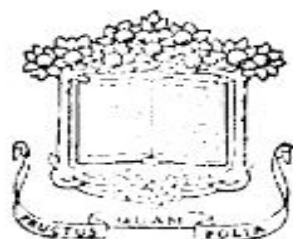


On the Borderland

By
F. Britten Austin



Garden City New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1923

The Project Gutenberg eBook of On the Borderland

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: On the Borderland

Author: F. Britten Austin

Release date: July 14, 2021 [eBook #65837]

Most recently updated: October 18, 2024

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/65837

Credits: E-text prepared by Tim Lindell, Martin Pettit, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team (<http://www.pgdp.net>) from page images digitized by the Google Books Library Project (<https://books.google.com>) and generously made available by HathiTrust Digital Library (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ON THE
BORDERLAND ***

The Project Gutenberg eBook, On the Borderland, by F. Britten (Frederick Britten) Austin

Note: Images of the original pages are available through HathiTrust Digital Library. See <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074943519>

ON THE BORDERLAND

books by

title page

On the Borderland

By

F. Britten Austin

logo

**Garden City New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1923**

COPYRIGHT, 1923 BY
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION
INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES, INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY THE CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY IN
THE UNITED STATES AND
GREAT BRITAIN

COPYRIGHT, 1919, 1920, BY INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE CO.
COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY CONSOLIDATED MAGAZINES
CORPORATION (THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE)
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES
AT
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

First Edition

TO
EDWARD CECIL

IN
OLD FRIENDSHIP

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BURIED TREASURE	<u>1</u>
A PROBLEM IN REPRISALS	<u>28</u>
SECRET SERVICE	<u>51</u>
THE STRANGE CASE OF MR. TODMORDEN	<u>83</u>
THROUGH THE GATE OF HORN	<u>98</u>
THE WHITE DOG	<u>122</u>
A POINT OF ETHICS	<u>143</u>
THE LOVERS	<u>165</u>
HELD IN BONDAGE	<u>187</u>
SHE WHO CAME BACK	<u>211</u>
FROM THE DEPTHS	<u>231</u>
YELLOW MAGIC	<u>253</u>

ON THE BORDERLAND

ON THE BORDERLAND

BURIED TREASURE

For the last twenty minutes the after-dinner talk of the little group of men in the liner's smoking-room had revelled in the uncanny. One man had started it, rather diffidently, with a strange yarn. Another had capped it. Then, no longer restrained by the fear of a humiliating scepticism in their audience, they gave themselves up to that mysteriously satisfying enjoyment of the inexplicably marvellous, vying with each other in stories which, as they were narrated, were no doubt more or less unconsciously modified to suit the argument, but which one and all dealt with experience that in the ultimate analysis could not be explained by the normal how and why of life.

"What do you think of all this, doctor?" said one of the story-tellers, turning suddenly to a keen-eyed elderly man who had been listening in silence. "As a specialist in mental disorders you must have had a vast experience of delusions of every kind. Is there any truth in all this business of spiritualism, automatic writing, reincarnation and the rest of it? What's the scientific reason for it all?—for some reason there must be! People don't tell all these stories just for fun."

The doctor shifted his pipe in his mouth and smiled, his eyes twinkling.

"You seem to find a certain amount of amusement in it," he remarked, drily. "The scientific reasons you ask for so easily are highly controversial. But many of the phenomena are undoubtedly genuine—automatic writing, for instance. It is a fact that persons of a certain type find their hand can write, entirely independent of their conscious attention, coherent sentences whose meaning is utterly strange to them. They need not even deliberately make their mind a blank. They may be surprised by their hand suddenly writing on its own initiative when their consciousness is fixed upon some other occupation, such as entering up an account-book. Always they have a vivid feeling that not their own but another distinctly separate intelligence guides the pen. This feeling is not evidence, of course. It may be an illusion; probably is.

“The best-analyzed reincarnation story is probably that dealt with by Professor Flournoy in his study of the famous medium H  l  ne Smith of Geneva. This lady sincerely believed herself to be a reincarnation of Marie Antoinette—and in her trance-state she acted the part with astonishing fidelity and dramatic power. In her normal condition she certainly possessed neither so much detailed knowledge of the life of the ill-fated queen nor so much histrionic ability. She also wrote automatically, and some of her productions were amazing, to say the least of them. Well, Professor Flournoy’s psychological investigations proved clearly to my thinking that it was a case of her subconscious mind dramatizing, with that wonderful faculty of impersonation which characterizes it, a few hints accidentally dropped into it and combining with her subconscious memory, which forgets nothing it has ever heard or read or even casually glanced at, to produce an almost perfect representation of Marie Antoinette. Also he proved that her automatic writing emanated from her own subconscious mind and nowhere else.

“Now, I am not going to say that discarnate spirits do not communicate through this subconscious activity of which one form is automatic writing. I am not going to say that we do not become reincarnated through an endless cycle of lives. I do not know enough about it to assert such a negative—no one does. All I know about the human mind is that we know very little about it. It is like the moon, of which you never see more than the small end. Infinite possibilities lie in the shadow. You are only conscious of a small fraction of your own personality. The subconscious—the unilluminated portion of your soul—is incomputably vast. It learns everything, forgets nothing; possibly it even goes on from life to life. When it is tapped by any of those traditional means which nowadays we call spiritualistic one may—or may not—come across buried treasure.”

“But you yourself do not believe in the truth of spiritualism as an actual fact, doctor?” queried one of the group, a trace of aggression in his tone.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

“I accord *belief* to a very limited number of attested facts, my friend,” he said. “That I am sitting here with you, for example. I am ready to adopt provisionally all sorts of hypotheses to explain those varied phenomena of

life, the ultimate explanation of which must in any case elude me. They are hypotheses for myself—I do not announce them as dogmas for others. But—if you do not think it is too late—I will tell you a story, a rather queer experience of my own, and you can form your own hypotheses in explanation of it.”

There was a chorus of approval. The doctor waited while the steward refilled the glasses at the instance of one of the group, relit his pipe, and settled himself to begin.

It was in 1883. I was a young man. I had recently finished walking the hospitals, got my degree, and before settling down into practice at home had decided to see a little of the world. So I signed on for a few voyages as a ship’s doctor. At the termination of one of them I found myself at a loose end in New York. There I became friendly with the son of a man who in his young days had been a Californian “Fortyniner,” had made a pile, settled East, become a railroad speculator and made millions—William Vandermeulen.

Old Vandermeulen had a delicate daughter, Pauline, then about nineteen years of age and in the incipient stages of consumption. Under medical advice, he was accustomed to take her each winter for a cruise around the West Indies in his steam yacht. That year, young Geoffrey Vandermeulen persuaded his father to ship me as medical officer. There was nothing alarming in the young girl’s condition, of course, or a much older and more experienced man would have accompanied them. She was merely delicate.

We were a small party on board: the old man, his wife—a faded old lady with no personality whatever—Pauline, Geoffrey, and myself. Geoffrey was an ordinary, high-spirited young man, intelligent and a pleasant companion, but not particularly remarkable. His sister was mildly pretty but utterly devoid of attractiveness, extremely shy, and given to sitting in blank reverie over a book. Although she always had one in her hand, she read, as a matter of fact, very little. It was just an excuse for day-dreaming. Of this girl the old man, otherwise as keen as a razor and as hard as nails—commercially, I believe, he was little better than a pirate—was inordinately fond. Outside business, she was the absorbing passion of his life. There was no whim of

hers that he would not gratify. It was rather pathetic to see the old scoundrel hanging over her frail innocence, all that he had of idealism centred in her threatened life.

The cruise was pleasant but uneventful enough for some weeks. We pottered down through the Bahamas to Jamaica and then turned eastward with intent to visit the various ports of the Antilles as far south as Barbados.

It was one evening while we were chugging peacefully across the Caribbean Sea that occurred the first of the remarkable incidents which made this voyage so memorable to me. I remember the setting of it perfectly. We were all in the saloon; I suppose because the night was for some reason unpleasant. The weather was calm, at any rate. Geoffrey and I were reading. Old Vandermeulen and his wife were playing cribbage. Pauline was sitting at a writing-table fixed in a corner of the saloon, entering up the day's trivial happenings in the diary which she religiously kept. I remember glancing at her and noticing that she was chewing the nail of her left thumb—a habit of which I was vainly trying to break her—as she stared vacantly at the bulkhead, no doubt ransacking her memory for some incident to record.

Suddenly she turned round upon us with a startled cry.

“Look, Mamma!—I have scrawled all over my diary without knowing that I did it!—Isn't that strange!”

We all of us looked up languidly. The mother made some banal remark, but did not withdraw her attention from her cards. The father glanced affectionately toward her without ceasing to count up the score he was about to peg on the board. Geoffrey and I continued our reading.

But the girl had been puzzling over the scrawl and all at once she jumped up from her seat and came across to us.

“Look!” she said. “Isn't it funny? These words—they're all like the words on blotting-paper—they go backwards and inside out! And there are figures, too!—Whatever could have made me do it?—And I don't remember doing it either, though of course I must have done so. There was nothing on that page a minute before, I am sure of that!”

There was something curiously uneasy in the girl's manner, a note in her voice that impressed me. I got up, took the open diary from her hand and there sure enough was a large uneven scrawl, two lines of it, diagonally across the page, and, as she said, reversed, as though it had been blotted down upon it.

Almost without thinking, I held the open page against one of the mirrors panelled in the saloon wall—and I could not repress a cry of astonishment. The scrawl was a decipherable sentence, mysterious enough, but coherent!—I'll write it down for you as nearly as I remember it, so as to show you how it looked. He produced pencil and paper from his pocket, wrote: "*lucia 1324 N 8127 W katalina sculle point SWbS 3 trees digge jno dawson youre turne:*" There you are—the last two words were added like a postscript and were followed by a rough sketch, an irregular oval over a St. Andrew's cross, like this—O/X

I read out what was written, and Pauline stared at me wide-eyed.

"Whatever could have made me write that?" she exclaimed.

Geoffrey looked up, fraternally scornful.

"It's a thin joke, Pauline! You can't monkey us in that fashion! I suppose you want to pretend that the ghost of some old pirate wrote it down in your book so as to start us off on a Treasure Island hunt." Stevenson's romance was then in its first success and Geoffrey had just been reading it. "Of course, you wrote it deliberately—what nonsense!"

She turned round upon him, her eyes filling with tears in the vehemence of her protest.

"Geoffrey, I couldn't!—I couldn't write reversed like that if I tried!"

"Oh, yes, you could," asserted Geoffrey, confidently. "It's easy enough."

"Supposing we all try," said I, curious to test its feasibility. I felt considerably puzzled. Pauline was not at all the sort of girl one would expect to persist in such a pointless sort of practical joke as this, and persistent she was—tearful like a child unjustly accused of a crime of which it protests innocence.

Her mother and father renounced their game of cribbage and bent their heads together over the enigmatic screed, without proffering an opinion. It was evident that they did not wish to hurt their daughter's feelings by open scepticism. They would have humoured her in anything, no matter how absurd.

I reiterated my suggestion and it was accepted in the spirit of a parlour-game. A line from a book was selected, we all tried—and we all failed hopelessly. None of us got more than two or three consecutive letters right. It is not so easy as it sounds. Try it for yourselves!

At that time, although spiritualism was a great craze in America, and D. D. Home, Eglinton, and other famous mediums, were arousing enormous interest and controversy in England, automatic script was an uncommon phenomenon. Table-rapping, levitation, slate-writing and materialization were the wonders in vogue—and I had then never heard of the “mirror-writing” which has since become a frequent form of automatic expression. Neither, of course, *à fortiori*, had the young girl who had just produced this mysterious specimen.

We all felt puzzled and impressed at our failure to imitate deliberately the reversed script. Old Vandermeulen picked up the diary and read the reflection of the scrawled page in the wall-mirror.

“Well, it's sure strange!” he said in his twangy drawl. “Geoff! You write this down in a straightaway hand and we'll see if we can get any sense out of it. I guess there's some meaning in it. Pauline ain't joking.”

Geoffrey obeyed and read out the script again.

“*“lucia 1324 N 8127 W katalina sculle point SWbS 3 trees digge jno dawson youre turne’*—It's exactly like the directions to a pirate's buried treasure, Father!” he added, excitedly. “Skull and crossbones and all! But of course that's ridiculous! Though I can't understand how Pauline could have written it like she did!”

“And I did not know even that I was writing!” asseverated Pauline, “let alone know what I wrote! It was just as if my hand did not belong to me—it was a sort of numbness that made me look down.”

“Tear it up, dear!” implored her mother anxiously. “I am sure it comes from the Devil!” Mrs. Vandermeulen belonged to a particularly strict little sect and was always ready to discern the immediate agency of the Evil One.

“Devil or not!” said old Vandermeulen. “I guess if there’s any buried treasure lying around here, I’m going to peg out my claim on it.” He turned to me. “Young man, was there ever any pirates about these parts?” The old ruffian was quite illiterate; had never, I believe, read a book in his life.

“Why, yes,” I replied, “from the end of the sixteenth century these seas were the chief haunt of the buccaneers and, after them, of the pirates who were not entirely suppressed until well in the eighteenth century. There must be any amount of their hidden treasure buried in these islands.”

“You don’t say!” he exclaimed, his avaricious old eyes lighting up. “And here have I been running this yacht up and down these parts for five years at a dead loss!” His disgust would have been comic, were it not for the ugly, ruthless lust of gold which looked suddenly out of his face. “Guess I’m going to quit this fooling around right away! I don’t know and don’t care if it was the Devil himself wrote this specification in Pauline’s book—I’m darned sure she didn’t write it herself—the handwriting’s different, d’you see?”—It was, as a matter of fact, compared with the previous pages, quite another hand—hers was an upright, rounded schoolgirl calligraphy, this was a cursive old-fashioned script inclined well forward. “So as we’ve got nothing else to start upon, we may as well see if there’s anything to it.” He tossed Geoffrey’s transcription across to me. “What do you make of it, young man?” he asked, with the sneering condescension he accorded to my superior literary attainments.

I took it, rather amused at the old scoundrel’s simplicity. That there was any authentic meaning in Pauline’s scrawl seemed to me wildly improbable. I was a frank materialist in those days and had Carpenter’s formula of “unconscious cerebration” glibly ready to cover up anything psychologically abnormal. However, I considered the sheet of paper with attention.

“Assuming this to be a genuine message,” I said, “it would appear to give the precise latitude and longitude of some point where it is desirable to dig. I take it that the figures stand for 13 degrees 24 minutes North, 81 degrees

27 minutes West. The world '*lucia*' puzzles me—unless the island of St. Lucia is meant. What '*katalina*' stands for, I do not know—it is evidently a proper name of some kind, '*sculle point SWbS 3 trees digge*' presumably means that one should dig under three trees south-west-by-south of Skull Point—wherever that is. '*jno dawson*' is, of course, John Dawson. Assuming this to be a spirit-message from the other world," I could not help smiling ironically, "it is possibly the name of the ghost who is communicating—and who desires to indicate to some person that it is his or her turn. He does not specify for what. I may remark that the ghost is either ill-educated or he has an archaic taste in spelling."

"I don't like it," said Mrs. Vandermeulen, querulously timid. "Do tear it up, William! I am sure harm will come of it!—It is the Devil tempting you!"

"So long as he's serious, he can tempt me sure easy!" said the old ruffian in a tone of cool blasphemy which sent the colour out of his wife's face. He rang the bell and the negro steward appeared. "Sam! Ask Captain Higgins to step in here for a moment!"

Captain Higgins, the skipper of the yacht, was a level-headed mariner of middle age whom nothing ever ruffled. He was competence itself.

"Good evening, Captain Higgins," said old Vandermeulen, fixing him with the keen eyes under shaggy gray brows, eyes which defied you to divine his purpose whilst they probed yours. "What's the latitude and longitude of the island of St. Lucia?"

"Fourteen North, sixty-one West," replied Captain Higgins promptly.

Old Vandermeulen turned to me.

"Then it's not St. Lucia, young man," he said. He picked up Geoffrey's transcription. "Well, now, Captain Higgins, is there any place thirteen-twenty-four North, eighty-one twenty-seven West?"

The skipper reflected a moment.

"No place of importance, certainly. I'll get the chart."

He returned with it, spread it out on the saloon table, ran his forefinger across it.

“Here you are!” he said. “A small island called Old Providence. It belongs to Colombia.”

Geoffrey, who was peering over his shoulder, uttered a startled exclamation.

“And look!” he cried. “There’s your Katalina!” He pointed to a small islet just north of Old Providence, a mere dot on the chart. “Santa Katalina!—My hat! that is weird!”

It certainly was. From whatever stratum of Pauline’s consciousness her writing had emanated, it was an amazing thing that she should have written down the exact latitude and longitude of a tiny island off the Nicaraguan coast and named it correctly. Even I could not help feeling that it was more than a fortuitous coincidence, that it was uncanny. The others surrendered themselves straight away.

I turned to look at Pauline. She was deathly white; evidently frightened at being made the vehicle of this message from the beyond. Her mother clutched at her, as though protecting her from unseen dangers. Geoffrey’s imagination had caught fire, his eyes were bright with excitement.

“My sakes! Pauline!” he cried. “I believe you now! You couldn’t have written that out of your head. I’ve read of things like this before—I guess you’re a medium and didn’t know it!—Father! We’ll track this message down, wherever it comes from, say now?”

“It comes from the Devil! Tear it up—oh, tear it up!” implored Mrs. Vandermeulen. “William! Tear it up—don’t follow it!”

Old Vandermeulen turned to the skipper. His jaw had set hard, his lips were compressed, only the glitter in his eyes, peering in a momentary fixation of thought from under his bent brows, showed that he shared the excitement of his son. So he must have looked in his office when he took the decisions which had made his millions.

“Captain Higgins,” he said, curtly ignoring the supplications of his wife, “how long will it take us to reach that island?”

The skipper put his finger on the chart at a point south of Haiti.

“We’re here,” he said. He measured off the distance. “At our best rate of twelve knots—about sixty hours steaming.”

The old man nodded.

“Put her about,” he said. His harsh tone had an odd ring about it, as though he was secretly conscious of affronting mysterious dangers, was all the more emphatic. “Right now!”

Captain Higgins never queried owners’ orders.

“Very good, sir,” he replied, stolidly, and walked out of the cabin.

A minute or two later we felt the yacht swing round. There is always something impressive when a ship on the open sea goes about upon her course, but I never felt it more powerfully than then. It seemed that there was a fateful significance in our deliberate action.

Geoffrey meanwhile was poring over the sheet of paper on which he had transcribed his sister’s reversed scrawl.

“It’s all perfectly clear,” he said, triumphantly. “We’ve got to make this island of Santa Katalina, thirteen-twenty-four North, eighty-one twenty-seven West, try and find a place called Skull Point, look for three trees south-west-by-south of it, and dig! We understand every word of it now!”

“All except the word ‘*lucia*’” I corrected, “and whose turn it is.”

“Yes—there’s that,” he said, dubiously. “I suppose every word has some meaning.”

“You can bet it has!” I replied, half sarcastically humouring his credulity, half surrendering myself to an uncritical acception of these mysteriously given directions. “I wonder who this John Dawson was—if he existed?”

“He’s a sure-enough ghost of some old pirate!” said Vandermeulen, with complete conviction. “And I guess he’s putting us fair and good on to his pile!”

I laughed, involuntarily, at this childishness. The old man frowned.

“There’s some things that perhaps even you all-fired clever young fellows don’t know,” he said, crushingly. “’Tain’t the first time I’ve heard of this sort of thing. A mate of mine in the old days at ’Frisco was waked up one morning by the ghost of a prospector who’d died up in the ranges. He told him just where he’d made his strike before his grub gave out. My mate had never heard of the place but he lit straight away on the trail—and sure enough the ghost was telling the truth. Old Jim Hamilton it was—and he drank himself to death on what he got out of it.” The old man looked me straight in the eyes as though challenging me to doubt him. Of course, I could say nothing. He grunted scornfully, and turned again to the chart still spread out upon the table. “It’s a nice quiet out-of-the-way place,” reflected the old ruffian, putting his thumb-nail on the lonely island. “Just the location for a cache—guess they’d feel pretty sure of not being interfered with there!” There was a grim undertone in his voice which was decidedly ugly. He might, himself, have been the reincarnation of just such a pirate as the one whose existence he was postulating.

Well, nothing more happened that night. Mrs. Vandermeulen, thoroughly alarmed and uneasy, hustled her daughter off to bed. Old Vandermeulen and his son sat up in an endless discussion of the mysterious script, referring again and again to the chart which so startlingly confirmed its indications, and speculating optimistically as to the nature and amount of the treasure they were convinced was buried in the designated place. They talked themselves into a complete faith in the supernatural origin of the message, and, father and son alike—it was curious to note the traits of resemblance which cropped out in them—were equally indifferent as to whether its source was diabolic or benevolent. Enormously wealthy although they already were, the prospect of this phantom gold waiting to be unearthed had completely fascinated them. At last I turned in, wearied with the thousand and one questions they asked me and to which I could give no answer, disgusted with their avarice, and scornfully contemptuous of their simplicity.

I found sleep no easy matter. Sceptical though I was, I could not get Pauline’s curious production out of my head, and the more I thought of it the more inexplicable seemed its coincidence with the chart. The subconscious mind, with its amazing memory, its dramatic faculty, its unexpected invasion of the surface consciousness in certain types, was not

then the commonplace of psychology that it is now—or I should probably have referred the whole thing to the combination of a casual, apparently unheeding, glance at the chart with a memory of some of her brother's remarks about "Treasure Island," automatically and dramatically reproduced. As it was, I could formulate no explanation that satisfied me—though I utterly disbelieved in the ghost of a piratical John Dawson, of which the two Vandermeulens were now fully persuaded.

The next day found us steaming steadily westward. Father and son could talk of nothing else but their fancied buried treasure and their plans for digging it up without taking the crew of the yacht into their confidence. Mrs. Vandermeulen hovered round her daughter, horribly anxious of she knew not what, but—after having been once silenced by a peremptory oath from her husband—afraid to make further protest. Pauline herself sat all day in a deck-chair, more silent even than usual, staring dreamily across the empty sea in a reverie which ignored us all. Naturally, I watched her closely. But, except that her eyes had a kind of haunting fear in them, she seemed perfectly normal. Evidently the occurrence of the previous night had shocked her profoundly, for once, when I casually mentioned it, she shuddered and implored me not to speak of it again. The fear of the uncanny in herself stared out of her eyes as she entreated me.

This dreamy absorption in herself continued until supper time that evening. Throughout the meal, I do not think she uttered a single word. She seemed not even to hear the conversation around her, but toyed listlessly with her food and finally ceased to eat long before the others had finished. Watching her with a professionally interested observation, I was uneasy. She had leaned back in her chair, was gazing straight before her with wide-open eyes. Suddenly I noticed that they had glazed over. All expression faded out of her face. The arm that rested on the salmon-table stiffened into a cataleptic sort of rigidity.

Her mother was also anxiously watching her.

"Pauline!" she cried. "Are you ill?"

There was no answer. The girl sat like a statue. Mrs. Vandermeulen glanced at me in wild alarm, silently imploring my intervention. Old Vandermeulen

and his son were hotly arguing the desirability or otherwise of informing Captain Higgins of their plans, and took no notice of us.

I got up from my seat and went round the table to the girl. I lifted up her lifelessly heavy arm with my fingers on her pulse. It was normal.

