Help!"

"Steek the yetts," quo the bobby. "Fa’s camin? Fit's the steer?" He gaed up tae the yett, lowsed the strap, an it slammed tee. The American steekit the ither yett.

"Lat me gae inbye," socht Mervel, hyterin an greetin, bit aye gruppin the buiks. "Lat me gae inbye. Steek me in--somewye. I tell ye he's efter me. I jouk awa frae him. He telt me he'd kill me an he will."

"Yer aa richt," quo the cheil wi the blaik beard. "The yett's steekit. Fit's it aa aboot?"

"Lat me gae inbye," quo Mervel, an skreiched alood as a cloor o a suddenty gar the faistened yett trimmle an wis follaed bi a faist chappin an a skirlin ootbye. "Weel weel," the quo the bobby , "fa's thonner?" Mr. Mervel sterted tae makk forcey lowps at panels that luikit like yetts. "He'll kill me--he's gotten a knife or some ferlie. Fur God's sake--!"

"Here ye are," spakk the bar cheil. "Cam in here." An he heistit up the flap o the bar.

Mr. Mervel breenged ahin the bar as the stramash ootbye wis repeatit. "Dinna unsteek the yett," he skirled. "Please dinna unsteek the yett. Far’ll I hide?"

"This, this Inveesible Cheil, syne?" speired the cheil wi the blaik beard, wi ae haun ahin him. "I jelouse it's aboot time we saw him."

The windae o the howf wis o a suddenty brukken, an there wis a skirlin an rinnin back an forrit in the street. The bobby hid bin staunin on the settee glowerin oot, raxxin tae see fa wis at the yett. He got doon wi heistit eebroos. "It's thon," quo he .The bar cheil stude afore the bar-parlour yett that wis noo steekit on Mr. Mervel, glowered at the brukken windae, an cam roon tae the twa ither cheils.

Aathin wis o a suddenty quaet. "I wish I’d ma truncheon," quo the bobby, gaun fearie-like tae the yett. "Aince we lowse it, in he cams. There's nae stopping him."

"Dinna ye be in ower muckle hash aboot thon yett," quo the peely wally cabbie, worriet-like.

"Unsteek the snibs," the cheil wi the blaik beard telt him, "an gin he cams--" He shawed a revolver in his haun.

"Thon winna dae," quo the bobby; "thon's murder."

"I ken fit kintra I'm in," reponed the cheil wi the beard. "I'm gaun tae lat aff at his shanks. Unsteek the snibs."

"Nae wi thon blessed thing gaun aff ahin me," quo the bar cheil, raxxin ower the blind.

"Verra weel," quo the cheil wi the blaik beard, an booin doon, revolver ready, drew them himsel. Bar cheil, cabbie, an bobby luikit aboot.

"Cam in," mummlit the beardit cheil in an fusper, staunin back an facin the unsteekit yetts wi his pistol ahin him. Naebody cam in, the yett bedd steekit. Five meenits efterwirds fan a secunt cabbie raxxed his head in cannie, they wir aye wytin, an a worriet face keekit ooto the bar-parlour an gaed information. "Are aa the yetts o the hoose steekit?" speired Mervel."He's gaun roon-- creepin roon. He's as ill-trickit as the deil."

"Gweed sakes!" quo the hefty bar cheil. "Thon's the back! Jist watch the yetts! I say--!" He luikit aboot him eeselessly. The bar-parlour yett slammed an they heard the key furled. "There's the yaird yett an the private yett. The yaird yett--"

He breenged ooto the bar. In a meenit he reappeared wi a carvin-knife in his haun. "The yaird yett wis ajee!" quo he, an his creashie unnerlip drappit. "He micht be in the hoose noo!" quo the first cabbie.

"He's nae in the kitchie," quo the bar cheil. "There's twa weemen thonner, an I've stabbed ilkie inch o it wi this wee beef slicer. An they dinna think he's cam in. They hinna taen tent --"

"Hae ye faistened it?" speired the first cabbie.

"I'm ooto snibs," quo the bar cheil.

The cheil wi the beard pit back his revolver. An even as he did sae the flap o the bar wis steekit an the snib clickit, an syne wi a muckle dunt the snib o the yett snappit an the bar-parlour yett burst ajee. They heard Mervel squalloch like a catched bawdie, an syne they wir sclimmin ower the bar tae his rescue. The bearded cheil’s revolver crackit an the keekin-glaiss at the back o the parlour crackit an cam dirdin an trinklin doon.

As the bar cheil gaed intae the yett he saw Mervel, unca cooried up an warsslin agin the yett that led tae the yaird an kitchie. The yett flew ajee while the bar cheil dauchled, an Mervel wis ruggit intae the kitchie. There wis a skirl an a clattervengeance o pans. Mervel, heid doon, an haudin back thrawn like wis forced tae the kitchie yett, an the snibs were drawn.

Syne the bobby, fa’d bin ettlin tae pass the bar cheil, breenged in, follaed bi ane o the cabbies, gruppit the wrist o the inveesible haun that held ontae Mervel, wis duntit in the face an gaed birlin back. The yett lowsed, an Mervel made a forcey tcyauve tae win a ludgment ahin it. Syne the cabbie gruppit somethin."I ‘ve catched him," quo the cabbie. The bar cheil's reid hauns cam cleukin at the unseen. "Here he is!" quo the bar cheil.

Mr. Mervel, lat free, so a suddenty drappit tae the grun an ettled tae creep ahin the shanks o the fechtin cheils. The warssle fummlit roon the side o the yett. The voyce o the Inveesible Cheil wis heard fur the first time, squallochin oot sherp, as the bobby trampit on his fit. Syne he skreched oot wi virr an his neives flew roon like flails. The cabbie o a suddenty skreiched an doubled up, kickit in the kyte. The yett intae the bar-parlour frae the kitchie slammed an cooered at Mr. Mervel's retreat. The cheils in the kitchie fand thirsels gruppin at an warsslin wi teem air.

"Fa's he gane?" speired the cheil wi the beard. "Oot?"

"This wey," quo the bobby, steppin intae the yaird an stoppin.

A daud o tile finnged by his heid an brukk amang the crockery on the kitchie brod.

"I'll shaw him," skirled the cheil wi the blaik beard, an o a suddenty a steel barrel glimmered ower the bobby's shouder, an five bullets hid fallowed ane anither intae the gloamin far the missile hid cam frae. As he fired, the cheil wi the beard meeved his haun in a horizontal arc, sae that his shots spreid oot intae the nerra yaird like spokes frae a wheel.

A seelence follaed. "Five cartridges," quo the cheil wit the blaik beard. "Thon's the best o aa. Fower aces an a joker. Takk a licht, somebody, an cam an finn aboot fur his corp."