“Miss Vandermeulen!” I said, rather sharply. “Are you not well?”

She turned her head slowly round to me, like a sleep-walker faintly aware of some sound that does not, however, wake her, and stared me full in the face with eyes in which there was not the slightest glimmer of recognition.

“Pauline!” almost screamed her mother, “don’t you know your own name?”

An expression of curious intelligence dawned in her face—her aspect changed in some subtle manner, as though another, quite different, personality was emerging in her—she laughed in low, confident tones utterly unlike her ordinary laugh.

“My name is Lucia!” she said, as though stating a well-known fact.

Lucia! To say that we were startled is to understate our astonishment—we were dumbfounded. The first word of the cryptic message! We gazed at her for a moment as at a complete stranger from the clouds—and indeed she looked it, as she smiled at us with bright malicious eyes. The diffident Pauline we knew had completely disappeared.

“She is possessed!” screamed her mother. “Oh, God—restore her! restore her!”

The girl stood up suddenly from her chair, passed her hand over her eyes, shook herself as though shaking off sleep. She turned away from us deliberately.

“Oh, John!” she said, and there was an odd little foreign accent in her tone, “I have dreamed—such a strange dream! I dreamed—I know not!—that I was not Lucia!” She laughed softly in her new low tones, “—That strange people were asking me my name. Then I woke—oh, John!” she sidled up in a wheedling manner to what, so far as we could see, was vacant space. “I am Lucia, am I not?—And you love me? You love me?” Her shoulders moved sinuously as though she were putting herself under the caresses of a

person invisible to us. “You love me—and I love you, although you have only that one terrible eye!” She still spoke with that curious foreign accent which lent a certain piquancy to her speech. “You love me, you John Dawson, you Englishman, you love me for ever, say?” She reminded me of Carmen sidling up to Don José. “You not deceive me—or——!” She looked up as into a tall man’s face with a sudden expression of feline vindictiveness, her white teeth showing in an ugly little rictus of the mouth, and slid her hand down stealthily toward her stocking. “But no!” She smiled; her hand came up again as though to rest upon a man’s shoulder. “You love me—and I love you—and,” her voice dropped, “when we have killed the others we go away with the treasure—you promise me, John Dawson?”

She appeared utterly unaware of our presence. There was a dramatic intensity in her voice and gestures which thrilled even me, although I had attended some hypnotic experiments in London and was aware of the complete realism with which a somnambulist will play a part suggested to him. I had no doubt whatever that she was in a state of hypnosis, accidentally self-induced, and that she was merely acting on the suggestions of the talk she had overheard.

Her mother, however, had no such consoling certitude. She hid her face in her hands, groaning: “She is possessed! She is possessed! Oh, God, cast out the evil spirit! cast out the evil spirit!”

Geoffrey was white to the lips, appalled, unable to utter a sound. The old man stared at her, fascinated, a strange gleam in his eyes.

The mother turned to me in despair.

“Oh, doctor! Do something—do something!—Oh, if only we had a minister here! She is possessed by an evil spirit! My Pauline! My Pauline!” She sank on her knees by one of the swivel-chairs, gave herself up to agonized prayers. “Oh, God, cast out the evil one! Oh, God, cast out the evil one!”

Thinking that this strange incident had already lasted more than long enough, I took a step toward the girl with a vague idea (though I didn’t quite know how) of breaking the hypnosis. She stood looking upward still, with a wheedling, diabolical smile, into apparent nothingness.

“We will go together—we two—with the treasure, say, John Dawson?” she murmured seductively, the very incarnation of a Delilah. “Mansvelt is dead—we will run away from Simon and go with my people before they kill us all—they are very many and you can only hold out two-three days—but we might take the treasure, John Dawson, the treasure you and Simon hid with Mansvelt—Simon, we will kill him—and we will go away and be rich—rich, John Dawson—say?” Her voice was perfidiously honeyed, her eyes glistened, as she caressed that uncanny empty air.

“What is she talking about?” muttered Geoffrey in a low, excited voice. “Who are these people—Mansvelt and Simon? Have you heard of them, doctor?”

I shook my head. They were utterly unknown to me. For a moment I hesitated, fascinated by the little drama, curious to hear more.

The mother moaned.

“Oh, do something, doctor! do something!—Save her! Save her! Oh, God, deliver her from the evil one!”

Her agony recalled me to my professional duty. I started forward but before I could reach her I was snatched back by a violent hand on my shoulder.

“Stand aside!” commanded old Vandermeulen in a terrible voice. “Evil spirit or no evil spirit, I guess it knows all about that treasure—and I’m going to hear what it’s got to say!” Of his normal love for his daughter there was not a trace. The man was completely dominated, to the exclusion of any other sentiment, by the lust for gold, more gold. He looked scarcely human as his eyes glowered upon me, murder in them if I thwarted him. “If it’s the Devil himself that’s got her—let her talk!”

But the mother sprang up with a wild shriek, rushed toward her daughter.

“Do you wish her eternal damnation?” she cried, flinging her arms about the girl. “Pauline! Pauline! For the love of God, don’t you know me?—Oh, say a prayer—say a prayer after me!” She commenced the Lord’s Prayer in a voice that trembled with anguish.

The girl stood rigid in her embrace, drawn up away from her, looking down upon her with fixed and hostile eyes. She made one instinctive movement to escape—and then suddenly crumpled in a swoon upon the floor.

She came round easily enough under simple restoratives, looked up at us with childish, bewildered eyes—the old Pauline again! Her mother completely broke down over her, sobbing in almost crazy joy at her restoration. Emotionally infected, perhaps, the girl also gave way to a hysterical passion of weeping, which would not be checked, and for which she could give no reason. She seemed not to have the slightest recollection of the part she had just played. Old Vandermeulen, still obsessed by his lust for the treasure, tried to question her. She only stared at him dumbly—a vague fear coming into her eyes, but giving no response. I silenced him with all the authority of my professional position, and got the girl into her stateroom, where we left her with her mother.

Throughout the next day neither of the two women appeared. Pauline was utterly prostrated, and she remained in bed. Her mother stayed with her, under strict injunctions to mention nothing of last night's terrible scene.

Meanwhile, of course, we were steadily drawing nearer to the Nicaraguan coast and the island of Old Providence with its tiny and, to us, fascinating satellite, Santa Katalina. Even I could not help wondering what we should find there. The two Vandermeulens were in a fever of excitement, cursing at every moment the slowness of the yacht. We were, as a matter of fact, due to reach the island early next morning.

Some time in the afternoon, the old man approached me confidentially.

“Say, young know-all,” he said, “what d’you figure out was the meaning of last night’s gaff? I guess Pauline ain’t got no natural talent for play-acting like that.”

Rather foolishly, I amused myself with his credulity.

“Of course,” I said, concealing a smile, “it may be that in a previous existence your daughter’s name was Lucia—the Spanish lady friend of some of the buccaneers and particularly of a certain John Dawson, who is now directing her to the treasure they buried together a few hundred years

ago.” I regretted my words the moment they were uttered. The man’s infatuation needed no fanning from me.

“By God, you’ve hit it!” he exclaimed. “And she’s just remembering!—I guess she can lead us straight to it!”

“Don’t be absurd!” I said, pettishly. “I was only joking!”

He glared at me in savage disappointment.

“You’re joking with the wrong man!” he said harshly. “Besides, it sure ain’t impossible!—You don’t know what happens to us when we’re dead, though you do think you know everything!”

“No—it’s not impossible,” I conceded. “But it’s improbable.”

“That’s your opinion,” he sneered. “You know nothing about it!—I’ve had them feelings myself—feelings that I’ve been to a place before when I sure know I haven’t. By God, that’s it!—Pauline’s just remembering—coming back to these old places—and she’ll take us a bee-line to the cache!”

He strode off to impart this illuminating theory to his son, and I saw no more of them until supper time. They were, I was sure, concerting some plan for cutting me out of a share in the treasure.

They had the furtive look of a couple of conspirators as we three, Pauline and her mother still absent, sat that night at table. Both forced themselves to exhibit a strained politeness to me, which obviously concealed some treacherous design. I didn’t like the atmosphere at all and was impelled to clear it.

“By the way,” I remarked, casually, “I don’t want a share in that treasure—I prefer to work for my living.” As I had not the slightest faith in its existence, this renunciation was not difficult. “Supposing your theory to be true, it belongs to Miss Vandermeulen if it belongs to any one.”

“Sure, that’s so!” agreed the old man. “It’s Pauline’s treasure, right enough. Ain’t it, Geoffrey?”

“I guess it’s no one else’s,” said Geoffrey, picking up the idea. “I’ll see to that.”

I could not help smiling at the gratuitous menace in his tone; he might have been sitting on the treasure-chests already.

At that moment we were startled by an appalling scream, a choking cry, from Pauline's stateroom.

We rushed in and stood for a moment transfixed with horror. Pauline, leaning out of her bunk, was throttling with both hands the life out of her mother, who had been sitting by the bedside. In a flash of my first perception of the scene, I saw that the girl had reverted to her trance-personality. It was Lucia who had that deadly grip upon the other woman's throat, Lucia who glared at her with fiendishly triumphant eyes, Lucia who gloated mockingly in her foreign accent: "Ah, Teresa!—You think you would take the Englishman from me—you think you would go away with John Dawson and the treasure?" She laughed, cruelly exultant. "I think no, Teresa—I think no—not with the treasure! You can go with that John Dawson, yes! But not with the treasure! You go and wait for him—for your John Dawson—I will send him to you—soon—soon!" Her low laugh was diabolical.

We flung ourselves upon her, but her strength was superhuman. She seemed utterly oblivious of us, as heedless of our struggles as though we were not there. Her eyes flashing, her teeth showing, she continued to jeer at her victim in her foreign voice: "He will come to you to-night—your John Dawson—as he promised, yes! I will send him to you——!" Only as we finally tore the almost strangled Mrs. Vandermeulen from her hands did she suddenly cease to speak. She sank back upon the bed, swooning into complete unconsciousness.

I drove out the father and son and applied myself to reviving the mother. I shall not forget the terrible night I had with her, after she had resuscitated. At length, I had to give her a few drops of laudanum to get her off to sleep. Pauline slept like a child.

I woke up the next morning to that strange feeling of hushed stillness which pervades a ship when her engines are at rest after a long period of unbroken activity. We were pitching heavily, evidently at anchor, for our upward rise was every now and then suddenly and jarringly arrested. We had arrived!

I went to look at my patients and found them both suffering from sea-sickness. This vicious plunging of the yacht was more than their weak stomachs could stand. I gave them each a steadying draught and then went on deck.

The two Vandermeulens were on the bridge with the skipper. I ignored them, instinctively avoiding their certain excitement. Upon our port bow was a fairly large island, its rocky shore crowned with a dense tropical foliage. On the other side of us was a small islet, barren save for a few sparse trees scattered over it, surf breaking white upon its beaches. Old Providence and its satellite, Santa Katalina! Between the two islands a strong current was running, with a heavy ground-swell in which we plunged and kicked, straining at our cables. No wonder the two ladies were ill, I thought, as the deck sank sickeningly sideways under my feet.

I went into the saloon and found that the Vandermeulens had already breakfasted. As I ate my solitary meal, I could hear the heavy trampling of feet on the deck overhead, and guessed that they were hoisting outboard the little steam-launch we used when in harbour.

When I had finished, I went to have another look at Pauline. Her mother was with her. Mentally, she was completely her normal self, with apparently no memory even of that trance-personality which had for the second time surged up in her. But she was feeling very ill in this violent and disturbing motion of the anchored yacht.

Old Vandermeulen came in.

“Get up and dress, Pauline!” he commanded, brutally, as though bearing down opposition in advance. “We’re going ashore!”

His wife sprang forward.

“Oh, no, no, William! Don’t take her! Don’t take her!—Don’t tempt Providence. Don’t go! William! William!” she clung to him in supplication. “She’s too ill to go! She’s too ill to go, isn’t she, doctor?”

The old man shook her off.

“Nonsense!” he said roughly. Nevertheless, he turned enquiringly to me.

I considered the pros and cons dispassionately for a moment. Of course, the old lady's fears were mere superstition and did not influence me in the least.

"Well," I said, "I think that if Miss Vandermeulen feels equal to the effort of dressing, it would do her good to get away from the yacht and walk about on firm land for an hour or two."

"I should like to," said Pauline, all docility. "Besides," she smiled, "I should like to see for myself if there is any truth in that strange writing."

Half an hour later we had, with some difficulty, stowed the ladies—for the mother insisted on coming also—in the stern-sheets of the little launch which rose and fell dizzily under the lee of the yacht. The two Vandermeulens were amidships, ready to give instructions to the helmsman. I noticed that they had a pick and shovel on board. I sat close to Pauline. She was looking pale, but the sea-sickness was in abeyance for the moment and a touch of digitalis I had given her had stiffened her up.

We sheered off, set a course over the rolling dark blue well toward the islet we could see as we lifted on the waves. We had anchored rather on the Old Providence side of the channel dividing the islands, and the launch was about midway between the two when Pauline, who had been looking around her with some curiosity, uttered a sudden ejaculation.

"That's not the island!" she cried, with a gesture toward Santa Katalina. "It's the other one—the big one!" She pointed to Old Providence. Then she checked herself, a peculiar look of puzzlement in her face. "I wonder whatever made me say that!" she exclaimed. "One would think I have been here before—but I can't have!"

"But that's Santa Katalina!" objected Geoffrey, pointing to the islet. It undoubtedly was.

"Wait!" said old Vandermeulen, who had been sharply watching his daughter for any sign of recognition. "I guess Pauline knows what she is talking about!"

He stopped the engine and for a few moments we rose and fell idly upon the waves, while the two men stared across to Old Providence.

“By Jove, yes!” cried Geoffrey suddenly. “Pauline’s right! Look! There’s Skull Point!”

He indicated, with outstretched hand, a jutting headland whose face had been weather-sculptured into the unmistakable semblance of a skull.

“Skull Point it is!” said old Vandermeulen, with such an oath as he did not usually let come to his daughter’s ears.

In another moment we had gone about and were throbbing quickly toward the headland. All eyes were fixed on it as we approached. Geoffrey had produced a compass.

“Look!” he cried. “The three trees! South-west-by-south from Skull Point!”

Sure enough, in the direction designated, three enormous trees, evidently hundreds of years old, raised their heads high above the mass of more recent vegetation.

A quarter of an hour later we were running into a little cove on the west side of the headland. A ledge of rock, sheltered from the swell, offered itself as a landing-stage, and we ran alongside and made fast.

Old Vandermeulen ordered the two members of the yacht’s crew, who had accompanied us, to remain in the launch. The rest of us started off into the island, Geoffrey carrying the tools. The three trees were at no great distance, at the summit of a slope of broken-down volcanic rock. Geoffrey arrived first.

“No need to worry where to dig, Father!” he shouted. “Here it is—plain enough!”

Under the centre tree was a cairn of loose stones, more than half buried under the detritus of many years, it is true, but evidently the work of men’s hands.

“That’s it, sure!” cried the old man. “First time you’ve seen this place, Pauline?” he queried, with a touch of grim cynicism.

“Of course!” she replied. “What do you mean, Father?—and yet—” she hesitated, looking around her—“yet I do have a strange sort of feeling as

though I had been here before. But I can't have! It's absurd!"

Mother and daughter sat down under the shade of the trees whilst we three set to work to open the cairn. I was as excited as they by this time, and I helped with a will. The old man, wielding his pick with the skill of an examiner, loosened the stones on the surface. I rolled away the big ones, and Geoffrey shovelled away the smaller stuff. At the end of an hour we had made a pretty deep excavation. We then took it in turns to work with pick and shovel in the hole, from which we threw up the stones.

Suddenly Geoffrey uttered an exclamation.

"We're on something!—What's that, doctor?" He passed me up a long bone.

"That's the tibia of a man," I replied. "I expect you'll find the rest of him there."

"Sure thing!" he said. "Here he is!" He cleared away one or two large lumps of rock and revealed the grinning skeleton of a man. "Hallo!" he added, as he bent down to it, "what's this?"

A long thin stiletto was lying loosely between the fleshless ribs of the skeleton.

The old man snatched it from him as he plucked it out.

"And by all that's holy!" he cried, "it's got her name on it! Look!"

I took it from him. The dagger was of antique pattern, its steel rusted and corroded but still resilient enough to make it a dangerous weapon, and on the hilt, still legible, roughly inlaid in silver like the amateur work of a sailorman, was the name—*Lucia!*

"I guess she murdered him with that!" said the old man, grimly, glancing from the stiletto to the skeleton grinning up at us from the hole where it had so long lain undisturbed. He turned toward where his daughter sat in the shade of the trees. "Here, Pauline!" he called to her. "Come and see—your friend the pirate and the knife that killed him!"

The girl jumped up and ran across to us, all excitement.

“How wonderful!” she said. “It’s like a dream come true!”

At the time, excited as we all were, I did not notice the strangeness of that spontaneous phrase. She stood upon the edge of the excavation and took the stiletto with eager curiosity from her father. She held it in both hands, breast-high, the point toward her, to read the name upon the hilt.

“Lucia!” she cried, with a strange look toward us, as though dimly and uncertainly recalling some terrible experience. “Lucia!” She repeated the name with a peculiar, slow intonation—an intonation of puzzled half-remembrance.

We stared at her, fascinated. Was our fantastic theory true?

Her gaze lost us, fixed itself into vacancy. Her features changed. An expression of vague fear—the fear of the hypnotic shrinking at some invisible danger—came into them. She opened her mouth as though to speak.

She uttered only an inarticulate cry—a cry of fright as the loose stones of the excavation slipped from under her. She fell headlong into the hole, where she lay oddly—ominously—still. I jumped down after her, lifted her up. The rusty old stiletto, caught under her in her fall, had driven straight into her heart—broken off at the hilt!

The doctor stopped, looked round upon his audience.

“And the treasure?” queried one of them.

“There was no treasure. There was no more digging that day. We took the poor girl’s corpse back to the yacht and I thought her mother would have died as well—or gone out of her mind. She was screaming to get away from the place. But the old man was not put off his game so easily. The next day, whilst I stayed on board with the distracted mother, he and his son went and dug again in that tragic cairn.

“They brought back all they found—the broken lid of a chest, branded with the date 1665. That, curiously enough, was *underneath* the skeleton,

suggesting that the hoard had been rifled before the man, whoever he was, was killed.”

“A strange story!” commented another of the audience. “And what’s your hypothesis in explanation, doctor?”

The doctor smiled.

“Well—you can have your choice,” he said. “There is the possibility that, in a prior existence, Miss Vandermeulen was in fact Lucia, that she seduced John Dawson into revealing the secret of the treasure, that she murdered him on the spot and went off with it—and that the vengeful spirit of the old buccaneer, hovering around these latitudes, came into touch with her new reincarnation, and, playing with a fine irony upon that same lust of gold which was responsible for his murder but of which she was this time entirely innocent, led her to a death by that same poniard with which she had killed *him*. Alternatively, there is the hypothesis that her spontaneous writing and the impersonation of Lucia were but an automatic dramatization by her subconsciousness of hints dropped into it by her brother’s reading of ‘Treasure Island’ and subsequent conversations between her father and his son, and that her death was a mere coincidence.”

“An incredibly complete coincidence!” said one of the men.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

“There was one other curious thing,” he said. “Some years later, in a history of the buccaneers, I came across a paragraph to the effect that the island called Old Providence since the eighteenth century was known to the buccaneers as Santa Katalina, and that only subsequently was that name transferred to the islet north of it. So Pauline’s subconscious memory was right! Furthermore, it stated that the large island, then called Santa Katalina, was seized and garrisoned by the buccaneers in 1664 under the leadership of a man named Mansvelt. He sailed off to get recruits, leaving the island in command of a certain Simon, and died upon the voyage. Simon surrendered the island to the Spaniards who had besieged it. The date was 1665.

“Of course, Miss Vandermeulen may have read that paragraph and subconsciously retained the names—but, for her, it was an improbable kind of reading. At any rate, she had a curious knowledge of an out-of-the-way

piece of history. As I said, when you tap the subconsciousness you never know what buried treasure you may find. Well, I leave you to your hypotheses, gentlemen.” He stood up, knocked out his pipe. “Good-night!”

A PROBLEM IN REPRISALS

In the dusk of a winter afternoon a battalion of the French Contingent of the Army of Occupation dispersed to its billets in the little German village. The *Chef-de-bataillon* and the *médecin-major*, having installed their staffs in their respective bureaux, walked up the street in search of the quarters which had been chosen for them in the meanwhile. The scared faces of slatternly women, obsequiously gesturing the mud-stained French soldiers into occupation of their cottages, turned to look anxiously at them as they passed, in evident apprehension of the order which should let loose a vengeful destruction only too probable to their uneasy consciences. Here and there a haggard-looking man, an ex-soldier probably, slunk into his house, out of sight, but the native population of the village was preponderatingly feminine. The two officers—the *commandant*, good-humoured and inclined to rotundity, his eyes twinkling under brows a shade less gray than his moustache; the doctor, a middle-aged man, quiet, restrained to curtness in speech and expression, with eyes that swept sombrely without interest over his environment—ignored alike the false smiles and the genuinely alarmed glances of these wives and mothers of their once arrogant enemies.

A captain came down the street toward them and saluted on near approach. It was the adjutant of the battalion. He was young and his natural cheerfulness was enhanced to perpetual high spirits in the enjoyment of the experiences following upon overwhelming victory.

“We are well housed, *mon commandant*,” he said joyously, with a flash of white teeth under his little brown moustache. “*Comfort moderne—presque!* Not a château, it is true—but large enough. The best in the village, in any case. Bedrooms for the three of us, and a room for our *popote*. Our baggage is already in, and dinner will be ready in half an hour. *Tout ce qu’il y a de mieux, n’est-ce pas?*” He finished with his young laugh.

The gray eyes of the battalion-commander twinkled at him.

“And the *patronne*, Jordan?—Old and ugly?”

The young man's face lit up. He put one finger to his lips and blew an airy kiss.

"Ah, *mon commandant*!" he replied in a tone of assumed ecstasy. "You shall see her! A pearl, a jewel, *une femme exquise*!—That is to say," he added, with a change of note, "she would be if she were not a *femme boche*. One almost forgets it, to look at her. But *boche* or not, she is young, she is beautiful, and, *mon commandant*, rarest of all—she is intelligent!"

The battalion commander laid his hand on the young man's shoulder and drew him along with them as they resumed their momentarily interrupted progress.

"I see I have to congratulate you upon another conquest," he said, with amused tolerance. "He is incredible, *notre cher Jordan*, Delassus!" he added with a smile to the doctor.

"*Je ne dis pas*," protested the young captain with an affectation of modesty. "But we understand each other and that is already much—although, unfortunately, she speaks no French and my German lacks vocabulary. But she made me understand that her husband was an officer killed in the war. '*Mann—Offizier—tot—Krieg*.' That's right, doctor, *n'est-ce pas*?—You are the linguist."

The doctor nodded assent.

"Quite correct. You should make rapid progress under an instructor so willing to impart interesting information," he said drily.

The young man protested warmly against the implication.

"Your cynicism is out of place, doctor. I assure you. She is *timide*—*timide* like a frightened bird.—I extorted it from her.—But you shall see for yourselves. Here we are!"

They were at the end of the village. The young captain led them through a carriage gateway, sadly in need of a coat of paint, up a weed-grown drive to a fairly large house, that had once been white but was now stained with the overflow of gutters long left out of repair. A belt of trees hid it from the road. The main door, in the centre of the house with windows on both sides

of it, was open, as if in expectation of them. Wisps of smoke from several of the chimneys hinted at hospitality in preparation.

As the three of them entered the hall, a young woman appeared on the threshold of one of the rooms communicating with it. Her natural slimness was emphasized by a gown of black, and this sombre garb threw into relief the fair hair which was massed heavily above her delicate features. It needed, perhaps, the youthful enthusiasm of the captain to call her beautiful; but her appearance had something of fragile charm which conferred a distinction rare among German women. She stood there, a little drawn back from her first emergence, contemplating them with eyes that evidently sought to measure the potentiality for mischief in these forced guests. Her attitude appealed dumbly for protection, so forlorn and frail and timid was it as she shrunk back in the doorway.

“Introduce us, Jordan!” whispered the battalion-commander to his subordinate. “*On est civilisé, quoi donc!*”

The young captain had lost a considerable amount of his assurance. Rather flustered, he saluted and pointed to his superior.

“*Commandant!*” then, turning to the other, “Doctor!” he blurted, clumsily.

Their hostess bowed slightly with a pathetic little smile as the two officers saluted. The doctor advanced a step.

“Have no fear, *gnädige Frau*,” he said politely in German. “The war is over and France does not avenge itself upon women. No harm will come to you.”

Her face lit up.

“*Ach*, you speak German!”

“I studied in Germany in my youth, *gnädige Frau*, and I have not quite forgotten the language.”

She smiled at him.

“*Gewiss nicht!*” Then, with a swift change of expression, she clutched imploringly at his arm. “You will protect me? I am so alone and

frightened!” She hesitated as though seeking a cognate circumstance in him that should compel his sympathy. “You are married?”

The polite smile went out of his face. His expression hardened.

“I was, *gnädige Frau*,” he replied, curtly.

She stared at him, divining that she had blundered upon some painful mystery. With feminine tact she steered quickly away from it into the region of safe commonplace. She threw open one of the doors leading into the hall.

“Here, *meine Herren*, is the *Speisezimmer*,” she said in a tone of colourless courtesy that contrasted with her emotion-charged voice of a moment before. “It is at your service for your meals. There,” she pointed to a door at the other side of the hall, “is the *Salon*—also at your service. I have had a fire lit in it. Your orderlies are now in the kitchen. I will send them to you to show you your rooms.” She inclined her head slightly in sign of farewell and passed out through a door at the end of the hall.

The young captain looked at his commanding officer.

“*Eh bien, mon commandant*? What did I tell you? Is she not——?”

His superior interrupted him, a twinkle in his eye.

“She is, *mon cher Jordan*—but you have not a chance against the doctor here!” He laughed, clapping the doctor on the back.

The *médecin-major* frowned. His ascetic features hardened again.

“*Mon cher commandant*, you do me too much honour,” he said coldly. “I assure you that there is no living woman who can interest me.”

“Bah!” said the battalion-commander a trifle fatuously, “*moi, je suis connaisseur dans ces affaires-là!* I am sure that something is going to happen between you and that woman. I can always feel that sort of thing in the air like—” he hesitated for an illustration, “like some people can see ghosts.”

The doctor looked him in the eyes.

“*Mon Commandant*,” he said, curtly, “if you could see ghosts you would not feel so sure.”

There was a moment of unpleasant silence. The captain broke it by shouting for the orderlies.

The three officers were introduced to their rooms and parted to perform their toilet before dinner.

The meal which followed in the rather overfurnished Speisezimmer was overshadowed by the gloomy taciturnity of the doctor who appeared still to resent the battalion-commander’s suggestions of gallantry. Not all the sprightly sallies of the adjutant, not the persistent *bonhomie* of the battalion-commander, resolutely ignoring any hostility between himself and the doctor, could bring a smile into that hard-set face with the sombre eyes. Their hostess did not appear again and was not mentioned between them. When they had finished, the captain suggested that they should smoke their cigars in the Salon.

“I feel I want to put my feet on the piano,” he said, with a vague remembrance of a popular picture, “like the *boches* at Versailles in ’seventy! To infect our hostess’s curtains with cigar-smoke is a poor compromise, but it is something! *Allons, messieurs!*—let us indulge in hideous reprisals! The *boche* has devastated our homes—let us avenge ourselves by spoiling his curtains!”

The battalion-commander looked smilingly across to the doctor.

“*Mon cher Delassus*, are you for this policy of reprisals?”

The doctor looked up as though startled out of a train of thought.

“*Mon commandant*, it is a subject on which I dare not let myself think.”

There was something so harsh in his tone that neither of his companions could continue their banter. Both looked at the doctor. They knew little or nothing of his private life, for he had joined the battalion only just prior to the armistice, but evidently it contained a tragedy the memory of which they had unwittingly revived. Both maintained a respectful silence for a few moments. Then the adjutant rose and went out of the room. He called out to them from the Salon that a splendid fire awaited them, and the others rose from the table also.

The battalion-commander laid his hand affectionately upon the doctor’s shoulder.

“*Mon cher*,” he said, “forgive me if I have unconsciously wounded sacred sentiments.”

The doctor pressed the hand that was extended to him. They went together across the hall into the Salon.

A blazing wood fire fitfully lit up a large room still without other means of illumination. Jordan explained that he had sent an orderly for some candles, as Madame had no petroleum for the lamps. The battalion-commander and the doctor threw themselves luxuriously into deep armchairs on either side of the fireplace and lit their cigars. In a few minutes the orderly arrived with the candles. Jordan fitted them into two large candelabra on the mantelpiece and lit them.

The eyes of all three officers roved around the apartment. It was, like the dining-room, rather overfurnished and was particularly rich in bric-à-brac of all kinds. It was, in fact, overcrowded with porcelain figures, small mirrors, pictures of moderate size, all sorts of valuable objects that in almost every case were of *easily portable dimensions*. This last attribute leaped simultaneously to the minds of two of them.

“*Mon commandant*,” began Jordan, in a humorously affected judicial tone, “I am penetrated by an unworthy suspicion——!”

“French! *Nom d’un nom!*” cried the battalion-commander. “Everything here!—The collection of the burglar *boche* officer!—Doctor! You speak German!—Ask that woman——!”

Both were suddenly arrested by the attitude of the doctor. He was staring in a fixed fascination at a small Buhl clock upon the mantelpiece. Suddenly he jumped to his feet, snatched down the clock, and gazed eagerly at the back of it.

“*Mon Dieu!*” he cried. “*This is mine!*—it comes from my house!—Look!”

He showed them an inscription on the back:

[1]“*A Jules, pour marquer les heures d’un amour qui ne cessera pas quand le temps même cessera, de sa Marcelle.*”

He stared at them like a lunatic.

“My wife!” he cried. “My wife!—Oh, Marcelle, Marcelle, where are you? Where are you?”

The others also had risen to their feet. A tense silence followed upon the wild cry.

The battalion-commander touched the doctor’s arm.

“*Mon ami*,” he said gently, “—can we help you——?”

The erstwhile sombre eyes of the doctor blazed down upon him, as though searching for a mortal enemy even in this friend. Then, with a distinctly apparent effort of will, the anguished man mastered himself.

“Listen!” he said. “This clock was a present to me from my wife. It was a love-marriage, ours—we loved, she and I——” he broke off, his eyes blazing again. Then, with a gesture of the hand as though he put that from him, he continued: “Before the war I was in practice at Cambrai. We lived out of the town—in a country house such as this. In August, 1914, I was mobilized. They sent me to Lorraine. I left my wife at home, believing her to be safe. You know what happened. The enemy swept over that part of the country. Trench-warfare began and my home, all I cared for in the world—my wife—was in the German lines. I never saw her again. I could never get any news. I waited four desperate years—and then, when we advanced, I went to find my home. It simply did not exist—it was a heap of bricks with a trench through it. My wife—no hint!” He pressed a hand over his eyes, then stared once more at the clock. “And now—I find this—here!”

Again there was a tense silence. The battalion-commander broke it at last.

“Interrogate the woman,” he said, briefly. “She must know something.”

“It is a pity her husband is dead,” said the captain, with grim humour. “We could have the pleasure of condemning him by court-martial, after he had confessed—whatever there is to confess.”

The doctor’s face set hard. He replaced the clock on the mantelpiece and wrote a few words on a page of his notebook.

“I am going to have the truth,” he said, tearing out the page and folding it up. “Ring the bell, my dear Jordan.”

An orderly appeared.

“Take this to Madame,” said the doctor, “at once.”

The orderly departed. The three men waited, two of them tingling with the excitement of this unexpected drama, the third standing with compressed lips and eyes that seemed to be frowning into a world which transcended this. He was certainly oblivious of his companions in the fixity of his thought. At last his lips moved.

“Marcelle! Marcelle!” he murmured. “My love! I am going to know—and, if need be, to avenge!”

At that moment the door opened and the frail little figure of the German woman appeared upon the threshold.

“*Meine Herren?*” she said, in timid enquiry.

The doctor looked up. His companions marvelled to see the expression of his face change to a smiling courtesy. But there was a glitter in the usually sombre eyes which spurred their hardly repressed excitement.

“Will you have the kindness to enter, *gnädige Frau?*” said the doctor. His voice was suave, but there was a note in it which his companions, although they did not understand the words, recognized as compelling.

The German woman glanced at him apprehensively, and obeyed. The doctor drew up an armchair for her, close to the fire.

“Will you not seat yourself, *gnädige Frau?*” he asked still in the suave voice with the undertone of command.

She inclined her head speechlessly and sat down. They noticed that her hands were trembling. The doctor motioned his companions to resume their seats. He himself remained standing, his back to the fireplace, his form hiding the clock on the mantelpiece from the eyes of the woman had she looked up. He smiled at her in a reassuring manner, as she waited dumbly for him to state the reason for his summons.

“We are very much interested in your collection of porcelain, *gnädige Frau,*” he said, smoothly. “It is French, is it not?”

A sudden expression of alarm flitted into her eyes, was banished. She nodded her head.

“*Ja—ja, mein Herr,*” she answered hesitatingly. She moistened her lips. Her hands gripped each other tightly upon her lap.

The battalion-commander and the captain observed her with a quickened interest. Despite their ignorance of German, the word “*Porzelän*” gave them the clue to their comrade’s opening question.

“It is the result of many years’ gradual acquisition, I presume?” he pursued, in a casual tone.

She shot an upward glance at him from under her eyebrows ere she replied.

“*Ja—mein Herr.*”

“It is well chosen,” said the doctor. “I congratulate you on your knowledge and good taste. Perhaps you would explain some of the pieces to us—pieces I do not recognize?”

She looked up at him with wide and innocent eyes.

“I cannot, *mein Herr*. I know nothing about porcelain. It was my husband’s collection. I keep it in memory of him.”

There was an accent of sincerity in the last phrase which drew a sharp glance from the doctor.

“Ah,” he said quietly. “He was killed, was he not?”

Her eyes filled with tears, her mouth twitched.

“Killed in one of the very last battles, *mein Herr.*” She drew a long sobbing breath and looked wildly at him. “*Ach Gott!* do not remind me! do not remind me!” she cried. “He was all I had in the world—everything—everything! You do not know how good and kind and loving he was! And now he is gone—he will never come back—never—never! And I loved him so!” She broke down into sobs, hiding her face in her hands.

The doctor waited until the crisis had subsided. A diagnosis of hysteria formed itself in his professional mind.

“So you have no real interest in this collection?” he enquired. “Would you sell it?”

“*Ach, nein—nein!*” she answered. “I keep it in memory of him, my Heinrich, who loved it so.—I feel him here when I dust it and care for it.” She looked wildly round the room. “I feel him here now!”

The doctor nodded his head in courteous assent to a possibility.

“Did he inherit it?” he asked casually, as though merely pursuing a conversation which could not, in politeness, be allowed to cease on a note of distress.

She shook her head.

“Ah, he bought it?”

She moistened her lips nervously ere she replied.

“Yes.”

“Before the war?”

Her face hardened as she answered again.

“Yes.”

There was a moment of silence and then the doctor changed his position slightly before the mantelpiece.

“And this pretty clock?” he asked, pointing to it. “Did he buy that also?”

She stared at it and then nodded her head.

“*Ja, mein Herr.*”

“*So!*—that is curious. I am particularly interested in that clock, *gnädige Frau*. Can you remember where it was bought?”

She hesitated, ventured a scared glance at him, and obviously forced herself to speech. The two officers involuntarily bent forward in their interest.

“No, *mein Herr.*”

She glanced round as though seeking an opportunity for escape.

The doctor repeated his question in a level tone of authority, his eyes fixed on her.

“You are sure you cannot remember where that clock was bought, *gnädige Frau*?”

“Quite sure.” Her breast was heaving. She half rose from her seat. “Why do you ask me all these questions? Let me go!—Let me go! You have no right to question me like this! I—I tell you it was bought—it was all bought!”

The doctor stepped forward with a quick movement, seized her wrist, and forced her back into her seat.

“I beg of you!” he said in a voice that compelled obedience.

She subsided, trembling in every limb. Her eyes followed his every movement with the fascinated attention of a frightened animal.

The doctor came close to her, and from her point of view glanced up to the mantelpiece. Then, stepping back, he arranged the candles so that the face of the clock, seen from her position, was a disc of bright reflection.

Without a word but with a deliberation which awed even the watching officers by its inflexible though mysterious purpose, he turned to her once more, and, with the gently firm touch of a medical man, posed her head so that she looked straight before her. Paralyzed under his masterful dominance, she submitted plastically. She was too frightened to utter a sound. Only her eyes widened as she saw him produce a heavy revolver.

“Now, *gnädige Frau!*” he said, and his voice, though passionless, was intense in its expression of level will-power, “do not move your head! Look up—under your eyebrows. You see that clock? Look at it—continue to look at it!—If you take your eyes off it for one fraction of a second I shall shoot you dead! You are looking at it? It marks a quarter to eight. When it strikes eight you will tell me quite truthfully how you came by it!”

He ceased. The young woman, her face white with terror, her mouth twitching, her nostrils distended, sat motionless, staring up under her eyebrows at the face of the clock.

There was a dead silence in the room. The minutes passed. The young woman did not move a muscle. Her wide-open eyes fixed on the clock, she seemed to stiffen into a cataleptic rigidity.

The doctor put aside his revolver. He approached her, took one of her wrists and lifted her hand from her lap. It lay limply in his.

“You are feeling sleepy,” he said in his level, positive voice. “You are going to sleep. My voice is sounding muffled and far away—but you will still hear it. You are losing the sense of your surroundings—but you still see that

clock face. You cannot help but see it. And when it strikes eight you are going to tell the truth.” He dropped the hand which fell lifelessly again upon her lap.

The young woman sat motionless as a statue. Her breathing changed to the deep respirations of sleep, although her eyes remained wide open.

The clock struck eight. At the last of its thin, silvery notes the young woman shuddered. Her lips moved.

“My husband sent it to me,” she said in a toneless, dreamy voice.

“When?” asked the doctor.

“In 1915.”

“From whence?”

“From the front.”

“Do you know the place?”

“No.”

“You are quite sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“And all these other things?”

“My husband sent them to me.”

“From France?”

“Yes.”

“How did he become possessed of them?”

“He took them out of houses.”

There was a pause in which the young woman did not move in the slightest. She appeared like some oracular statue waiting for the next question.

“Why did you lie to me?” asked the doctor in his level voice.

“Because you would have thought my husband a thief, and I am so proud of him.”

“Can you be proud of him, knowing that he was a thief?”

“Yes,” came the dreamy answer. “It was not his crime. He sent these things to me because I asked him for them and he loved me.”

“You asked him to send you these things? Why?”

“Because all the other officers’ wives were having things sent to them.”

“*So!* Your husband would not have taken them if you had not asked for them?”

“No. He only took them to give me pleasure. He never thought of anybody but me. That is why I love him so—why I shall always love him.”

The doctor bit his lip, and hesitated for a moment.

“You do not think your husband would have offered violence to a woman in the house where he got this clock?”

“No. He loved me too much. He never thought of any woman but me. I am sure of it. He was an ideal man, my Heinrich—always gentle, always loving, always faithful.” She paused a moment before continuing. “It is cruel of you to make me realize how much I love him!”

The doctor stood over her, contemplating her, his brows wrinkled in a puzzled frown. His comrades looked at him enquiringly. He ignored them. The young woman, having ceased to speak, remained motionless and upright on her chair. The only sound in the room was the ticking of the clock.

Suddenly the doctor’s brows cleared in an evident decision. He lifted the young woman’s hand again as he spoke in his level, positive voice. His face was very grave.

“You are asleep. But you are going into a very much deeper sleep—a sleep so profound that it takes you far out of this time and place. Nevertheless you will remain in touch with me and you will hear my voice. But

everything else is going from you. You are now released from the limitations of this body. You are on a plane from which you can enter into any time and place that I shall command.”

He dropped her hand and, with his finger-tips, closed the lids over her eyes. Her body still remained upright in its trancelike rigidity.

“What do you see?” he asked.

“Nothing,” came the dreamy answer.

“Where are you?”

“I do not know—I—I am nowhere, I think,” she said with hesitation. “I—I—oh, do not keep me like this!” There was a new note of anxiety in her voice.

“Wait a moment,” said the doctor. He turned to the mantelpiece, took down the clock, placed it on her lap, and clasped her hands about it.

“Now,” he said in his quiet, tense tones, “you are in touch with that clock. I want you to go into the time and place when that clock had another owner—before your husband had it. Focus yourself upon it. Go into the room where it stands.”

The young woman’s eyelids twitched flickeringly but otherwise her rigid attitude was unmodified.

“Yes,” she said, in a slow and doubtful tone, “yes——”

“What do you see?” asked the doctor. His lips compressed themselves firmly after the words, the muscles of his lean jaw stood out, in the intense effort of his will to keep emotion under control, to avoid an unconscious suggestion of ideas.

“I see a *salon*,” said the young woman dreamily, “a *salon* with French windows opening on to a lawn. There is a grand piano in it—and a young woman seated at the piano. She is dark—young—oh, she is very beautiful! She keeps on looking at the clock—the clock is on the mantelpiece between two bronze statuettes. She is expecting somebody——”

“Yes?” said the doctor, crouching over her, his fists clenched in a spasm of supremely willed self-control, his breath coming in the quick gasps enforced by that tumultuous beating of the heart he could not command.

“Yes?—Go on!”

“She hears a footstep—she jumps up from the piano. A man comes into the room—a civilian. She throws her arms about him and kisses him. She leads him across to the mantelpiece and takes up the clock. She puts it into his hands—she is showing him something on the back of it, something written! They kiss again. They are in love these two—how she loves him! I can feel that—I can feel her love vibrating in me!” She paused dreamily. “I know what real love is—and she loves him like that——”

“The man?” asked the doctor, his eyes wild. “The man?—describe him!”

“His back is turned to me—I cannot see his face. Ah, he turns round. The man is—*you!*”

The doctor looked as though he were going to collapse. His companions watched him, fascinated, completely mystified, trying to guess at the drama their ignorance of the language hid from them. He mastered himself with a mighty effort.

“Yes,” he said. “You have the place right—but not the time. Go on a year—more than a year! Go on to the time when this clock passed out of that woman’s possession!”

“More than a year!” she repeated dreamily. “I—I must sleep—I cannot ——” She was silent for a few moments. “Yes—yes—I see the room again. The young woman is in it. She is seated at a little table—writing. She looks up—Oh, how sad and pale she is!—but she is still very beautiful. I am so sorry for her—she is so unhappy—and she is still in love, I can still feel it vibrating in me. She is picking up a photograph—she kisses it—it is yours!—she kisses it again and again. Why are you not with her? I feel that you are a great distance off—she does not know where you are. That worries her, because she loves you so.” She stopped.

“Go on,” said the doctor sternly. “What do you see next?”

“She puts away her writing hurriedly. She is frightened of something—someone is coming, I think—yes! The door opens—a soldier—no, a German officer! Oh, she is frightened of him, but she is brave! She stands up as he comes toward her. She draws back from him—he is between her and the door. He puts out his hands, tries to hold her—*Ach!*” her voice rose to a scream, “*it is Heinrich!*”

“Go on!” commanded the doctor. “*Go on!* What do you see?” His voice was terrible in its inexorability.

“Oh no, no!” she whispered. “No! Don’t make me see! don’t make me see! I don’t want to—I don’t want to—*Ach, Heinrich, Heinrich!*” Her voice came on a note of anguish. “I cannot bear it!”

The doctor frowned at the rigid figure with closed eyes that began to sway slightly to and fro upon its chair. Her face was drawn with a suffering beyond expression.

“See!” he commanded. “And tell me what you see!”

“Oh!” she moaned, “you are cruel—cruel! I do not want to see! I do not want to look!”

“You must!”

“Oh!” Evidently she surrendered helplessly. She commenced in a fatigued, dreary voice: “They are there together—the two of them! That beautiful woman—oh, I hate her now, I hate her!—*Ach, Heinrich, have you forgotten me?*” It was as if she called to him. “He does not hear me. His eyes are fixed on the woman.” She continued in short panting sentences uttered with increasing horror. “She is retreating from him—further and further back. He is following her. Oh, something terrible is going to happen—it is in the air—I feel it—something horrible!—What?—Ah, *he is trying to kiss her!* My Heinrich! Oh, how dreadful, how dreadful!—Oh, don’t make me see any more—don’t make me see any more!—He has got her in his arms—she is struggling. Oh, I can’t look—I will not look!—Oh, Heinrich, and I loved you so!” Her voice fell from the scream of a nightmare to a plaintive moaning. “Oh, no more—no more! I can bear no more!”

“Look!—Look to the very end!”

The doctor's comrades shuddered at his aspect as he crouched over her, seeming as though he were trying to peer with her eyes into some scene of horror they could not even imagine.

The young woman's face was a mask of agony.

"Oh, you torture me," she moaned, "you torture me—I see, and I do not want to see—oh, I do not want to see——"

"What do you see?"

"They are struggling together!—She fights desperately—what a wild cat she is! He is pinning her arms to her sides with his embrace—she throws her head back, back, to escape him. Ah! She has broken away! She runs to the table. *What is she going to do?*" The seer's voice rose in acute alarm. "*Ach*, a revolver! Oh, no, no!" The ejaculation was a vehement and agonized protest. "*Heinrich!* Oh, leave her—leave her!—No, he laughs at her as he follows—and she is so desperate. Ah, he has got her up in a corner—he has seized her again—she is crying out—it is a name—she cries it again and again——"

"What name?"

"I hear it! *Jules!*—*Jules!*—that is it—*Jules!* Oh, what a tone of despair!"

The doctor closed his eyes and swayed. Then, mastering himself with a superhuman effort, he said hoarsely:

"Go on!—To the end!"

"I cannot see plainly—they are struggling still. *Ach!* the revolver! *She has fired!* I see the thin smoke in the air.—What has happened? He has her in his arms—he stumbles with her.—*Ach, she is dead!* She has shot herself. He stretches her out on the floor—he is bending over her—*Ach, Heinrich, Heinrich, you have broken my heart!*" She wailed as if from the depths of a wretchedness beyond all solace. "You have killed my love for ever! I hate you, I hate you, I hate you as long as I live—I hate myself for having loved you! *Faithless, despicable brute!*"

She finished in a tone of fierce vindictiveness, a resentment, at once horrified and implacable, of unforgivable wrong.

But the doctor no longer heeded her. Hands to his brow, eyes closed, he reeled away from her.

“Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!” he groaned. “Marcelle, Marcelle! How shall I avenge you?”

He glanced at the now silent and still rigid figure of the young woman. Tears were trickling down her cheeks from the closed eyes. Her trance was unbroken. She sat still nursing the clock.

Then, with a deep breath, he drew himself erect. The jaw that expressed his powerful will set hard again. His two companions looked with horror upon the dreadful pallor of that face from which two fierce eyes blazed. A little laugh from him. It was a sickening mockery of mirth.

“Mes amis!” he said. “You asked me a little time ago what I thought of the policy of reprisals. I ask you that question now. That young woman, in a hypnotic trance, has just described to me, as though she had seen it acted before her eyes, the suicide of my wife. She killed herself rather than be outraged by that woman’s husband. In her waking life the young woman is, of course, totally ignorant of the event. In her waking life she adores the memory of her dead husband as of a perfect and faithful lover. Now, in her hypnotic state, she loathes him—her love has turned to bitter jealous hatred. She despises him. In fact, she feels toward him just as she would have felt had she witnessed the scene that destroyed my life’s happiness. It rests with me to call her back to waking life, totally ignorant of her husband’s crime, adoring him as before—or to leave her in an agony of shattered love. Virtually, her husband murdered my wife. Her memory of him is the only thing that I can touch. Shall I leave it sacred? Or shall I, justly, kill it?—What do you say?—It is a pretty little problem in reprisals for you!”

His comrades stared at him in horrified astonishment.

“But,” cried the battalion-commander, “are you sure——”

“Look at her!” replied the doctor.

The young woman still sat rigidly upright. Her face was drawn with anguish. Heavy tears rolled ceaselessly from under the closed eyelids. She

sobbed quietly in a far-off kind of way that was nevertheless eloquent of an immense despair.

“She sees what happened——?” queried the captain in an incredulous and puzzled tone.

“Three years ago. She is looking at it now,” asserted the doctor. “She sees her husband bending over my dead wife.—Come, *messieurs*, let me have your verdict!” He seemed to be experiencing a grim, unhuman enjoyment at their evident recoil from the terrible problem he offered them. “I must wake her soon!”

“And if she wakes—knowing——?” faltered the captain.

“She will probably kill herself. She has been living in an intense love for the idealized memory of her husband. The revulsion will be overwhelming.”

The battalion-commander interposed.

“But, *mon cher*—a suicide—that goes beyond——”

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

“Her husband drove *my* wife to suicide——”

“It is terribly logical,” murmured the young captain, “but,” he glanced at the unconscious figure in its mysterious and awful grief, “one needs to be God to indulge in logic to that point.”

“And yet we are but men,” said the doctor, “and the problem is there before us—must be solved at once! In my place, what would you do?”

The battalion-commander rose. He went up to his comrade and looked him in the eyes.

“*Mon cher*,” he said solemnly, “God forbid that I should ever be in your place! I do not know.”

The doctor turned to the young man. There was a terrible smile on his lips.

“And you, *mon cher Jordan*?”

The captain rose also. He also read the hell in the doctor's eyes. He shook his head and shuddered.

"*Mon ami*," he replied, "I should go mad."

The doctor nodded grimly.

"The terrible thing is that I cannot go mad," he said. "I am still sane.—So you both decline the problem?"

The two officers shook their heads, not trusting themselves to speech.

The doctor turned away from them and covered his face with both hands. He reeled to the mantelpiece, leaned against it. They saw his body shake in the intensity of the nervous crisis which swept over him.

"Marcelle!" he cried. "Marcelle!—if you are a living spirit, counsel me! Shall I avenge?"

The watchers turned to the entranced woman as though involuntarily expecting a reply through her from that mysterious region where her soul was in touch with the long-past tragedy she had revealed. She still wept silently in that awful sleep which was no sleep. But no word passed her lips. Only the clock she held upon her lap struck one silvery note, marking the half-hour.

At the sound the doctor turned from the fireplace and took up the clock. He gazed, with a passionate intensity, upon the inscription on the back.

"Marcelle!" he murmured. "Our love ceases not when time itself shall cease! Though you are dead, that still lives—*that* was not murdered!—I understand, *ma bien-aimée*, I understand!"

He put the clock gently upon the mantelpiece and turned once more to the rigid, waiting figure. His comrades watched him, spell-bound, keying themselves to deduce his decision from the tone of his voice when he should speak. His stern face was set in an unfaltering resolve they could not penetrate. He lifted her hand.

"*Gnädige Frau*," he said, and the level, passionless voice gave no hint to those ignorant of the language of the purport of the German words which

followed, “when you wake from this sleep you will entirely forget the hideous dream through which you have passed. You will never remember it, waking or asleep. You will think of your husband as you have always thought of him—faithful and loving. You will completely resume your normal life. You will not even be aware that you have slept. It will seem to you as if you had only just sat down in this chair. But when you wake you will present me with the clock upon the mantelpiece. You will feel an overmastering impulse to do this, and you will obey it.—Now,” he wiped the tears from her face and blew sharply upon her closed eyelids, “*wake!*”

The two officers watched her, fascinated. Would she shriek? What terrible paroxysm would be the expression of a heart-broken despair? Or had he ——? They held their breath.

Her eyelids flickered for a moment, and then, with one deep sigh, her eyes opened. She smiled round on them.

“*Meine Herren?*” she said in her voice of timid enquiry. Then, fixing her eyes on the doctor, “You sent for me?”

The doctor looked at her gravely.

“The Commandant desired me to assure you, *gnädige Frau*, that you need be under no apprehensions during our stay here. We consider ourselves the guests of a charming lady and we hope to leave only a pleasant memory behind us.”

His companions marvelled at the strength of will which could enforce so complete a normality of voice and feature.

The German woman smiled up at him, a pathetic little smile.

“You are very kind, Herr Doctor—please convey my thanks to the Commandant.” She made a little movement which drew attention to her black dress. “My—my husband in heaven, if he can see you, will—will bless you.” Her eyes filled with tears. “Please excuse me!” she said with a pretty little gesture of apology, “his memory is all I have—I cannot help bringing him into every act of my life.”

“Love need not cease with death, *gnädige Frau*,” replied the doctor. “One hopes that those we loved still watch over us—though we cannot see them.”

She smiled again.

“He had no thought but of me, Herr Doctor, and I have none but of him.—I see you understand,” she finished in a tone of involuntary sympathy. “You also have loved?”

“*Ja, gnädige Frau*,” he replied with a grave and enigmatic smile. “I also.”

Her eyes went past him to the mantelpiece, rested with a curiously fixed expression on the clock. Suddenly, as though moved by an uncontrollable impulse, she jumped up, took the clock from the mantelpiece and thrust it into the doctor’s hands.

“Please accept this!” she said appealingly.

The doctor fixed his grave eyes upon her.

“Why?” he asked.

She stammered, evidently at a loss for her reason.

“Because—because I want you to have it—because I feel, I do not know why, that you have protected me from something——” She stopped, puzzled by her own words. “That is absurd, I know!” she exclaimed. “But it belonged to two lovers, Herr Doctor—you, who understand love, will value it, I know. I—I feel you *ought* to have it!”

She left him standing with it. Then she turned to the other officers with her appealing little smile and bowed slightly in farewell.

“*Gute Nacht, meine Herren!*” she said, and went out of the room.

The doctor stared after her, his face deathly white. Suddenly his body broke and crumpled. He sank down to his knees by one of the chairs, still clasping the clock in his hands.

“Marcelle!” he cried, his head bowed over his recovered love-token, his body shaking, “Marcelle! have I done right?—have I done right?”

The battalion-commander touched his subordinate on the shoulder. Both tip-toed silently out of the room.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] “To Jules, to mark the hours of a love which will not cease when Time itself shall cease, from his Marcelle.”

SECRET SERVICE

“But, *Excellenz*——!” The entreaty, from such a man, was oddly and strikingly sincere. About forty years of age, sprucely dressed in a well-cut lounge suit, spats over patent boots, he was the type to be seen any day gazing rather aimlessly into the shop-windows of Piccadilly or the Rue de la Paix, the type that haunts the hotels frequented by the best society and yet is not of that society, the type that drifts behind the chairs of every gambling casino in the world. A dark moustache, carefully trimmed, curled over lips whose fine curves were unpleasantly thin and clear-cut. His complexion was sallow; his dark eyes, fixed on his companion in an accentuation of his entreaty, implored now with an expression of genuine truthfulness which was certainly not habitual to them. He gesticulated with a white and exquisitely manicured hand.

“But rubbish!” The speaker was an oldish, thick-set man in evening dress. His round red face, barred with a clipped white moustache, with a pair of small gray eyes vivacious behind pince-nez, was set upon a short apoplectic neck which rucked into folds above his collar. The scalp showed pink through close-cropped white hair. He stood warming himself with his back to the fire—a very large fire for Berlin in the winter of early 1918—and glared angrily at the young man. He spoke with the irascibility of a brutal superior whose impunity is of long date and unquestioned.

“Are you mad, Kranz? Do you take me for an imbecile old woman? Am I feeble-minded—do I *look* feeble-minded—that you should dare to—to play such a trick upon me?” He was obviously working himself up into one of his official rages. “You—you tell me that you have an infallible means for obtaining secret information, no matter how hidden. You persuade me to come and test it—*me!* I give you credit for your impudence!—and this is what it is!” He almost choked with offended dignity. “Be careful, Kranz! You have traded this once upon your record with us—you will never do it again! To bring me—*me!*—to this absurdity!—to expect me to listen to the hypnotic ravings of that idiot girl! I wonder you didn’t offer me crystal-gazing!”

“But, *Excellenz*——!”

The old man waved a hand at him.

“My dear Kranz,” he said, dropping suddenly into a tone of tolerant contempt. “I forgive you this once. I daresay you have been the victim of a genuine hallucination. You would not have dared else.—You don’t drug, do you?” The question was asked with a disconcertingly sudden sharpness. The younger man made a gesture of emphatic denial, defying the piercing gray eyes that probed him. The old man grunted. “Keep your sanity, Kranz—or the Bureau will lose a valued servant. Drop this nonsense. I know what I am talking about—I studied psychology under Wundt of Jena. The whole thing is a hallucination—the raving of the dream-self released from control—*dummes Zeug!*—Give me my coat!”

“*Excellenz*, I implore you!”

The old man looked at him with a snarl of savage mockery.

“Don’t waste any more of my time, Kranz! Look at her—is it even probable that an imbecile creature like that can be of use in our business? Look at her, I say!”

He flung out a hand toward a young girl who stood with obvious reluctance in the centre of the luxuriously furnished apartment. She was perhaps eighteen but her youth had neither beauty nor charm. Her features were soft and heavy; the nose thick; the chin receding; the eyes weak and protuberant. Unmistakably, her personality was of the feeblest. Her face flooded scarlet with shame and her eyes swam with tears at this brutal insult. Yet evidently she did not dare to rush away. Only she looked beseechingly toward Kranz, like a dog who awaits a sign from its master.

His sallow face blanched. The thin lips under the dark moustache lost their curves, became a straight line.

“Agathe!” he said, and his voice of command was strangely in contrast with the tone in which he had entreated the old man. “Go into the next room and wait!”

The girl vanished without a word. Kranz waited until she had closed the door, and then he turned once more to his superior.

“I implore Your Excellency to listen!” he said with a desperate gesture. “I stake my reputation upon it——”

The old man grunted scornfully.

“Your reputation!”

The dark eyes flashed.

“My reputation with you, *Excellenz*,” he corrected in a gentle voice of complete cynicism.

The old man stared at him.

“Well, go on!” he said brutally, after a short pause which was eloquent of his appraisal. He cleaned his pince-nez to mark his contemptuous indifference to anything that might be said.

“You remember Karl Wertheimer, *Excellenz*?”

The old man swung round on him, replaced the pince-nez.

“Shot by the English.—You’ll never equal him, Kranz.”

Kranz shrugged his shoulders.

“*Excellenz*, I believe neither in God nor Devil—until the other day I believed that death finished us completely—but I assure you solemnly upon my—upon anything which you think will bind me—that the soul, or whatever you choose to call it, of Karl Wertheimer speaks through that girl!” There was a pause of silence in which the old man’s eyes probed him to the depths. He proffered no comment and Kranz continued, his voice intensely earnest. “The English shot Karl Wertheimer in London—but they did not kill him. His—his soul is here, in Berlin, in this room, alive as ever, as eager as ever to work for the Fatherland!”

“He always had patriotic notions,” murmured the old man, with a sly smile at the obviously cosmopolitan Kranz, “—that is why he was such an invaluable agent. Go on with your little romance.”

“It is no romance, *Excellenz*, I assure you—it is living fact. Karl Wertheimer was a useful agent while he lived upon this earth—but he is immeasurably more useful now that he is a—a spirit. There are no walls that can keep him out—there is nothing he cannot see if he chooses to—there is no conversation he cannot overhear——”

“H’m!” grunted the old man, “admitted that if he is a spirit he can do all this—how can he communicate it to us?”

“Through this girl!”

“Who is she, this girl?”

“The daughter of some shopkeeper or other. I followed her ankles one evening in the Park—it was night, and I could not see her face.” He smiled cynically. “I won’t trouble Your Excellency with the details. I brought her in here and no sooner had she sat down in that chair when she swooned off. I was just cursing my luck—I saw her face for the first time then!—and wondering how I was going to get rid of her, *when Karl spoke to me*. I confess, *Excellenz*, it gave me a pretty bad turn. It was so utterly unexpected—his voice coming from her lips. However, I pulled myself together—and we had a most interesting conversation——”

“He could answer your questions?” interjected the old man, sharply.

“Just as if he were himself sitting in the chair. So, naturally, I kept a tight hold on the girl. She has not been allowed out since.”

“H’m!” The old man grunted again and looked at his watch. “Well, I have missed my appointment,” he said with the factitious bad temper he owed to his dignity. “I may as well see her performance. Fetch her in!”

Kranz went to the door and called.

“Agathe!”

The girl entered, stood with her eyes fixed timorously on him. He pointed to a large armchair by the fireplace.

“Sit down!” he commanded. The girl obeyed dully, one little apprehensive glance at him the only sign of any mental life in her. She sat upright, her

hands on her lap, staring stupidly into the fire. Two heavy tears collected themselves in her protuberant eyes rolled down her cheeks. They seemed but to emphasize her degradation. Her tyrant stood over her, his dark eyes hard.

“Lean back and go to sleep!”

She sank back among the cushions. Obviously, she had no will at all of her own. Her eyes closed. Her expressionless face twitched for a moment and then was as still as a mask. Her bosom heaved in the commencement of deep and heavy breathing which continued in the normality of slumber. The old man watched her, keenly and contemptuously alert for any sign of simulation.

Kranz pulled a little table across to the fireplace. A telephone instrument, incongruously utilitarian in this luxurious room, and writing materials were on it.

“You should note down what is said, *Excellenz*,” he said earnestly, in a low voice.

The old man ignored him, his eyes on the girl. Suddenly he shuddered in a rush of cold air. The paper on the table fluttered as in a draught. He turned to Kranz in savage irritation.

“Shut that window!”

Kranz shook his head.

“They are all shut, *Excellenz*!” His whisper was one of genuine awe. “Hush! It’s beginning! *He’s come!*”

The old man favoured him with a glance of inexpressible contempt. The scorn was still in his eyes when he jerked round to the girl again in an involuntary start of surprise at a sudden greeting.

“Good evening, *Excellenz*!” The words issued from that expressionless mask of the deeply breathing girl, but they were uttered in a tone of easy jocularly, followed by a little good-humoured laugh, which was uncanny in its contrast with her degraded personality. Despite the feminine vocal

chords which had articulated the phrase, the *timbre* and intonation were vividly those of a man of the world.

The old man stared speechlessly. His faculties seemed inhibited under the shock. The red faded out of his round face, left it ashen gray under the close-cropped white hair. Kranz, watching him narrowly, feared for his heart. He made a brusque little gesture as though seizing control of himself.

“*Herr Gott!* It’s—it’s *his* voice!” he gasped.

His eyes turned to Kranz and there was fear in them, a primitive fear of the supernatural. Trembling, he reeled rather than walked to the chair by the table with the telephone, dropped heavily into it. Kranz broke the oppressive silence, posed himself as master of the situation.

“Good evening, *Karl!*” he said as though welcoming an everyday acquaintance into the room.

“Hallo, Kranz!” came the easy, jocular voice through the lips of the entranced girl. “*Wie gehts?* I am glad you persuaded His Excellency to come. Now we can start!”

The old man pulled himself together, moistened his lips for speech.

“Is—is that really you, Karl?” he asked, unevenly.

The merry little laugh, so uncanny from the only origin visible, preceded the answer.

“Really I, *Excellenz*—Karl Wertheimer, shot six months ago by the English in the Tower of London, and as alive in this room as ever I was.” The tone changed to that of a humorously bantering introduction. “Karl Wertheimer, *Excellenz*, the terror of the English counterespionage department, at your service—still!”

The old man fumblingly produced a handkerchief and mopped at the perspiration on his brow. He hesitated for an appropriate remark.

“Why——?” he asked falteringly, and stopped.

The merry little laugh rang out again in the silent room.

“Why, *Excellenz*? Because in my earth-life I had only one passion—and it is as strong as ever it was. *Stronger*, for I owe our enemies a grudge for that little early-morning shooting party in the Tower. You’ve no idea how I long for a really good cigar, *Excellenz*,” he finished in a tone of jesting complaint.

The old man stared into the empty air beyond the girl.

“And you can really obtain information and convey it?” He was recovering his poise. The question was asked in the brusque tone familiar to his subordinates.

“Test me, *Excellenz*!”

“I assure you, *Excellenz*——!” interjected Kranz, eagerly.

His superior waved him aside. The brow under the short white hair had recovered its normal ruddiness, was wrinkled in cogitation. He felt in his pocket and produced a letter in a sealed envelope.

“Tell me from whom this comes,” he said.

He proffered the letter as though expecting it to be taken out of his fingers. Then, as it was not, he dropped his hand with a gesture of hopeless bafflement. There was so real a feeling of the actual presence of Karl Wertheimer in the room that the quite normal fact of the letter remaining untouched emphasized suddenly the uncanny nature of this conversation.

“Permit me, *Excellenz*,” said Kranz, politely. He took the letter and laid it on the girl’s brow. Her lips moved at once.

“This purports to be from the firm of Wilson and Staunton, Boston, to the firm of Jensen and Auerstedt, Christiania, with reference to an overdue account.” The voice was still the chuckling voice of Karl Wertheimer. “Actually, it is a communication in code to you from Heinrich Biedermann at New York. Do you wish me to read the message? I still remember the old code, *Excellenz*!”

“No—no!” interposed the old man. “Never mind!”

“Perhaps you would like me to tell you what Heinrich Biedermann is doing at this moment, *Excellenz*?”

“But he is in New York! You can’t be here and there, too!”

Again came the merry little laugh.

“Time and Space are an illusion of matter, *Excellenz*. I half forget that you are still subject to it.—Well, Heinrich Biedermann is sitting with a young woman in a restaurant, having tea. They are both very cheerful, for he has just received a remittance from you, and he has bought her a new hat. The sun is setting and he is lost in admiration of the glow of her red hair against the background of the illuminated sky which he can perceive through the window. He is hopelessly in love with her, which is unfortunate, as the lady happens to be a spy, by name Desirée Rochefort, in the pay of the French Secret Service.”

“The devil——!” ejaculated the old man.

“But,” said Kranz in a puzzled tone. “Sunset?—It is nearly midnight!”

The old man turned on him.

“Fool! There is a difference of six hours in time between here and America. That proves it—if anything can be proof of such wild improbability!”

“Test me again!” said the amused and confident voice of Karl Wertheimer. “Something really difficult this time!”

The old man leaned back in his chair and pondered. Then the gleam of an idea came into his malicious gray eyes.

“Right!” he said, emphatically. “You know the library in my house?”

“Certainly, *Excellenz*!”

“Go into my library. Read me the fifteenth line of the ninety-first page of the sixth volume on the third shelf of the right-hand side, without opening the book. Can you do that?”

“You shall see, *Excellenz*,” replied the voice, cheerfully. “The sixth volume counting from the left, I presume?”

“Yes.”

“I will note that,” said Kranz, coming to the table. He wrote the particulars and looked up to his superior. “Do you know what the line is, *Excellenz?*” he asked.

“I don’t even know what the book is!” replied the old man, harshly. He wrinkled his brows in impatience at the silence, which prolonged itself through several seconds. The girl seemed quite normally asleep.

“Here you are, *Excellenz!*” It was again the mocking voice of Karl Wertheimer which issued from her lips. “The book is Shakespeare. The line is ‘*England, bound in with the triumphant sea.*’ Can you interpret the omen, *Excellenz?*”

“The U-boat war——” murmured Kranz, as if to himself.

“Write it down!” commanded the old man. Kranz wrote the line.

His Excellency took up the telephone receiver.

“Hallo! Hallo!” He gave a number and waited. “Hallo! Is Wolff there?—Tell him I want him at once! Yes—a thousand devils!—Wolff! my secretary! Are you all deaf?” he vociferated irascibly. “Hallo! Is that you, Wolff? Yes, of course it is I speaking! You ought to know my voice by this time!—Go into the library and get——” He hesitated. Kranz passed him the sheet of paper “—get the sixth volume from the left on the third shelf of the right-hand side. Bring it to the telephone. Hurry now!”

Again he waited. There was a tense silence in the room, a silence which was emphasized by the heavy and regular breathing of the sleeping girl.

“Hallo! Are you there?—Is that you, Wolff? Be quiet! Answer my questions!—Have you got the book?—Right—What is it?—An English book?—Shakespeare—right!—Now turn up page—page ninety-one. Got it?—Count to the fifteenth line——” He turned from the telephone to Kranz. “Write down what I repeat!” Then again speaking into the telephone: “Yes? Read out the line!—what?—‘*England, bound in with the triumphant sea*’—a thousand devils!—Wolff! Wolff! wait a minute!—where did you find the book? On the shelf? Had it been touched? You are sure that it had not been

touched—not opened? Oh, you have been in the library all the evening, working——”

“Tell him that the love-poem he has been writing to Fräulein Mimi in your library to-night is not only banal but it does not scan,” interjected the mocking voice of Karl Wertheimer. “The line ‘*Unsere Herzen schlagen rhythmisch*’ is particularly bad.”

The old man glanced toward the vacant air over the girl and grinned. He repeated the message into the telephone. He waited a moment—and then burst into chuckling laughter.

“*Famos!*—He’s smashed the receiver. Scared out of his life!—I heard him yell.” He put down the instrument and turned again to the chair. “Karl Wertheimer, I believe in your reality—I believe in your powers.” His voice was solemn. “The Fatherland has work for you to do.”

“That is why I am here, *Excellenz*.” The voice came jauntily through the expressionless lips of the unconscious girl.

The old man pursed his mouth under the clipped white moustache and pondered. Kranz watched him with acute interest.

“Listen!” said the old man, looking up in a sudden decision. “At the present time the Allied Military Missions in Washington are negotiating with the United States Government with regard to the despatch of the American Army to Europe, for the coming campaign. We know this—we know that any day now they may come to an agreement. It is of the utmost importance to us that we should know, *immediately*, the numbers promised and the schedule of sailings. The fate of the world depends upon it. The secret will be most jealously guarded—triple locked out of reach of any ordinary agent. Can you read it, as you read the line in that closed book?”

“I can, *Excellenz*—if you can give me some indication where to look,” replied the voice. “We must, so to speak, *focus* ourselves—I can’t now explain the conditions with us, but you will understand what I mean—spirit pervades——” For the first time in the colloquy the voice spoke with hesitation, as though despairing of explaining the inexplicable. “Direction—definite direction—is essential——”

“H’m,” the old man grunted. “Well, I suggest Forsdyke—you know, the permanent Chief of Department—as the man most likely to prepare the schedule. You know where he lives?”

“The very house in Washington!” replied the voice triumphantly. “Good enough! I will do my best, *Excellenz*.”

“To-day is the 21st of February,” said the old man. “We *must* know by the end of the month. Vast issues depend on it. Can you do it?”

“I will try.” The voice came feebly and as from far away. “I must go now, *Excellenz*—the power—the power is failing—fast. Good-bye—good-bye, Kranz—take—take care of the girl—she—she is the—only means—of—communication——” The last words came in a whisper, ceased. The girl appeared to be in normal slumber.

The old man turned to Kranz, spoke out of preoccupation which otherwise ignored him.

“Give me my hat and coat!”

A sudden anxiety paled the sallow face.

“Your Excellency remembers what Karl said,” he murmured as he assisted his chief into the heavy fur-lined garment.—“The girl is the only means of communication. I need not remind Your Excellency that the girl is my——”

“You need not remind me of anything, Kranz,” interrupted the old man, harshly. “You will not be forgotten. Good-night!”

Kranz accompanied him obsequiously to the door.

* * * * *

On that evening of the 21st of February a cheerful little party was assembled around the dinner-table of Henry Forsdyke, Chief of a certain department in the United States Administration. The large room, which had been built by a Southern magnate who led Washington society in pre-Civil War days, was illumined only by the shaded lights of the table, and beyond the dazzling shirt-fronts of the men it lapsed into a gloom that was intensified by the dark curtains over the long windows and was scarcely

relieved by the glinting gilt frames of the pictures spaced on the walls hung in a dull tint. In that half-light the servants moved, scarcely real. Only the party within the illuminated oval of white napery, sparkling glass, and gleaming silver was vividly actual, plucked out of shadow. It was a fad of the host's, this concentration of the light upon the table. He alleged that it emphasized the personalities of his guests. His daughter, who was irreverent, accused him of an atavistic tendency that craved for the candle-light of his ancestors.

Within the magic oval the party exchanged light-hearted talk that effervesced every now and then into merry laughter where a young girl's voice predominated. All were in evident good spirits. The host himself, a man of between fifty and sixty years, with shrewd gray eyes looking out of a face characterized by a pointed and neatly clipped iron-gray beard, set the tone. He smiled down the table with a contentment that seemed to spring from a secret satisfaction, the contentment of a man who has completed an anxious and difficult task and can now relax. He was in his best vein of sententious humour.

The same undertone of relief could have been discerned by the acute in the gaiety of young Jimmy Lomax, Forsdyke's private secretary, although one alone of the little glances between him and his host's daughter, if intercepted, might have seemed sufficient reason.

Captain Sergeantson, Jimmy Lomax's chum, had obvious cause for cheerfulness. Attached to a Special Service Department, he had just returned from Europe, where he had fulfilled an extremely difficult mission with conspicuous success. His home-coming had provided the excuse for this little dinner-party.

As for Professor Lomax, Jimmy's father, no one had ever seen him other than in high spirits. The author—after a lifetime of profound and exact scientific research that had earned him a world-wide reputation—of an enquiry into the possible survival of human personality, which was the controversial topic of that winter and which threatened to deprive him of that reputation, he was in striking contrast with the idea of him propagated by the sensational Press. There was nothing of the visionary about those clear-cut features. A stranger would have diagnosed him as a lawyer—a

lawyer whose judicial perception of evidence was clarified by a sense of humour. The mobile mouth, even in silence, hinted at this latter quality. The eyes twinkled, eminently sane, under a well-balanced brow. He joked like a schoolboy with his host's daughter, exciting—for the secretly selfish pleasure of hearing it—her gay young laugh. Occasionally he glanced across to his son, approbation in his eyes.

Hetty Forsdyke, the only woman of the party, was a typical specimen of self-reliant, college-bred American girl. Good to look upon, her beauty hinted at a race which had been proud of its exclusiveness long after Napoleon had sold Louisiana to the States. Her vivacity and charm had roots, perhaps, in the same stock, but the cool, level-headed understanding of life, which she expressed in a slang that provoked her father to vain rebuke, and the genuineness of which was vouched for by her clear gray eyes, was an attribute of the Forsdykes and the North.

The dinner was nearly at an end. Forsdyke, launched on a story of a Presidential campaign in the Middle West a generation ago, had arrived at the stage where the chuckles of his hearers were on the point of culminating in the final burst of laughter. Hetty, her glass between her fingers, half-way to her mouth, was looking at him with a smile that pretended the story was quite new to her. Suddenly her expression changed. She stared, as if spell-bound, at the dark curtains from which her father's oval face detached itself in the illumination of the table. The glass slipped from her fingers, smashed.

Forsdyke's story ceased abruptly. Four pairs of alarmed eyes focussed themselves upon his daughter. Jimmy, involuntarily, had half risen from his chair. The movement seemed to recall the girl to her surroundings. She shuddered and then, with an evident effort of will, brought back her gaze to the table. Her smile routed the momentary anxiety of her companions.

"How careless of me!" she said easily, quelling, with quiet self-control, her confusion ere it could well be remarked. "I don't know what I was thinking of!—Do go on, Poppa! It was just getting interesting."

She signed composedly to a servant to pick up the broken glass, and settled herself, all attention, to the familiar story.

“What a hostess she is!” thought her father. “Just like——” He did not finish the complementary clause and stifled another which began: “I wonder what I shall do when——” He picked up his story again and was rewarded by his meed of laughter. But his eyes rested uneasily on his daughter and he promised himself a later enquiry into this abnormality.

The party withdrew into the drawing-room, where, since Forsdyke was a widower of many years’ masculine supremacy, the men lit their cigars. Hetty, at a request from her father, seated herself at the grand piano in the far corner, and commenced the soft chords of a Chopin prelude. Jimmy Lomax stood over her. There was already something proprietary in his air. But the girl, after one glance up at him, seemed to forget his presence in the spell of the music. Her position commanded a full view of the room and she looked dreamily across to where the three men were gathered by the white marble fireplace.

Suddenly the music stopped on a crashing discord. The girl had jumped to her feet, was trembling violently. Young Lomax clutched at her.

“Hetty! What——?”

She broke away from him, came swiftly across the room to his father.

“Professor!” she said. “You were once in practice as a doctor, weren’t you?”

The twinkling eyes went grave as they met hers. There was unmistakable seriousness in her question.

“Yes, my dear——”

“Then I want you to examine me right here, Professor!” she said. “Tell me if I’ve got fever!”

She met the amazed eyes of the other men with a look which announced that she knew her own business.

Without a word the Professor lifted up her wrist and felt her pulse. “Now show me your tongue!” She obeyed. He nodded his head, and placed his hand upon her brow. His eyes plunged into hers for one second of searching scrutiny and then he nodded his head again, satisfied. “My dear,” he said, “I

haven't a thermometer here, but I should say you are absolutely normal in every way. Your pulse is a shade rapid, perhaps."

The girl took a long breath.

"Thank you, Professor," she said, simply. She turned to the others. "You heard what the Professor said? There's no fever about *me*. Now—listen! I want to tell you something. I've been waiting to tell you ever since we sat down to dinner—and now I *must* tell you! And you mustn't laugh!—Poppa, this is serious!"

The four men, puzzled at her demeanour, grouped themselves round her. She assured herself of their gravity.

“This evening,” she began, “between five and six o’clock I suddenly developed a dreadful headache. It was so bad that I just had to go to my room and lie down. I went to sleep straight off. And then—then I had a—a dream—only,” she interposed quickly, to hold their interest, “it wasn’t like an ordinary dream. It was so vivid that I felt all the time it *meant* something. I dreamed that someone or something that I could feel was sort of loving and kind and earnest—*very* earnest, I could feel that strongly—took me into a room. And, somehow, I knew that the room was in Berlin. It seemed quite a nice room but I don’t remember much about the details of it. I only remember that I saw myself there with two men, one young and dark, the other old and white, who were staring at a girl sleeping in a big armchair. They took not the faintest notice of me, and I didn’t worry much about them. The girl was the interesting thing to all of us—and yet, though I was staring at her with a sort of fascination I couldn’t shake off, I didn’t know why. Then a strange thing happened. The girl kind of faded away—I don’t know how to describe it, because I felt all the time she was still there—and as she faded, there came up the figure of a man. He seemed to grow out of her—to take her place. It was real uncanny. This man that grew out of the girl like a—like a ghost—was somehow more *living* than any of us. It was as if he were in the limelight and we were in the shadow. I shall never forget his face. It was handsome but *wicked*—mocking—malicious—like a devil. And he had an ugly scar over the right eyebrow which made him look even more devilish——”

“What colour was his hair?” interposed Captain Sergeantson. “Any moustache?”

The girl looked at him in surprise at the question.

“Fair—sticking up straight. No moustache—why?”

Captain Sergeantson nodded.

“I only wondered. Go on, Miss Forsdyke.”

The girl resumed.

“Well—it seemed that we were all looking at this man and not the girl at all. She had disappeared behind him, or into him, I don’t know which. The other two men were talking to him—talking earnestly. And it seemed to me that it was extremely—oh, *immensely*—important that I should understand what they were saying. I listened with all my soul. It almost hurt me to listen as hard as I did—And yet I couldn’t get a word of it. What they said was, somehow, just out of reach—like people you see talking on the bioscope. And then, all of a sudden, I heard—one sentence—as clearly as possible, ‘*Forsdyke is the man who prepares the schedule!*’”

Jimmy Lomax uttered a sharp cry of amazement.

“What!” He turned to Forsdyke. “Chief, that’s strange!”

Forsdyke imposed silence with a gesture.

“Go on, Hetty,” he said, calmly. “What then?”

“Then I woke up. The words were ringing in my ears. They haunted me all the time I was dressing for dinner. I wondered if I ought to tell you. Something was whispering to me that I should. But I was afraid you would laugh at me. But that’s not all. You remember at dinner I dropped a glass.—Poppa!” Her voice suddenly became very earnest. “I saw that man—the man who had grown out of the girl—*standing behind you*. His eyes were fixed on you as though trying to read into you—so evilly that I went cold all over.”

The Professor gave her a sharp glance.

“No vision of the room in Berlin—or wherever it was?” he queried.

She shook her head.

“No. Just the man. But even that’s not all. Just now—when I was playing and looking across to you—*I distinctly saw him again*, close behind Poppa! He moved this time—moved with a funny little limp—just like a real man with a bad leg. I jumped up—and—and he was gone!” She looked around apprehensively as though expecting to see him still.

“Your liver’s out of order, my dear,” said her father. “Take a pill when you go to bed to-night.”

“No,” said the girl, “it’s not that. I know you would say I was ill—that is why I asked the Professor to examine me. I am sure it *means* something!”

Captain Sergeantson threw the end of his cigar into the fireplace and took a wallet out of his pocket. The wallet contained photographs. He handed them to the girl.

“Miss Forsdyke,” he said, gravely, “would you mind telling me if you have ever seen any of these people?”

The girl examined them. Suddenly she uttered a cry and held up one of the prints.

“*This!*” she said. Her eyes were wide with astonishment. “This is the man I saw!—There’s the scar, too—exactly!—Who is he? Do you know him?”

“That man,” replied Captain Sergeantson, sententiously, “is Karl Wertheimer. About the cutest spy the German Secret Service ever had.—I was going to tell Jimmy a story about him and brought his picture along with me,” he added in explanation. “I sort of recognized him from your description.”

The girl stared at the photograph.

“Of course,” continued Sergeantson, “he made up over that scar. He was an extraordinarily clever actor, by the way. They cleaned off the make-up when they took the photograph.”

“And he is a German spy!” mused the girl, still staring at the picture.

“He was!” replied Sergeantson, grimly. “The British shot him in the Tower when I was in London six months ago.”

The girl looked up sharply.

“I’m sure I’ve never seen his photograph before!” she said, as though answering an allegation she felt in the silence of the others. “How could I?”

“I can’t imagine, Miss Forsdyke. The extraordinary thing is that you should have got his limp. That’s what gave him away to the British. He broke his

leg dropping over a wall in an exceedingly daring escape at the beginning of the war. But how you should know about it beats me all to pieces.”

“I didn’t *know*—I saw——”

“You saw his ghost, I guess, Miss Forsdyke—and that’s all there is to it.” Captain Sergeantson lit himself another cigar by way of showing how cold-blooded he could be in the possible presence of a spectre.

Jimmy shuddered. “It’s uncanny,” he said. “I don’t like it.”

“But *why*?” puzzled Hetty, wrinkling her brows. She turned to her father. “Poppa——!”

Forsdyke shook his head smilingly.

“I’m out of this deal. Ask the Professor. He’s the authority on spooks. What does it all mean, Lomax? Can you give an explanation that doesn’t outrage commonsense?”

The Professor smiled. The eyes in that clean-cut face twinkled.

“Commonsense?” He shrugged his shoulders. “We want to start by defining that—by defining all our senses—and we should never finish.” He looked with his challenging smile round the group. “I see you are inviting me to throw away my last little shred of reputation as a sane,” he said, humorously. “Well, I will not venture on any explanation of my own. The evidence, with all respect to Hetty here, is insufficient. We only know that she had a dream and a hallucination twice repeated. We know that the hallucination corresponds to a photograph in Captain Sergeantson’s pocket. We do not know what basis there is—if any—for her dream. But I will give you two alternative explanations that might be suggested by other people.—Will that satisfy you?”

“Go ahead, Professor,” said Forsdyke. “Don’t ask me to believe in ghosts, that’s all!”

“I don’t ask you to believe in anything,” replied the Professor. “I don’t ask you to believe in the reality of your presence and ours in this room. If you have ever read old Bishop Berkeley you will know that you would find it exceedingly difficult to evade the thesis that it may all be an illusion. Your

consciousness—whatever that is—builds up a picture from impressions on your senses. You can't test the reality of the origin of those impressions—you can only collate the subjective results. Everything—Time and Space—may be an illusion for all you or I know!"

"I heard that in my dream!" Hetty broke in. "Someone said it: 'Time and Space are an illusion!' I remember it so clearly now!" Her eyes glistened with excitement.

"All right, Hetty," said her father. "Let the Professor have his say. It's his turn. And don't take us out of our depth, Lomax. You know as well as I do what I mean by commonsense."

The Professor laughed.

"Well, I'm not going to guarantee either of the explanations, Forsdyke. I merely put them before you. The first is the out-and-out spiritualist explanation. Let us see what we can make of that. You must assume, with the spiritualists, that man has a soul which survives with its attributes of memory, volition, and a certain potentiality for action upon what we know as matter. Captain Sergeantson here vouches for the fact that a certain German spy, Karl Wertheimer, was shot in London six months ago. The spiritualist would allege that it is possible—under certain conditions which are very imperfectly under human command—for the soul (we'll call it that) of Karl Wertheimer to put itself into communication with his old associates who still remain in the world of the living. There is an enormous mass of human testimony—which you may reject as worthless if you like—to the possibility of such a thing. Assume it *is* possible. Karl Wertheimer was a spy so successful, according to Captain Sergeantson, that it is reasonable to suppose that spying was his natural vocation, his life-passion, as much as painting pictures is the life-passion of an artist. It may be assumed that, if anything survives, one's life-passion survives. Now suppose that Karl Wertheimer's late employers believe in the possibility of communication with their late agent—that they find a medium—in this case, the young girl that Hetty saw in her dream—who can be controlled by the defunct Karl Wertheimer—through whom they can speak to him and receive communications from him—what is more natural than that they should do so? Admitting the premises, difficult as they are, it appears to me

that the discarnate soul of Karl Wertheimer would be an extremely valuable secret agent——”

“Yes, suppose—suppose——” said Forsdyke. “It is all supposition. And it doesn’t explain Hetty’s dream.”

“I am coming to that,” pursued the Professor. “Grant me, for the sake of argument, all my suppositions. Karl Wertheimer’s employers are communicating with him and setting him tasks. One of those tasks, we will assume, concerns you. Now it may be, Forsdyke, that in the unseen world of discarnate spirits there is one who watches over you, guards you from danger. Someone, perhaps, who loved you in this life——”

Forsdyke glanced up to the portrait of his wife upon the wall.

“I leave the suggestion to you,” said the Professor, delicately. “We will merely pursue it as a hypothesis. Such a spirit would seek to warn you. It is obviously futile to discuss the means it might or might not employ. We know nothing of the conditions of discarnate life—nothing, at any rate, with scientific certainty. But we will assume that such a spirit, desirous of communicating, finds that Hetty here is temporarily in a mediumistic condition—and by ‘mediumistic’ I mean merely that she is in the abnormal state which, in all ages and in all countries, induces persons to declare that they see and hear things imperceptible to others. She certainly had an abnormal headache. She goes to sleep and dreams. We won’t analyze dream-consciousness now. I will only point out that, in a clearly remembered dream, the events of that dream are as real to consciousness as the events of waking life, and that the perception of Time is enormously modified—you dream through hours of experience while the hand marks minutes on the clock. You are subject to a different illusion of Time—and, as Time and Space are but two faces of the same phenomenon, it may be said that you are subject to a different illusion of Space as well. The spiritualist uses this undoubted fact to support his assertion that in dream-sleep the spirit of the living person is freed from the conditions of matter and is in a condition at least approximating to that of a person who is dead—that it can and does accompany the spirits of those who in this life were linked to it.

“The spiritualist, then, endeavouring to explain our present problem, would allege that a spiritual agency concerned with your welfare led Hetty’s spirit into a room in Berlin where Karl Wertheimer’s employers were indicating him to you for some special purpose—that Hetty, being then pure spirit, could actually perceive Karl Wertheimer as a living being when perhaps those in the room (if there was such a room) could only perceive the girl through whom he was speaking—that she could actually hear the significant phrase of their conversation. Further, the spiritualist would assert as a possibility that Karl Wertheimer, ordered to obtain information in your possession, is actually here—*shadowing* you more effectively than any mortal spy could do—and that Hetty, still retaining her mediumistic power, has actually seen him. That is a spiritualistic explanation—I apologize for its length, Forsdyke. Give me another of your very excellent and material cigars!”

“It is a fantastic explanation. I don’t believe a word of it,” said Forsdyke, passing him the box. “Let us have the other one.”

“The other one,” replied the Professor, cutting the tip of his cigar and lighting it carefully, with a critical glance at its even burning, “is shorter. It is the explanation of those who are determined to explain a great mass of well-attested and apparently abnormal facts by normal agency. Their explanation in one word is—telepathy. You know the idea—the common phenomenon of two people who utter a remark, unconnected with previous conversation, at the same moment. Living minds unconsciously act upon each other—that is experimentally proved. Why, therefore, drag in dead ones? That is their argument. Let us apply their theory. Hetty is in an abnormal condition. Captain Sergeantson is coming to dinner. In his pocket he has a photograph of the notorious German spy, Karl Wertheimer. In his mind he has a story about him which he intends to relate. Now there are well-documented cases of hallucinations of persons actually on their way to a house where they were not expected appearing to their destined hostesses. I could quote you dozens of examples. The telepathist says this is because the guest forms in his mind a vivid picture of himself in that house, which is projected forward to the hostess’s mind and causes her to think she sees him. Now, Captain Sergeantson’s mind is not full of himself—it is full of the story about Karl Wertheimer that he is going to tell. Hetty’s mind—somehow—picks this up. She goes to sleep and as in sleep, notoriously, the

human mind has a faculty for building up pictures and a story. Hetty dreams this story about Karl Wertheimer. It is true that she has never seen Karl Wertheimer. But Captain Sergeantson presumably has a visualization of him, including the limp, in his mind. The subsequent hallucinations are explained by the tendency to automatic repetition of any vivid impression upon the nervous centres which excite a picture in consciousness. It is a more or less tenable theory, but it would be gravely shaken if it happened that, unknown to Hetty or Captain Sergeantson—you *actually had something to do with a secret schedule which would interest our friends the enemy.*”

There was a silence. Forsdyke’s brow wrinkled as he stared into the fire. Suddenly he switched round to the Professor.

“That’s the devil of it, Lomax!” he exclaimed. “I have! A most secret schedule. Thank God, it will be out of my possession to-morrow morning, when I——”

“*Don’t*, Poppa!” cried Hetty, clapping her hand over his mouth. She stared wildly around her. “I feel sure that someone is listening!”

Forsdyke freed himself with a gesture which expressed his impatience of this absurdity.

“What do you make of that, Lomax?” he asked.

“Of course,” murmured the Professor, “Hetty’s mind may be influenced by a dominant anxiety in yours.—I should not like to say, Forsdyke!” His tone was emphatic. “Personally, I have never heard of a spectral spy—but—well, you are, on your showing worth spying on. And there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio—you know! If it *is* possible—then there are things more improbable than that this means of acquiring information should be used. Your schedule would, I take it, be priceless?”

“The fate of the world may be involved in it,” replied Forsdyke. “But I can’t believe——”

“I am certain!” exclaimed Hetty. “I feel there’s something uncanny around us now!” She shuddered. “Oh, *do* take care, Poppa!”

“But what can he do?” asked Jimmy, who had been listening anxiously to the Professor’s explanation. “What do you suggest, Sergeantson? You’re the authentic spycatcher. How can you defeat the ghost of one?”

“I pass!” replied Sergeantson, laconically. “Professor, the word’s to you!”

Forsdyke looked genuinely worried.

“Of course, I don’t believe it, Lomax,” he said. “But supposing—supposing there was something like you suggest—what could I do?”

The Professor’s eyes twinkled.

“Assuming the objective reality of our supposition, my dear Forsdyke,” he replied, “I can think of only one effective counterstroke.”

He held their interest for a moment in suspense.

“And that is——?”

“To drop a bomb on the girl!”

“A bomb—on the girl——” puzzled Jimmy slowly. “Why?”

“Because when you break the telephone receiver it doesn’t matter what the fellow at the other end says—you can’t hear!”

“But we can’t get at her,” said Sergeantson. “We don’t even know who she is, or where. We should never find out—in time.”

“That’s just it,” agreed the Professor. “You would have no time. Assuming that a ghostly spy is haunting our friend Forsdyke—the moment he reads that schedule, or even indicates where it is, the spy reads it too——”

“Reads it?” echoed Jimmy, incredulously. “But surely ghosts can’t read!”

“It is alleged they can,” replied the Professor. “There is, for example, a very curious case reported of the Rev. Stainton Moses, a teacher at the University College in London during the ’seventies. A spirit, purporting to be writing through his hand, quoted to him a paragraph from a closed book in a friend’s library. Moses merely indicated a book and a page at random, without knowing even to what book he referred. The quotation was correct.

One of the foremost scientists of the present day has lent the weight of his authority to this story by incorporating it in his book as evidence of supernormal powers——”[2]

“That is sure incredible, Professor!” cried Sergeantson.

“We are dealing with what normally are incredibilities,” said the Professor, with a smile. “We agreed to assume an objective reality to our supposition—and, assuming it, the spy would read that schedule at the same moment as Forsdyke, and possibly communicate it instantaneously. As Forsdyke is going to do something with that schedule to-morrow morning, well,” he shrugged his shoulders, “my money would be on the ghost!”

“My God!” said Forsdyke, thoroughly alarmed, “if it’s true—it’s maddening! One can do nothing!”

“Nothing,” agreed the Professor. “There would be no time.”

The men stared at each other, exasperated at the hopelessness of the problem. If—they scarcely dared admit it to their sanity—it really were the case?

Hetty startled them by a sudden cry.

“Didn’t you hear? Didn’t you hear?” she exclaimed. “Someone laughing at us—close behind!—Oh, look! Look!” She pointed to empty space. “There he is again! Don’t you see?”

She fainted in Jimmy’s ready arms.

* * * * *

The next morning Hetty found her father already at breakfast.

“Well,” he asked, his dry smile mildly sarcastic, “any more dreams?”

“Horrid!” she replied with a little shudder as she poured herself out some coffee. “But I don’t remember them.”

“You will see the doctor to-day, young woman,” observed her father in a tone which indicated his verdict on the happenings of the previous night.

Hetty was docility itself, a phenomenon not altogether lost on her experienced parent.

“Very well, Poppa,” she agreed, demurely. “What are you going to do this morning?”

“I am going to the office to get some papers——”

“*The* papers——?” She checked herself with a little frightened glance round the room.

Her father laughed—a good, healthy, commonsense laugh.

“*The* papers!” he said. “No more nonsense about ghosts, Hetty. I’m going to get *the* papers from my office and take them round to the Conference. So now you know. And there’s a Colt automatic in the pocket of the automobile if any one tries tricks on the way.”

Hetty nodded her head sagely.

“Guess you’ve a place for me in that automobile, Poppa,” she said. “I’ll come with you to the office, wait while you get the papers, and go on with you to the Conference building—and while you’re there I’ll go on to see that doctor. I shall be back in time to pick you up before you are finished with your old Conference.”

Her father saw no objection to this, was in fact secretly glad to have her under his eye as long as possible.

“Mind, no tricks about the doctor!” he said, with an assumption of severity.

“Sure, Poppa!” was her equable reply.

A few minutes later saw them speeding through the keen air of a frosty morning toward Forsdyke’s office. But the interior of the limousine was warm, and Hetty, snug in her furs, looked a picture of young, healthy beauty, looked—— A memory came to Henry Forsdyke in a pang that brought a sigh. He thought of the Professor’s suggestion of last night. Of course, the whole thing was absurd!—but he wondered——

The car swung into the sidewalk in front of the Government building, stopped before the big doorway with the marble steps. Forsdyke got out.

“I shall be back in a few minutes,” he said.

Hetty watched him go across the pavement, ascend the marble steps. He looked neither to right nor left. *Then who was that with him?* Hetty felt her heart stop. Who was that who passed into the doorway with him? No one had been on the steps—she was suddenly sure of it. Yet—her heart began to pump again—certainly two figures had passed through the swing-doors! She sat chilled and paralyzed for the moment in which she visualized the memory of those two figures passing into the shadow of the interior—tried to think when she had first perceived the second. A certitude shot through her, a wild alarm.

She jumped to her feet, and with a blind, instinctive desire for a weapon, pulled the Colt out of the pocket of the limousine and thrust it into her muff. A moment later she was running across the pavement and up the marble steps. The janitor pulled open the swing-door for her. She fixed him with excited eyes.

“Who was that who came in with Mr. Forsdyke just now?” she asked breathlessly.

The janitor stared.

“No one, miss. Mr. Forsdyke was alone.”

Alone! She repressed an impulse to scream out, dashed to the elevator which had just come to rest after its descent. The attendant opened the gate at her approach.

“Did you take Mr. Forsdyke up just now?” she asked.

“Yes, miss.”

“Was he alone?”

“Sure!—He came in alone.”

“Take me up!” She trembled so that she could scarcely stand. Her eyes closed in a sickening anxiety as she swayed back against the wall of the elevator.

She shot upward. Another moment and she found herself racing along the corridor to her father’s rooms, twisting at the handle of the door.

She almost fell into the ante-room occupied by Jimmy Lomax. He jumped to his feet.

“Hetty!”

“Father!” She had scarcely breath enough for utterance. “Father!—I must see Father——!”

“Hetty, you can’t! He’s busy in his private room—no one dare——”

“I must!” she gasped. “Quick!—the ghost——!”

He stared in astonishment. She dodged past him, flung open the door into the next room.

Henry Forsdyke was standing, checking over a sheaf of papers in his hand, in front of the swung-open wall of the room, now revealed as a safe divided into many compartments. Hetty perceived him at the first glance; *perceived, standing at his side, a man with a sardonic mocking face and a scar over the right eye who peered over his shoulder.*

In a blind whirl of impulse she whipped out the automatic, rushed up close, and fired—into thin air!

Her father swung round on her in a burst of anger.

“Good God, Hetty!—Are you mad?”

She looked wildly at him.

“The ghost!—the ghost!”

He laughed despite his genuine wrath.

“Great heavens, what nonsense it all is!—What are you thinking of?—You can’t shoot a ghost!”

But Hetty had sunk on to a chair and was sobbing hysterically.

* * * * *

In the luxuriously furnished room in Berlin Kranz was speaking excitedly into the telephone.

“*Excellenz!*” he called. “*Excellenz!*—Are you there?—Quickly!—Karl says he will be with us in ten minutes!” He glanced toward the girl sleeping in the big chair. “Quickly!”

He listened for a moment and then put down the receiver with a satisfied air. He rose from his seat and began to pace nervously up and down the room. From time to time he threw a glance at the still figure stretched back among the cushions. She slept with a regular deep breathing. He listened, anxiously alert for any change.

The minutes passed, slowly enough to his impatience. He looked at his watch. It marked ten minutes to four. A thought occurred to him—he amplified it deliberately, to occupy his mind. Ten minutes to four!—What time would it be in Washington? Six hours—ten minutes to ten in the morning. What would be happening at ten minutes to ten? What was Karl looking at——?

The raucous hoot of a Klaxon horn startled him out of these meditations. He ran to the window, looked out. A familiar motor-car was drawing up by the pavement. His Excellency had lost no time!

A few moments later and the dreaded Chief stood in the room, formidable still despite his dwarfed appearance in the great fur coat turned up to his ears. The clipped white moustache bristled more than ever, it seemed, as he glared at Kranz through the pince-nez with a ferocity which was but the expression of his excitement.

“Yes?” he cried, ere the door had closed after him. “What has happened? Speak, man!”

“Nothing yet, *Excellenz!*” Kranz hastened to assure him. “The girl swooned off suddenly at about a quarter to four—I have not let her out of my sight since last night—and then Karl spoke. He said—and it sounded as though he meant it—that he would give us the information in ten minutes. I telephoned you at once.”

“Right! Quite right!” snapped His Excellency. “Ten minutes! The time must be up——”

“Good afternoon, *Excellenz!*” The old man jumped. The familiar mocking voice came from the lifeless mask of the sleeping girl. “Your suggestion was correct—Forsdyke! He is taking me to it now!” The derisive laugh rang out, uncanny in the silent room. “Patience for a few minutes!”

The old man made an effort of his will.

“Where are you now, Karl?” he asked.

“In a motor-car—funny story—tell you later—patience.” The voice sounded far away and faint. “Look to the girl, Kranz—not breathing properly—can’t speak—if—power—fails.”

Kranz went to the sleeping girl. Her head had fallen forward and she was breathing stertorously. He rearranged the cushions, posed her head so that she once more breathed deeply and evenly.

They waited in a tense silence. Then her lips moved again.

“Listen—now! Take it down as I read it!” Karl’s voice rang with an unholy triumph.

“Quick, Kranz!—Write!” commanded the old man.

His subordinate leaped to the table, settled himself pen in hand.

The girl’s lips trembled in the commencement of speech, opened.

“Schedule of Sailings of American Army to Europe!” began the triumphant voice.

There was a pause.

“Yes—yes!” cried the old man impatiently. “Go on!”

“Numbers for March”—Karl Wertheimer’s voice came with a curious deliberation as though he were memorizing figures. “—*Ahh!*” The voice broke in a wild, unearthly cry that froze the blood.

They waited. There was no sound. They heard their hearts beat in a growing terror.

Suddenly the old man spoke.

“The girl!—Look, Kranz!—She does not breathe!”

Kranz sprang to her, lifted her hand, bent suddenly down to her face. He looked up with the eyes of a baulked demon.

“She is dead!” he said hoarsely.

He turned to her again and, with a frenzied rage, tore away the clothes from her throat and chest. Just over her heart was a small round dark spot staining the unbroken skin.

“Look!” he cried.

The old man peered down at the mark, and then stared round the room.

“What has happened?” The wild cry quavered with the terror of the Unseen.

No answer came from the silence.

NOTE

The belief that an injury done to the “astral” body of a spirit is reproduced in the physical body of the medium *en rapport* with that spirit is found in all countries and in all times, from the most ancient to the present. The old-time witch or wizard is, of course, the same psychologically abnormal type as the “medium” of to-day. The genuineness or otherwise of their powers is beside the point. Phenomena of the same nature as that described above are reported again and again in the witchcraft trials of the seventeenth century and in a comparatively recent legal case in France in 1853. Andrew Lang,

analyzing this last case, says: “In the events at Cideville, and the depositions of witnesses, we have all the characteristics.... The phantom is wounded, a parallel wound is found on the suspected warlock.” Reporting the evidence in the trial, Lang continues: “Nails were driven into points on the floor where Lemonier saw the spectral figure standing. One nail became red-hot and the wood around it smoked: Lemonier said that this nail had hit ‘the man in the blouse’ on the cheek. Now, when Thorel was made to ask the boy’s pardon and was recognized by him as the phantom, Thorel bore on his cheek the mark of the wound!” The alleged wizard lost his case. (“A Modern Trial for Witchcraft,” in *Cock Lane and Common-sense*, 1894, p. 278.)

In this case it was the medium’s own spectre which appeared. But the modern spiritualist holds that there exists the same connection between the living body of the medium and the materialized spirit of the dead. “... The clutching of a [materialized] form hits the medium with a force like that of an electric shock, and many sensitives have been grievously injured by foolish triflers in this way.” (*Spirit Intercourse*, J. Hewat Mackenzie, 1916, p. 53.) Sir Wm. Crookes sounds the same warning note in his description of the famous “Katie King” case (*Researches in Spiritualism*, 1874, p. 108 *et seq.*).

FOOTNOTE:

[2] The reference is to *The Survival of Man*, Sir Oliver Lodge, pp. 104-5.

THE STRANGE CASE OF MR. TODMORDEN

Mr. Todmorden rose from his seat in the railway carriage; he spoke in the tones of a man who ends a discussion:

“Well, gentlemen, this is my station, and you haven’t convinced me that a man ever commits a crime unless of his own free-will. I’d show no mercy to the rascal! Good-night!”

Mr. Todmorden was far from being so stern, either in appearance or character, as this emphatically uttered sentiment would suggest. As his short, stout figure moved along the platform, the head thrown back and a pair of bright little eyes, set in a chubby round face, glancing sharply through his spectacles for an acquaintance to smile at, he looked—what, in fact, he was—a successful city man whose original kindness of heart had mellowed into habitual benevolence—the type of man who moves through life beaming on people who touch their caps; salutation and recognition alike instinctive, meeting each other half-way.

Affable though Mr. Todmorden was, he had his prejudices and his pride; pride centred in the practice he had built up as a family solicitor of standing and renown: prejudices directed against those unfortunates who, from choice or necessity, transgressed the social code. His ideal in life was probity. He was intolerant of any infraction of it, and conducted his own affairs with punctilious scrupulousness. If he contemplated himself with some approbation it was justified. His fellow-men concurred in it.

In the warm light of a late summer sunset he strolled along the suburban streets to his home. His countenance expressed that contentment with himself and his surroundings usual with him. His mind, satisfied, played lightly over the headings of sundry affairs, neatly docketed and done with, he had settled that day. Other affairs, not so completed, were thrust into the background until the morrow. His good-humoured round face was in readiness for a smile.

Suddenly he stopped and contemplated through his spectacles a large house a little way back from the road. A long ladder resting against the wall was the uncommon object that had attracted his attention.

“Dear me!” he said to himself, “Old Miss Hartley having the house painted again!”

Miss Hartley was one of his oldest and most valued clients. In fact, both repudiated the business term and called each other “friends.” Their sentiments toward each other warranted it. She was an elderly spinster, eccentric and wealthy; he a bachelor who could and did afford himself a whim. They smiled at one another’s oddities without any lessening of the mutual respect many years of intercourse had induced. His attitude toward the old lady was almost fraternal. The long practice of watching her interests had developed a habit of affectionate protection in him. He advised her on countless petty manners and forgot to put them in the bill. He was personally, not merely professionally, anxious on her behalf when the occasion required it.

The sight of the ladder against the wall recalled one of his most common anxieties. It was a pet grievance of his that she would persist in living alone, save for one maid, in that large house. To his mind, she offered herself as a prey to the malefactor who should chance to correlate the two facts of her wealth and her solitude. He expressed that opinion frequently, and was obstinately smiled at. Now, as he walked on, the thought of the danger she invited recurred to him. It irritated him.

“Tut! tut!” he said. “That ladder, now, is just placed right for a burglar! I’m sure it is! Dear me! how careless! how very careless!” He tried to measure the ladder from his remembrance of it, and, to end his doubts, returned and examined it again. The ladder rested close to a freshly painted window-sill on the first floor.

“Dear me! dear me!” said Mr. Todmorden, genuinely perturbed. “That’s the window of Miss Hartley’s room!” He stood irresolute, debating whether he should ring the bell, and point out the dangerous position of the ladder. A nervous fear of the old lady’s smile restrained him. He knew she regarded him as an old “fusser.”

He walked on again, carrying his fears.

“She is really too foolish, too foolish!” he repeated. “Living alone there—with only that stupid girl in the house! Any one might break in. They’ve only to walk up that ladder! And she will persist in advertising that she has valuables!” The occasion of the final clause in Mr. Todmorden’s mental arraignment was a particularly fine diamond brooch the old lady wore at all times, despite his protests. If there was a sentimental reason for its continual use, she concealed it under her quiet smile. The memory of that smile irritated Mr. Todmorden. “Confound her! she’s so obstinate!” His thoughts focussed themselves on that brooch, with a criminal lurking in the background. Gradually, they drifted to the criminal. As his irritation faded under the soft warm light of the sunset, he amused himself by picturing types of possible burglars. Finally, forgetting his original preoccupation, he thought of an ancestor of his own—his maternal grandfather—who had been transported for a doubtful case of murder. In contrast to that squalid page of family history self-esteem read over his own achievements. Successful, respected, an alderman, a possible knighthood in front, he had surely wiped out that black patch on his pedigree. He savoured a very pleasant sense of personal probity as he walked up the drive to his house.

He ate his solitary dinner, and revived the feeling of well-being with a bottle of his favourite port. Then Miss Hartley’s brooch recurred to his mind, and was followed by a thought of the ladder which led to it, and of a criminal who might climb the ladder. As he sat in his big chair in the lonely dining-room, gazing at passing thoughts rather than thinking them, the case of his maternal grandfather cropped up in his reverie. Moved by a sudden whim, he rose from his chair and took down a battered volume of law reports. Fortified by another glass, he read through the case of his ancestor. He finished it, and sat thoughtful for a moment before replacing the book. “H’m, h’m,” he said to himself. “Very doubtful! Very doubtful! Ah, well, we’ve travelled a long road since then!” He smiled at his own success, and went off to bed in a contented mood. That doubtful grandfather was a long way back.

In the morning, as he walked down to the station to catch his usual train, he noticed a group of people standing on the pavement and gazing up at a house. An unreasoning anxiety gripped him. He hastened his pace. Yes—

surely!—it was Miss Hartley’s house which excited this unwonted interest. He arrived among the crowd, rather out of breath.

“What is it? What is it, my man?” he demanded of a gazing spectator.

Half a dozen voices replied.

“It’s a murder! Old Miss Hartley——!”

Mr. Todmorden did not wait to hear more.

“Good gracious!” he said, as he hurried along the garden path, and “Good gracious!” he repeated, as he rang the bell. He could not formulate a thought. He gazed, mentally, at the awful thing, stunned.

The door was opened by a policeman. Behind him stood the maid-servant, white, frightened, and sobbing. She ran toward him with a cry of “Oh, sir!” but broke down, unable to utter a word.

“All right, all right, Ellen,” said Mr. Todmorden rather brusquely, pushing her aside. He addressed himself to the policeman. “What has happened, constable? Surely not murder?”

“Yes, sir. I’m afraid so.” He looked doubtfully at his questioner. “Are you one of the old lady’s relatives, sir?”

“No. I’m her solicitor, and one of her oldest friends. Dear me! dear me! how terrible! Is there any one in authority here, constable?”

“Two inspectors upstairs, sir.”

“Can I see them?”

He was shown into the bedroom, and introduced himself to the police-officers. They welcomed him with gravity. On the bed lay a covered figure. Mr. Todmorden drew aside the sheet and gazed upon the features of his old friend. They were marred by a bullet-hole through the forehead. He turned away, trembling, his face working with emotion. He could scarcely speak, but made the effort due to his dignity, as the deceased’s legal adviser. “Any—any clue?” he asked.

“None, sir, at present,” was the reply.

“Dear me! how terrible! how very terrible! She was my oldest friend——” he could not find the strength to repress his grief—“my oldest friend! Oh, it’s awful, inspector, awful! The—the wickedness of it! She hadn’t an enemy.” He struggled for the control of himself. “What was it—robbery?”

“No, sir—nothing seems to be tampered with. Perhaps the murderer was startled.”

“When was it discovered?”

“This morning, when the maid brought in the tea. She says she heard nothing. She admits being a heavy sleeper.”

“And there is nothing missing?”

“Apparently not, sir. The drawers were locked, and the keys have not been interfered with. Nothing was disturbed, in fact.”

“Ah!” Mr. Todmorden was gradually getting back into his legal clearness of mind. “Has the girl looked carefully round to see if anything has disappeared?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Call her up, if you please, officer.”

Ellen appeared, still weeping, and was bidden to look round for anything out of place. Dabbing her eyes, she examined the room carefully. Suddenly she gave a cry.

“The mistress’s diamond brooch! I put it here last night!” She pointed to a tray on the dressing-table. “It’s gone!”

“Good God!” said Mr. Todmorden. “How very curious!”

The inspectors looked at him sharply.

“Does that give you any clue, sir?” asked one of them.

“No—no,” he replied, rather confused. “I—the fact is, I was thinking of that brooch only last night, and of how unprotected Miss Hartley was. I have often told her so—poor woman!”

“Ah!” said the inspectors in chorus. Mr. Todmorden felt there was something suspicious in their sharply uttered exclamation. Even to himself his explanation had sounded lame. The police-officers might imagine he was shielding somebody. The consciousness of his inability to explain how very startling the fulfilment of his fears had been to him made him feel awkward.

“Of course,” he said, “the murderer must have come in by the ladder.”

“The ladder?” asked one of the inspectors. “I saw no ladder.”

“There was certainly a ladder resting against the sill of this window at six o’clock last night,” asserted Mr. Todmorden. “The house, you will observe, is being redecorated. I noticed the ladder, and it occurred to me that a first-class opportunity was being offered to a burglar. In fact, I was on the point of calling on Miss Hartley and warning her of it. I wish I had done so!”

“H’m!” The inspector scarcely deigned to trifle with the suggestion. It could be understood that it was his professional prerogative to evolve theories. “Yes—perhaps. But I think we can explain the entrance in a more likely way,” he said, mysteriously. “It is scarcely probable that the decorator’s men would leave the ladder there all night, sir.”

“I’m sure the rascal came up the ladder!” Mr. Todmorden’s affirmation was so vehement, came so involuntarily, that it surprised himself. Why was he so positive? He felt uncomfortable. He put on a bustling, important air. “Well, well, I must get up to town, as I have a very important appointment. I will look in at the station on my way home this evening. If you hear of anything during the day you might communicate with me. Here is my card.”

The old gentleman took his way to the city, oppressed by grief. Bitterly he reproached himself for not having ceded to his impulse to point out the dangerous position of that fatal ladder.

As good as his word, he called at the police-station on his way home. The chief inspector received him:

“A very mysterious affair, Mr. Todmorden. Very mysterious!”

“It is very terrible to me,” replied the old gentleman. “Miss Hartley was a very old friend. I feel myself in some way responsible. The possibility of such a tragedy actually occurred to me on my way home last night, and I might have warned her of it. I shall never forgive myself. Miss Hartley relied upon me. It is terrible to think that I failed her in this supreme instance.”

“You refer to the ladder,” said the inspector. “We have made enquiries about that. It appears it was overlooked last night and was carried away by one of the decorator’s men at six o’clock this morning. Undoubtedly, the murderer used it. In fact, he left the window open after him.”

“I was certain of it,” said Mr. Todmorden. “And there is no clue to the rascal?”

“Hardly any. The constable on the beat reports that, at two o’clock this morning, he saw the figure of a man running along the road away from the house. That man was wearing a very light suit—possibly a flannel one. A curious dress for a burglar, I think you will admit. The constable particularly noticed that there was no sound of footsteps as the man ran. He must have been wearing rubber soles. Unfortunately, the constable lost sight of him when he turned the corner.”

“Dear me!” said Mr. Todmorden. Only half his mind had listened to the inspector’s words; the other half was occupied by that curious and fairly common hallucination of a previous and identical incident. The description was oddly familiar. He seemed to know it in advance. At an intense moment of the hallucination, he had a glimpsed memory of himself running, running along a road at the dead of night, running silently. He shook off the uncomfortable and absurd feeling. “Dear me! How very strange!”

The inspector was observing him narrowly.

“I suppose you cannot give us any hint that might help us, Mr. Todmorden? You know no one who bore the old lady a grudge?”

“Certainly not. She was the best and kindest of women.”

“May I ask who benefits by her death?”

“She has only one relative, a nephew, who inherits everything. He is in America. I have cabled to him, and received a reply.”

“Ah! So he’s out of it.”

“Of course, of course.”

“This business of the brooch, Mr. Todmorden—it seems strange that the murderer should have taken that, and that only. He has made no attempt on anything else. You know no one who had an interest in the article?”

“No one. Miss Hartley wore it always. I have often expostulated with her for wearing so valuable a piece of jewellery in the street. Someone might have noticed it and resolved to obtain it.”

“Yes, yes, of course. A very strange affair, Mr. Todmorden, very strange! I confess I cannot see light in it. Er—her affairs are quite in order, of course?”

“Quite. I keep the accounts; they are open to investigation. The name of Todmorden and Baines is a sufficient guarantee, I think,” he added, with a smile. “But, of course, it is natural you should wish to make sure. You can examine the books to-morrow.”

“Unnecessary, my dear sir, I’m quite certain. Of course, I am bound to ask these unpleasant questions.”

“Don’t apologize. I am as anxious as you are to catch the criminal. I have, in fact, a personal interest in it. Miss Hartley was so good a friend to me that I shall never rest until I have brought the scoundrel to justice. A reward may help. I will personally give a hundred pounds for his apprehension. You might have bills printed to that effect.”

“Thank you, Mr. Todmorden. I hope we shall be able to claim it, though, at present, I see little chance of it. However, something may turn up.”

As Mr. Todmorden went home, he looked years older than the man who had traversed the same ground twenty-four hours earlier. Grief-stricken though he was, at the loss of his dear friend, his predominant emotion was a fierce lust for vengeance on the murderer. His fingers worked, gripped the air, as he brooded on him—the hated unknown—and his step oscillated from fast

to slow and slow to fast, as thoughts, hopeful or despondent, got the upper hand. If he could only lay hands on the scoundrel. A black and bitter wrath seethed in him. It was, unjustifiably, the more bitter at the remembrance that Fate had placed for a moment in his hand the power to avert the tragedy, had given him a glimpse into the future—and yet had turned aside his will. The wickedness of it! That dear, kind, charitable old soul! Shot like a dog! He stamped his foot on the pavement at the thought of it; tears welled up in his eyes.

“I’ll double that reward if he isn’t caught within a week!” he decided. The decision comforted him.

All through his solitary dinner he brooded on the crime, and sat afterward, for long hours, trying to think of someone who might have an urgent reason for possessing himself of that diamond brooch. He went to bed at last, baffled, weary, heartsick. Had he met the murderer on the stairs he would gladly have throttled him with his own hands.

Putting on his pyjamas, he noticed something unusual—something hard—in the pocket. Mechanically, he drew out the object and looked at it. He stood as if petrified, his eyes staring, sweat breaking out on his brow.

In his hand he held Miss Hartley’s diamond brooch!

He gazed at it, overwhelmed with amazement and horror. What was happening? Was he crazed? Was his mind unhinged by the event of the morning, was this an hallucination? All that was his familiar self prayed, prayed hard, that this might be madness. Or—his instinct of self-preservation caused him to clutch at the thought—was he the victim of some atrocious trick? Impossible. Was it real? He felt the jewel—turned it, so that it sparkled under the electric light.

“My God!” said Mr. Todmorden, sinking into a chair. The familiar concrete surroundings crumbled about him, were dissipated. He gazed into unfathomable mysteries.

How could the brooch have got into his pocket? Someone must have put it there! Someone! Who? Who could have come into his bedroom and put that damnatory brooch into the pocket of his pyjamas? The servants? He reviewed them swiftly. Impossible! Then who? Not—surely not—he must

be going mad—not himself! It was absurd, unthinkable. He had gone to bed and slept without a dream. Or, was there a dream—a dream of running in the darkness, fast, barefoot? Nonsense! Nonsense! He did not get up in the middle of the night, walk down the street, murder his dearest friend, and come back as though nothing had happened! His mind flashed on the portrait of Miss Hartley, and he felt the cruel irony of the supposition, though he himself made it. Then who—who? A wave of superstition swept over him. Devils? It was inexplicable. He revolted at something obscure within him, something which pointed a finger to the accusing brooch, which whispered the inexorable corollary in his ear. No! No! It could not be! He was innocent, he was conscious, instinctively conscious of his innocence.

But was he?

The something whispered persistently. An idea came to him—the proof. He went quickly across to a drawer in his dressing-table and took out his revolver. With trembling hands he examined the charges. One had been exploded! Had devils fired his revolver also? Oh, God! He thought he was going to faint.

How? Why? How? Why? These two questions besieged him incessantly, battering at his crumbling mind. He clasped his head in his hands, rocked to and fro on his chair.

Madness? Madness came in these sudden attacks, so an imp of thought assured him. He was mad! Mad!

For hours he strode up and down the room, wrestling with demons in the night. He had killed his dearest friend. He had no doubt of it; the realization filled him with an agony of horror and grief. He would gladly have died rather than have done this awful thing. And how had he done it? How had he committed this crime without the faintest remembrance of it? It was impossible! He had not—then he looked at the brooch, and knew he had. It was monstrous, unthinkable—but true.

At length, physically exhausted, he threw himself on the bed and continued the struggle—striving, striving to see light in this appalling mystery. At last he fell asleep.

He woke and looked around him. He was in a dark room. That was strange. He knew he had left the light on. He was standing up. He held something in his hand—a book. Puzzled, he put out his hand to where the switch of the electric light should be. It was not there. In a new terror that surged up, obliterating the older horrors of the night, he groped along the wall for the switch, and found it. The place sprang into light. He was in the dining-room! In his hand he held the report of his grandfather's trial. The truth flashed on him.

He was a somnambulist.

With a wild cry he sank down in a swoon.

When he returned to consciousness, the electric lamps were yellow patches in the sunlight which filled the room. He struggled to his feet and switched them off. He stood for some moments unsteadily, trying to adjust his mind to these unfamiliar surroundings, to remember—to remember something. Then his ghastly situation rushed on his mind, vivid with a new light. He was a criminal! He risked discovery, ruin! He heard people moving about—servants. They must not suspect him of any abnormality. Haggard, trembling, giddy, an old, old man, he tottered up the stairs to his own bedroom.

Escape—escape from the consequences of his involuntary crime was his master impulse. He was no longer the benevolent Mr. Todmorden, successful, respected, the eminent solicitor; he was a hunted criminal, happed by Furies. He must not be found out. He sobbed in self-pity and strove for the control of his faculties. He must think—must think. The brooch must be got rid of. He would drop it over London Bridge. Yes, that was the way. The brooch gone beyond all possibility of recovery, who would suspect him? He had not suspected himself. He breathed more freely, feeling himself already safe. He would triple that reward. That would avert suspicion. Yes. Yes. He repeated the monosyllable to himself as he walked up and down the room.

But suppose there was some trace of the crime on him? He must make sure. The inspector's story of the light-suited fugitive came into his mind—his pyjamas! That fugitive must have been himself in his pyjamas. He had again that flashed memory of running, running silently. He doubted no

longer, but examined the pyjamas on his body, searching for a spot of blood, for any sign that might betray him. Yes! There on the trouser-leg was a smear of stone-coloured paint—the paint on Miss Hartley’s window-sill. He must get those pyjamas away, destroy them—somehow. He thought of half a dozen plans and rejected all. Everything he thought of seemed to proclaim his guilt. The problem was still unsolved when another danger occurred to him. His revolver contained a discharged cartridge. He must reload it. Feverishly he did so. As he clicked the chambers into place there was a knock at the door. He put down the revolver and listened in sudden panic. The knock was repeated. He tried to speak and could not. At last words came:

“What is it?”

“Please, sir, a man from the police-station wants to speak to you at once.”

He tried hard to reply in his normal tones.

“All right. Tell him I’ll be down presently.”

“Please, sir, he says he can’t wait. It’s very urgent.” Discovery? No! Impossible—as yet! He kept a tremor out of his voice by an effort.

“Show him into my dressing-room.”

Mr. Todmorden thought swiftly for a vivid second. That smear of paint must be concealed. He slipped on a dressing-gown. Then he caught sight of his revolver on the table, and, on a blind impulse, dropped it into his pocket. He took a long breath. Now—was there anything about him suspicious? He opened his dressing-gown and surveyed himself in the mirror. Yes!—there was a button gone from his pyjama-jacket! Where had he lost that button? He would have given anything for certainty. But he must not keep the police waiting. That would look strange. He girdled his gown about him and went into the dressing-room.

The chief inspector awaited him. A sharp expression of surprise came into the officer’s face.

“I have had a bad night, inspector,” said the old gentleman, noticing the look and feeling his haggard appearance needed explanation.

The inspector condoled with him.

“I am pleased to say we have found a slight clue to the criminal, Mr. Todmorden,” he said, looking again sharply at the old gentleman. Mr. Todmorden felt he quailed under the glance. “It’s a button. And, the curious thing is, it is a pyjama button.”

“Yes?” Mr. Todmorden’s mouth went dry.

“Funny wear for a burglar—pyjamas,” commented the inspector. “Don’t you think so, sir?”

“Very curious.” Mr. Todmorden recognized the urgent necessity for a normal voice. “Yes; very curious.” He must talk—say something! “By the way, inspector, I’ve been thinking about that reward. I’ve decided to triple it. I—I am determined to catch the scoundrel.”

“Very kind of you, sir. I hope we shall ask you for the cheque. We’re on the road, anyway. We’ve only got to find out where those pyjamas came from, and, quite likely, we shall get on his track.”

“Yes, yes, quite so.” Would the interview never end? Mr. Todmorden agonized.

“If we can only find some buttons like this we can make a start. There are differences even in pyjama buttons, you know, sir. I have compared it with mine, but it doesn’t tally. Would you mind comparing it with yours?”

Mr. Todmorden stared at him, speechless.

“Would you mind comparing it with yours, sir? We must not neglect any chance of getting a clue. Allow me!”

He stepped quickly to the old gentleman and flung aside his dressing-gown. The buttons, with the hanging thread of their missing fellow, were revealed. Triumph flashed in the inspector’s face.

“James Henry Todmorden, I——”

Mr. Todmorden jumped back from his grasp. With a sharp cry he drew his hand swiftly from his pocket. There was a report, and he dropped to the

floor.

The inspector looked at his lifeless body.

“I thought the old rascal did it,” he said. “A well-planned bit of work, though.”

THROUGH THE GATE OF HORN

The young man's face was pale. His jaw, hard-set in a grip of self-control, lent his clever, handsome features a suggestion of force remarkable for his twenty-two years. At maturity, his intellect, backed by so much character, would be formidable. He turned to the window, stared out of it for a long moment. Then he switched round upon the girl.

"So that's your last word, Betty?—Finish?"

Her eyes dropped under his, were raised again in a volition which dared to match itself, though she was tremulous with the effort, against the challenge of his voice. Their blue depths were charmingly sincere.

"I cannot help myself, Jack." She shook her head pathetically. "You ought to understand."

His voice came grimly, with intent to wound.

"You are selling yourself to James Arrowsmith. Yes, I understand."

She shuddered, turned away her head in despair of sympathetic comprehension. There was a silence during which both gazed down vistas of gloomy thought. Then she looked up again, diffidently venturing another appeal to his magnanimity.

"You know Father's position——"

He nodded, sardonically.

"I know. He thinks his business is safe if James Arrowsmith is his son-in-law instead of merely his go-ahead competitor. He's wrong. Arrowsmith would cut his own brother's throat if he met him on a dark road and thought he had a dollar in his pocket. He's just a modern brigand!"

The girl sighed.

"What can I do, Jack?—Father——"

He blazed out in a sudden fury.

“Oh, yes, I know! Father! I can’t help your father being a fool! It’s not my fault that he can’t recognize potentiality in a man—that he is only capable of appreciating a success that is already made, which he can measure by a balance in a bank! Give me ten years—I’ll eat up James Arrowsmith!”

The girl shook her head sadly.

“Ten years, Jack—it’s a long time ahead. We have got to deal with things as they are to-day. And to-day——”

“I’m nothing!” he said, bitterly.

She looked up at him.

“You are just a promising young man fresh from college, Jack! With a big future before you, I am sure of that—but it’s only a future!”

“I’ve started, anyway!” he exclaimed. “I’ve got that job on the *Rostrum*—begin next week. And I’m going to make good!”

“Of course you are—but—we can’t marry on your pay as a very junior sub-editor.” She shook her head again. “We must be reasonable, Jack. If I saw any chance——”

“Yes,” he interrupted, brutally, “if you saw any chance of my driving you about in six months’ time in a big motor-car like James Arrowsmith’s—then you would condescend to love me!”

She stood up, her eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, *don’t*, Jack!” She turned away her head, pressed her hand to her eyes, dropped it in a hopeless gesture. She faced him again, her sensitive mouth quivering at the corners, her expression appealing from misery to compassion. Evidently, she hardly dared trust herself to speak. “You know I love you!” Her voice caught, almost broke. “You know I love you now—shall never love any one else. All my life I shall remember you—if I live fifty years——”

His short laugh was intended to express that terrible cynicism of Youth losing its first illusions.

“Cut it out, Betty! In fifty years you will be seventy. No doubt you will be a charming old lady. You may even be sentimental—you can indulge safely in the luxury, then! But you won’t even remember my name. You’ll only be interested in the love-affairs of your grandchildren!”

She smiled at him involuntarily—and then consciously maintained the gleam in her eyes, quick to emphasize and elaborate the note of comedy he had accidentally struck. It was escape from threatening acrimony.

“And you, Jack? In nineteen-seventy-two? Will you remember *my* name?—Will you be even sentimental, I wonder?—Oh, I should like to see you—a cynical old grandfather, telling your grandchildren not to marry for money, but to marry where money is!—Oh, Jack!” Her voice was genuinely mirthful. “You *will* come and see me and talk their affairs over with me, won’t you? We shall be two such dear old cronies!”

He had to concentrate on his frown, endangered by her infectious sense of humour.

“I shall never marry!” he announced, gloomily. “So there’s not much use in promising to discuss my grandchildren’s affairs with you fifty years hence. I shall never love another woman.”

She ignored the sombre vaticination, determined to keep on a safer plane of futurity.

“Oh, wouldn’t you like to see, Jack? Fifty years ahead—and all that will happen in the meantime?” There was just a hint of seriousness in the light tone, in the bright eyes which smiled into his. “If one could only know!” Her face went wistful. “I often wonder—these crystal-gazers and people—whether they can really see——” She looked up at him. “Jack! You are so clever and know everything—don’t you know any place where one can go and really see what is going to happen?”

He smiled, half in pleasure at her flattery, half in the consciousness of being about to say a clever thing. The smile was wholly youthful, despite his assumption of withered cynicism.

“Yes. The place to which you are sending me.”

“What place?” Her tone was puzzled.

“Hell!” he said shortly.

She wrinkled her brows.

“I don’t understand.”

“Of course, you haven’t read Virgil,” he said, with the crushing superiority of the newly fledged graduate. “It’s in the sixth book—where he takes Æneas into Hades. He describes two gates there—a gate of horn and a gate of ivory. They are the gates through which all dreams come. Those that pass through the ivory gate are false dreams—the true ones come out of the gate of horn. I will sit down beside it, and report if any of them concern you. You haven’t left me much other interest,” he concluded, bitterly, “and this life will be just Hell.”

She looked at him in a short silence.

“You are being very cruel, Jack. Do you think there will be much happiness for me?” She turned away her head.

He laid both his hands on her shoulders, compelled her gaze to meet his.

“Then let me give you happiness! Betty, I love you! I love you! I care for nothing in the world but you! Risk it! Forget everything except that you love me and I love you! You will never regret it. I will make you the happiest woman on earth as I shall be the happiest man. You cannot live without love! I love you, Betty!—and I shall always, always love you! Trust yourself to it, whatever happens!”

She withdrew herself from him, shook her head hopelessly.

“I can’t,” she said, wearily. “I have promised——”

“Arrowsmith?”

“Father.” Her tone answered all the implications of his question with a dreary finality that left no issue. Her sigh was a seal upon resignation.

“Then it’s good-bye?”

She nodded in a forced economy of speech.

“Good-bye.”

He picked up hat, stick, and gloves and moved toward the door.

“You’ve nothing more to say to me?”

She shook her head, her eyes brimming with tears.

“No, Jack. Except that I shall remember this birthday as the most miserable day of my life. You have not made it easy for me.”

“Why should I?” he asked, the uncompromising egotism of youth suddenly harshly apparent. “You refuse the best gift I can offer you—myself!”

“I can’t help myself. But,” she hesitated on the pathetically forlorn appeal, “you might be kind.” Her eyes implored him.

He struck himself upon the forehead with a dramatic little ejaculation which matched the gesture.

“Bah!—It all seems like an evil dream to me!”

She smiled at him, sadly.

“I wish it came out of the gate of ivory, Jack—and not out of the gate of horn!”

He flushed, his raw sensitiveness resentful of this boomerang return of his own witticism.

“You can keep your sense of humour for James Arrowsmith, Betty!—Good-bye!”

He snatched open the door, went out. He could not visualize her standing there listening for his shattering slam of the front door, running to the window for a last glimpse. He thought of her only as mocking at the tragedy which was so real to him.

In a furious rage with the universe as constituted, he marched blindly out of the house and straight across the pavement with intent to quit even her side of the road. His brain in a whirl, he looked neither to right nor left, careless of an environment which was at that moment scarcely real to him. He only half-heard the raucous scream of a Klaxon horn, a warning human shout—and then something struck him violently on the side, followed it with a crashing blow on his head.

He could not see Betty's face, tense and white, bending over his senseless body as it was extricated from under James Arrowsmith's plutocratic car and—after her emphatic prohibition of hospital—borne into her father's house.

* * * * * *

He felt himself shoot upward in the vast, familiar elevator of the *Daily Rostrum* building. His head was full of important business, interviews with Senators, statesmen, financiers which had filled his busy day. With practised mental control he screened these matters temporarily from his consciousness, cleared his brain for the immediate tasks which awaited him. The elevator stopped opposite a door which bore his name. As he opened it he heard, with the little glow of observed success, the awed recognitory whisper of one of the two seedy journalists he left behind him in the lift: "*The Editor!*"

He entered the big room hung with wall-maps above the low-ranged bookcases, where a lady clerk was arranging his afternoon tea on a little table by the side of his massive desk. His secretary, evidently alert for his entrance, appeared at another door.

"Mr. Bolingbroke is waiting to see you, sir!"

"Good! Show him in!"

He settled himself in his big chair, glanced at the pile of papers on his desk, looked up to nod a curt greeting to the keen-faced young man who entered.

"Five minutes, Mr. Bolingbroke!" he said warningly, with a gesture toward the papers which awaited him.

The young man smiled.

“I can do more business with you, sir, in five minutes, than I can with another man in fifty,” he said, extracting a wad of typescript from an attaché case. “Here’s the draft of the last article.”

He took it, leaned back in his chair, ran his eye over it. It was headed “*The Cut-throat Combine. The Arrowsmith Apaches Uneasy For Their Own Scalps. More Points for the Public Prosecutor.*”

He skimmed it through rapidly. It was a scathing denunciation of a predatory Trust with which the proprietors of the *Daily Rostrum* had quarrelled. Chapter and verse were given for a series of malpractices which, substantiated after this publicity, would infallibly bring the wrongdoers before a court of justice. He leaned forward, picked up a pencil, struck out a few sentences, made other points more telling. Suddenly he frowned, scored out a whole paragraph.

“You’re too tame over this infantile mortality business! You want to let yourself scream over it. That’s the note that’ll wake ’em up! Get all the sentimental parents clamouring for his blood!” He handed back the typescript. “Rewrite the final paragraph and it’ll pass.” He glanced at his watch. “Four and a half minutes, Mr. Bolingbroke!” he said, an almost boyish note of triumph in his voice, “and I guess it’s finish for Mr. James Arrowsmith!”

He turned to his tea while the journalist made his exit. Then he bent himself forward to the business on his desk.

As he ran through and signed letter after letter, his own phrase “Finish for Mr. James Arrowsmith!” rang in his head, repeated itself over and over again with almost the distinctness of an auditory hallucination. A detached portion of his consciousness listened to it, was lured into a train of thought that was not unpleasant.

Of course, he had no real personal grudge against James Arrowsmith. Without him——! He smiled as he set his signature at the foot of yet another letter. That was a long time ago! And he had prophesied it—he remembered, suddenly, his own words—“Give me ten years and I’ll *eat* James Arrowsmith!” Ten years! He glanced involuntarily at the calendar in

front of him, read the date—1932. By Jove, it *was* ten years—ten years ago—Betty’s birthday! He glanced again at the calendar—and dropped his pen on the desk with a sharp exclamation of annoyance. Good Lord, of course it was! It was Betty’s birthday to-day! And he had forgotten it!

For a moment or two he stared in front of him, his brows contracted into a frown which was directed impartially at circumstance and himself. He had been so terribly busy of late—but, of course, he must find time. Poor old Betty! He took up the telephone instrument on his desk, gave a number.

“Hallo! That you, Betty?—Jack. Jack speaking. Many happy returns of the day! What?—Of course I remembered!—What?—Well, it’s only five o’clock,” his tone was one of self-extenuation. “I say, old girl! We’ll go out to dinner—any restaurant you like! What? You’ve got an appointment?” He repeated the words incredulously. “Oh, very well!—I say, Betty! You haven’t got a cold or anything, have you?—Oh, all right—no, I only thought your voice sounded strange.” He frowned. “Very well—do as you like! Good-bye!” He put back the receiver with a vicious thud.

Throughout the remainder of the afternoon, while he gave directions to the series of sub-editors who came deferentially into his presence, an obscure worry persisted at the back of his consciousness. Of course—he had to confess it—he had neglected her of late. How long was it since he had been home? Only a month—or five weeks? The foreground of his brain, working at full pressure on the problems continuously submitted to it for instant decision, failed to solve the question—relegated it to be worried over by that independent consciousness at the back of his mind. It was a long time, anyway! Of course she understood. It was the paper—the paper to which he was the slave—which, practically, he never quitted (he had a bedroom in the building)—the paper of which he personally read every item that was printed and an enormous quantity of copy which was not—the paper which was his pride, his joy, his one interest in life! Of course, she understood—but it was rough on her. Poor old Betty! He thought of her strange voice, and winced with remorse. She had been brooding over no letter that morning. If only she would have gone to dinner with him! He felt that he could have explained things, put everything straight. But she had an appointment! What appointment? With whom? He put a thought out of his mind, and the thought peeped persistently over the barrier. Impossible, of

course! Preposterous! Docile little Betty? Besides—who could there be? His vanity was scornful of the idea.

Nevertheless, as he worked, an impulse kept rising in him, ever more powerfully, an impulse to go home—to go home at once. He fidgeted as he beat back the disturbing desire, had to concentrate himself fiercely upon his task. Suddenly, as though the obscure subconsciousness, which was, after all, his real self, had come to a decision in which his brain had no part, he surrendered. He was surprised at himself as he sharply pressed the bell-button upon his desk. His secretary appeared.

“Tell Mr. Thompson to see the paper through to-night. Get me a taxi at once!”

The well-disciplined secretary barely succeeded in veiling his astonishment.

“Very good, sir.—And if we get that cable from Yokohama——?”

He bit his lip in an unwonted hesitation. Upon the contents of a cable expected that evening from Yokohama he would have to decide the policy of his paper, and upon the policy of his paper, as outlined in the leader which would be published in the morning, depended to a large extent the direction of the current of popular opinion—the current which would set in a few days toward peace or war. To-night, if ever, he ought to remain at his post, but the dominant impulse which had swept over him would take no denial. He felt like a traitor to his professional code as he replied:

“I may be back. If I am not, ring me up. You will find me at home.”

His straight stare at the secretary challenged and browbeat the bewilderment in that young man’s eyes.

“Very good, sir,” he said, submissively, and departed.

A few minutes later he found himself speeding homeward in a taxi that, despite the reckless audacity of the liberally subsidized driver, could not go fast enough. The momentary halts imposed by cross-traffic seemed interminably prolonged delays. Of course he was a fool, he told himself—but his impatience increased with every second, set his fingers drumming upon the unread evening newspaper on his knee. At last! The taxi swung

into the pavement in front of the tall block of flats where he had his city home. He jumped out with the feverish alacrity of a man who hastens to avert disaster, almost ran to the elevator.

Another moment and he was fitting his key into the latch. He swung the door open—was confronted by Betty in hat and furs, apparently just on the point of departure. She shrank back at his entrance, went white.

“Jack!”

The tone of her voice reëchoed in him like an alarm-bell. He looked sharply at her.

“Where are you going?”

She stared at him, white to the lips, evidently unable to answer. He repeated the question in a level voice from which, by an effort of will, he banished the wild suspicion which suddenly surged up in him.

“Where are you going, Betty?”

She laughed, a trifle hysterically.

“You are taking a great interest in my doings all at once, Jack! I’m going out, of course.—I told you I had an appointment.”

His eyes met hers, held them till they dropped and she went suddenly red. He opened the door of an adjoining room, gestured her to enter, followed her.

They stood and faced each other in a silence that seemed to ring with the menace of near event. He was the first to break it.

“Now perhaps you will tell me where you are going, Betty?” He held his voice on a note of politeness, but it was nevertheless sternly compelling.

Her eyes sought the carpet. Her bosom heaved deeply through a long moment where there was no sound save the suddenly perceived loud ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece. Then, on the wave of a resolve, she lifted her head, confronted him proudly.

“I am going to leave you, Jack!” It was evident that she had to fight to keep her voice from breaking. “I—I have had enough of it!”

His ejaculation was characteristic.

“My dear!—You must be mad!”

An answering anger came into her eyes.

“Mad or not—I mean it!”

“Leave Maisie?” he cried incredulously.

She smiled at him, more in control of herself now than he.

“No. I am taking Maisie with me,” she said with deliberate calmness.

“But you can’t! I will not allow it!”

“Perhaps you propose to sit here all day and watch her?” she asked, with biting sarcasm. Then, with a sudden change of tone, indignation flamed up in her. “What is she to you?—Is she any more to you than I am?—Do you see her from one month’s end to another?—Do you ask after her? Do you write to her? Do you take the faintest interest in her?—No!—Once you leave this flat and go to your hateful paper, you forget her as utterly as you do me!” Her eyes blazed at him. “Maisie and I are all the world to each other, Jack! And we will not be separated! We go together!”

The violence of this outburst from the woman whose docility he had so long accepted as naturally as he did that of his staff upon the *Rostrum* shocked him profoundly. At the same time, a blinding passion of jealousy surged up in him.

“You shall not go!”

“I shall!” There was no mistaking the determination in her voice. “The moment your back is turned!”

The room seemed to reel about him. The hitherto so solid foundations of his existence had broken up suddenly beneath him. He could not have suspected so great a capacity for emotion in himself. He pressed his hand against his brow, closed his eyes tight in the sickening shock.

“Who is it?” he asked hoarsely. “The man?—His name?”

Her eyes seemed to be probing the depth of his wound as they looked into his, but they showed no compassion.

“I cannot tell you.” Her tone was unshakably firm.

There was again a silence, in which he fought for mastery over himself. He looked at her in uncomprehending despair.

“Betty! Betty, tell me why?—For God’s sake, tell me why!—You used to love me. Tell me why you’ve changed!”

She evidently was also fighting to keep his emotion from communicating itself to her. He thought, as he waited for her answer, that her head never looked more nobly beautiful.

“Do you remember, Jack? Ten years ago?—Ten years to-day?—You said to me: ‘You cannot live without love!’ You were right.” A sob, that almost escaped its check, came into her voice. “I cannot live without love.”

He looked for yet another moment upon the sad dignity of her face, upon the quivering, sensitive mouth, upon the eyes that brimmed with tears—then, with an impulsive movement, he sprang forward, seized her two hands in his. The tears were in his eyes also, and in his voice.

“Oh, Betty, Betty darling! I remember! And I said ‘I love you! I love you! Trust yourself to it whatever happens!’—Oh, Betty! Is it too late? Is it too late?”

Her eyes looked deeply into his, incredulous at first of his sincerity, then softening in a wonderful certitude, she let herself go into his enfolding arms, her mouth drawn wistfully close to his, yet still, for a moment, withheld. All pride went out of her suddenly. She implored, like a soul that has an unbelievable chance of life.

“Oh, Jack! You do love me?—You love me still!—Oh, Jack, Jack!”

She buried her head upon his shoulder, her body shaking with sobs.

He caressed her, soothingly.

“My dear! My beloved! My dear, dear Betty! Of course I love you! You and Maisie are all I have in the world—and it’s mostly you!—Oh, I know I’ve been a fool! I’ve thought only of my selfish ambition. But, dear, try me again! I’ll be so much kinder to you, so much more thoughtful.—And we’ll forget all this. Never remember it. I won’t even ask you the man’s name.”

She half-raised her head from his shoulder, swallowed tearfully.

“There—there wasn’t any man!” she said, and broke down again into a passion of sobs that would not cease.

* * * * *

As he expected, the young man was waiting for him. Maisie was waiting also, standing very tall and rigid by the window, in all the dignity of youth measuring swords with the parental generation. He thought, as he came into the centre of the room, how like her mother she was—her mother twenty years ago, when she had faced *her* father. He nearly smiled at the remembrance, checked himself with a thought of the matter in hand. This, of course, was quite different!

The young man rose to meet him. They shook hands with the amount of stiffness proper to the occasion. He found himself suddenly wishing that Betty were here, after all. He had been hasty in telling her to keep out of the way. She could handle Maisie more tactfully than he could. Very reasonable woman, Betty—she had seen his point of view at once. These thoughts passed swiftly through his mind as he invited the young man to a chair, seated himself. There was an awkward silence.

He and the young man broke it at the same instant.

“You wanted to speak to me——?”

“I think you understand, sir——”

Both stopped likewise at the same instant to make way for the other, and both failed to recommence.

Maisie stepped forward impatiently, stood between them, towering superbly.

“I don’t see why you want all this icy ceremony, both of you,” she said scornfully. She turned to her father. “Jim wants to marry me, Father—and I want to marry Jim. And that’s all there is to it!”

“Indeed!” He raised his eyebrows in mild sarcasm. “I wonder you thought it necessary to inform me of such a trifling matter.”

“We thought it better to tell you.” Maisie was cheerfully unscathed.

“Much obliged, I am sure. I’m very interested. I expect you will both of you want to marry lots more people before you’ve finished. I shall always be willing to lend a sympathetic ear when you care to tell me of the latest.”

“Father!” broke out Maisie indignantly. He felt that he had scored. “This is serious!”

“It always is,” he said philosophically. “And you, young man? I suppose you are burning to add your testimony of the solemnity of this occasion to Maisie’s?” He felt that if he could only keep it up on this tone he was safe. Maisie was apt to be so damnably stubborn and unmanageable once he failed to maintain superiority. As for the young man—well, of course, he was only a young man. He could soon manage *him*!

This young man, however, was no whit abashed.

“I am, sir,” he said, confidently. “Maisie and I are made for each other!” he added, uttering the banality as though it were now for the first time new-minted for the lovers’ lexicon.

“Really?—It is a happy chance, for certainly Maisie’s mother and myself omitted to take you into account when we——”

“Father!”

“—named her at the baptismal font,” he continued, equably. He had scored again.

The young man was impervious.

“Perhaps there are higher Powers than you, sir?” he ventured, with polite deference.

“—Even if you are the editor of the *Daily Rostrum*!” added Maisie viciously.

He resettled himself in his chair under this lively counter-attack.

“Well, let us drop these witticisms,” he said with some asperity. “Come to business. Let’s hear your case, if you have one.”

“Certainly, sir. I ask your permission to marry Maisie.”

“I appreciate the courtesy. What is your income?”

The young man hesitated.

“Well—at present, sir——”

“Nothing, I suppose?” He was still keeping his end up, was well-satisfied with the tartness of that question. He nearly smiled as he watched the young man wriggle.

“I must confess, sir—but I have qualifications—and I am ambitious!”

“All young men are ambitious,” he replied, oracularly. “Let us hear the qualifications!”

“I graduated with honours at my university——”

“Pooh! So did the man who sells my paper at the corner of the street!”

“—and I have great hopes of getting a good job.”

“Indeed!—Where?”

“On your paper, sir!”

He was staggered by the young man’s impudence.

“My compliments!—But, as I unfortunately fail to share those hopes, I must regretfully refuse the permission you ask for!”

He had only just managed to keep his temper.

Maisie sailed forward to the attack.

“But, Father, you have often told me that when you married Mother you were only a graduate with your first job on the *Rostrum*! We don’t mind struggling—we should *like* to struggle—just as you did!”

“Things were different then. That was a long time ago. In this year of nineteen forty-two life is much more difficult than when your mother and I were young.”

“It only seems so to you because you have got old. It isn’t difficult to us young people!” said Maisie, smilingly positive.

He winced under the unconscious cruelty of this remark.

“Perhaps you will allow my experience to be the best judge,” he said, snappily. “In any case, I refuse my permission! The idea is ridiculous!—I do not think there is any more I need say, young man,” he concluded, making a movement to rise from his chair.

Maisie pinned him down to it, both arms around him, kneeling at his side, her face—Betty’s young face!—looking up to him in winsome appeal.

“Father!” she said, and her voice was full of soft cajolery, “if any one took Mother away from you, wouldn’t you feel it dreadfully?” He had a sudden little flitting vision of a crisis ten years back. “Would life be worth anything to you?—I mean it seriously.” She paused for a reply he refused to give. “Well, Father—that’s just what life will be like to Jim if you take me away from him!”

“I don’t see the necessity of the parallel,” he countered, feebly.

“Oh, yes, you do. And Father!—If any one took you away from Mother?—What would life be like to her?—You know! *Just a dreary blank!*—And that’s what my life will be like if you send Jim away from me!”

“But——” he began.

She put her hand over his mouth, a deliciously soft young hand, with a faint fragrance that reminded him——

“No!” she continued, inexorably. “Listen to me! I haven’t finished. If any one took you from Mother, and she knew where to find you—what would

she do? You know! She would go to you, whatever was in the way!—And, Father, that’s what I should do!—Father!” she said, and her tone was full of solemn warning, “would you like to think of your darling little Maisie starving somewhere in a top back room—and hating you, *hating you!*” her voice suddenly became almost genuinely vicious, “because you wouldn’t give her husband a chance to earn his living? Would you like to sit day after day, not knowing where she was, wondering all sorts of things—with Mother sitting on the chair opposite and not daring to say a word—day after day, and year after year, and never hear from her any more?—And all because you were a stubborn, foolish old man who had forgotten what real love was!”

“But, Maisie——” he did not himself know what he was going to say.

She snuggled up close to him, looked up into his face.

“Dadsie!” she said, and the voice was the voice of the child Maisie who had so often looked up from his knee with just that irresistible smile which had brought strange tears to his eyes then as it did now—sudden tears he could not quite keep back. “Dadsie!” she said once more and her tone went straight to his heart. “You do love your little Maisie, don’t you? And you want to make her happy—all her life you have wanted to make her happy and you’re going to make her happy now. You are going to give her Jim, her man—like you are Mother’s man—a chance to make good. You are going to give us both a chance to make good together—like you and Mother have made good together. You are still going to be Maisie’s dear, good, kind, generous father whom she will always love—aren’t you, Dadsie?”

The young man stood up.

“Sir,” he said, “I’ve lost my father. And if I could choose another one—I should like it to be you!”

The older man warmed suddenly at the unmistakable sincerity of his tone. He was a good lad, after all—very like himself, he thought—twenty years ago!

“Dadsie!” implored Maisie, her arms still about him. “Dadsie!—Say yes!—Just think it’s Mother and you starting for the first time!”

Something broke down in him—almost the barrier against unmanliness. He blew his nose quickly and his smile had a twist in it as he looked into Maisie's eyes.

“That's not fair!” he said. “But you've won. You shall have your chance.—You can start to-morrow, young man, but, mind—to work!” He stood up, went to the door.

“Betty!” he called as he opened it.

She stood there—smiling at him. He guessed suddenly that she had been there all the while.

“Well?” she said, her eyes happy.

He glanced round to where the two young lovers had stood. But they had vanished together into the garden.

“I've been an old fool, my dear!” he said, smiling.

“You've been an old dear!” she replied, putting an arm about him and coming with him into the room. “You couldn't have made me a better birthday present!” Her eyes, also, were full of tears.

“Forty to-day!” he said, “and it only seems like yesterday since you and I _____”

“And you still love me?” she queried, in a tone that had no doubt, looking up into his face.

“I still love you,” he replied, happily positive. “Just as I did then!”

Arms about each other, he led her in front of the big mirror over the fireplace and they smiled at the reflected picture of their union.

“She called me an old man,” he said, a little ruefully, patting his hair before the mirror. “I'm getting a bit gray, too.” He looked at her. “But you, dear, you haven't got a gray hair—and in my eyes you are just as beautiful as ever!”

She shook her head slowly at him in delight.

“And you are just as handsome!”

He smiled down upon her.

“Maisie accused me of being too old to remember what true love was,” he said. “Do you think so, dear?—Have we forgotten?”

“Darling!” she whispered, as she snuggled close against him.

They kissed, believing that their kiss was just the kiss of twenty years ago. It wasn’t. It was a symbol of infinitely more.

* * * * *

He sat tapping his foot impatiently on the carpet of the ante-room to the council-chamber of the *Daily Rostrum*. Behind the closed door a meeting of the chief proprietors was in secret deliberation. He glanced at his watch, his dignity fretting at this unwonted exclusion, an unacknowledged anxiety unsettling his nerves. He knew himself to be on the threshold of a new epoch. An enterprising, young-blooded syndicate was acquiring the *Daily Rostrum*, was even then in conclave with the old proprietors, agreeing upon the final terms. They had sent for him—had asked him (oh, most courteously!) to give them yet five minutes.

But he was resentful of those five minutes. Young Henry Vancoutter (not so very young now, though—he must be forty!—Let me see—twenty years——), the chief proprietor, ought to have treated him with more consideration. He deserved better than to be left cooling his heels while the destinies of his paper—*his* paper, for he if any one had made it, had lived for it for forty years, had been its unchallenged autocrat for thirty—were in the balance. The old man would never have done it, he thought, resentful of this rising generation. Never once was old Vancoutter lacking in the respect due to him, the prince of editors who had made his property one of the most valuable in the journalistic world.

He wondered what the future would bring. Doubtless the policy of the paper would be changed—that was only natural, of course. They must go ahead with the times (he nerved himself for an effort that he felt would be a tax upon his strength). Yes—perhaps they had fallen a bit behind of late. The circulation was not what it was—not half what it had been fifteen years ago.

They had made rather a virtue of being a trifle old-fashioned, appealing to conservative instincts. Not in the old days, certainly—but for the last twenty years. And undoubtedly they had suffered from it. He must look up the sidelines a bit—the radio-service to private subscribers, for example. He drifted on to a vague calculation of the initial cost for the service of wirelessly cinema-pictures of current events, mingled with advertisements, with which their go-ahead rival the *Lightning News* was making so great success with hotels and flat communities. His jaw set. He would beat them on their own ground. He would show the world that the editor of the *Rostrum* was still alive, was still a power.

Yes—he was not done yet. He could not—no one could—conceive the *Rostrum* without him. He was the paper itself. There was not the faintest possibility of his being replaced. It was unthinkable as practical near politics, as unimaginable as death itself. Such a day was, thank God, still remote. Old proprietors or new, there was no question that he was the indispensable editor. But he would have to put his shoulder to the wheel.

He wondered what Betty would think of the changes. Poor old Betty! She was getting very frail, but (he thought, cheerfully) considering that she was sixty to-day she was a wonderful woman. He glanced at his watch again, fidgeted with impatience. She would be waiting for him in the car outside—very nice of the old dear to come down for him every day as she had done for now, let me see, was it five or six years past? Ever since he had had his illness. Dear old Betty! He warmed himself with the thought of the splendid fur coat he was going to buy her as a birthday present that afternoon.

The door opened suddenly. Young Vancoutter uttered his name with a smile, murmured an apology, beckoned him in.

He entered, glanced round upon the familiar faces and the new ones gathered on each side of the long table. The new looked up at him with interest, the old bent over blotting-pads on which they scribbled idly. He seated himself.

Vancoutter spoke in his familiar crisp tones.

“Mr. Trenchard, I have to inform you that the board has come to very satisfactory terms with the syndicate who are, in fact, now the new

proprietors of the *Daily Rostrum*.” The speaker paused for a moment, cleared his throat. “You will, of course, readily understand that these new proprietors wish to have complete control of their property and that their ideas of editorial management may not coincide with ours—with those which you have so successfully and so worthily upheld for so many years.” He felt himself turn sick as he listened, pinched his lips together lest his emotion should be remarked. A mantle of ice seemed to compress him. Vancoutter continued, with an indulgent smile: “We for our part, of course, have safeguarded the interests of a man who has served us so brilliantly, whose association with our paper——” “*Our paper*”! He almost smiled in bitter irony.“—has so materially contributed to bring it to that pitch of influence at which it is still maintained to-day. Therefore, as part of the purchase-price paid by the new proprietors, ten thousand shares have been set aside as your property—and, if you prefer it, the syndicate has engaged itself to buy those shares of you, cash down, at the current market valuation _____”

He scarcely knew what followed. He had only the most indistinct recollection of several other long-winded speeches whose flattery was sincerely intended to soften the blow. He could not remember what he himself had said—apparently, he had kept his dignity—had duly thanked the old proprietors. Of all the welter of words, he clearly recalled only —“The younger generation, Mr. Trenchard! A man of sixty-two owes it to himself to retire!”—and they haunted him, rang over and over again in his brain like the knell of his life.

At last he escaped, went stumbling blindly down the stairs, forgetting, for the first time for forty years, the elevator. Betty was waiting for him in the closed car, her head peering out of the window. He groped for the door, almost fell into it. She helped him to the seat.

“My dear! What is the matter?” she said, white with alarm. “Are you ill?”

He clenched his jaw in the agony of his humiliation.

“Sacked!” he said briefly, the tears starting to his eyes. “Sacked at a moment’s notice!”

She stared at him, unable at first to grasp the full significance of his words.

“Oh, no, Jack! No!” she said. “No! You can’t mean it! It’s not true?”

He nodded, gazing fixedly out of the window, away from her.

“It’s true!” he replied grimly. “My life’s finished!”

She felt timidly for his hand, pressed it without a word. He turned and faced her. They looked for a moment into each other’s eyes, then suddenly he crumpled into her arms, a dead-beat old man, and sobbed like a child.

“Oh, Jack, dear! Jack!” she said, caressing the gray head upon which her tears fell like rain. “At last we can be together!”

* * * * *

They sat side by side on the porch of the country-house, overlooking the wide lawns which swept down to a belt of trees and the river. Along the bank two young couples were walking in a close and intimate comradeship whose happiness was indicated by the bright young laughter which floated at intervals, in the stillness of the sunny afternoon, to the porch of the house. He watched them as they went, then turned silently to his companion. Betty sat, sweetly placid, a little smile just accentuating the loose wrinkles on the soft face, her eyes looking perhaps after the young people, perhaps into happy thoughts. He thought she was very beautiful as she sat there—and inestimably precious.

“Betty darling!” he said suddenly, lifting her hand to his lips, “to think that you are seventy to-day!”

She turned and smiled at him, her pale-blue eyes darkening with grateful love.

“Nineteen seventy-two, Jack!” she said, softly. “Do you remember——?”

His smile answered hers.

“Yes, dear. I remember——”

She checked him with a little gesture.

“Hush! Don’t speak!” she murmured, as though in awe.

They sat there, hand in hand, in silence, gazing over the lawns to where their grandchildren wandered with the lovers of their choice, in a quiet ecstasy for which they had no words. Love swelled in them, filled them with the soundless harmonies wherein Life's discords are resolved.

* * * * *

“Hush! Don't speak!”

He opened his eyes. Betty was bending over him. Betty? He stared at her, puzzled. Where were the soft wrinkles, the gray hair? This was Betty—Betty as she used to be all that time ago. Then his consciousness readjusted itself suddenly to its environment. He gazed round on an unfamiliar bedroom where Betty moved with an air of proprietorship.

“I have had such strange dreams, dear——” he said weakly.

She bent over him again, smiled.

“From the gate of horn?” she asked. How charming she looked!

He collected his thoughts with an effort—remembered, all at once.

“I hope so, dear—please God, they are!”

She rearranged his pillow, smoothed the sheet under his chin, smiled again.

“Go to sleep, Jack—lots more sleep!” she commanded gently but authoritatively.

Without strength or will to protest, he let himself relapse once more into drowsiness. Suddenly he opened his eyes.

“What was the name of the man who wanted to marry Maisie?” he asked, as though he had long been puzzling over the question.

“Maisie?” She looked at him in blank lack of comprehension.

“Our daughter!”

A beautiful smile of tenderness, of something ineffably feminine, came into her eyes. What was it she gazed at in that instant of silence?

“Hush, dear. Don’t talk!” she said, softly, kissing him on the brow. “Go and sit again by the gate of horn.”

THE WHITE DOG

Mr. Gilchrist was nervous and fidgety. He was alone, not merely in the dining-room where he sat, but in the house; and solitude at night to a man accustomed to find comfort and distraction in the presence of others is a black desert where one starts at one's own footsteps.

Sitting there in the dining-room of the pretty suburban villa he had had built some twenty miles from town, the familiar objects which surrounded him seemed to have grown remote, unfamiliar. Smoking his pipe, with the half-read newspaper on his knee, his ear was worried by the insistent ticking of the clock, and this ticking seemed a novel, almost uncanny, phenomenon. He could not remember having heard a sound from that timepiece before. There were features about the sideboard, too, as he gazed at it fixedly, that appeared quite strange to him. Certain details of inlay-work on the Sheraton-pattern legs he perceived now for the first time. These little unfamiliarities observed with his mind on the stretch—the latent primitive man in him scenting danger in solitude—added to the loneliness. The sheltering walls of the usual were pushed away from him. He felt himself exposed, out of the call of friends, in a desolation hinted by invisible malevolences. Of course, the feeling was absurd. He shook himself and tried to summon up a little of the bravura with which he had dismissed his wife and daughter to the dance at the village a mile away, making light of their protests that it was the one servant's evening out, saying that at any rate she in the kitchen would not be much company to him in the dining-room where he proposed to sit and smoke. His friend Williamson might drop in, too—anyway, he would be all right.

His friend Williamson had not dropped in, and with every slow minute ticked out by that confounded clock he had found himself less at ease. Once he got up and walked into another room, but the sound of his own footsteps, heard with astonishing loudness in the house empty of any other person, afflicted his nerves, and he returned to his former seat in the dining-room.

The seven-thirty express from town rushed by on the railway line which ran, fifty yards distant, parallel with the road; and the sound of it heartened him for a minute or two. The world of fellow-men was brought close to him for a flying second, and all his sociable instincts greeted it, claiming acquaintance, as it sped along. Then, as the noise of it died away into a silence yet more profound than before, the primitive in him again peeped out through his civilization, panicky, ear at stretch for stealthy danger. The stillness which surrounded the lonely house seemed charged with perils that stole near with noiseless footfall. A weird, mournful cry outside, breaking suddenly on that stillness, pulled him erect on his feet, listening, trembling. The cry was repeated, and he sat down again, telling himself that it was an owl, as doubtless it was; but his hand shook as he picked up his newspaper again and tried to read.

With some effort he forced his brain to grasp the meanings of the words, which related a murder case, announced in massive letters at the top of the column. The mental machine seemed to stop every now and then and he found himself gazing at some unimportant, common word in the line until it looked as strange and devoid of meaning as one in a foreign and unknown language. The comprehension of it required a deliberate effort of will.

Suddenly, with a soul-shaking unexpectedness, there was a violent, rapid knocking at the door.

* * * * *

He was on his feet in an instant, shaking in every limb, panic-stricken as an Indian in a place of spirits. A primitive vague dread of the supernatural held him motionless, obsessed by a formless horror.

The knocking at the door renewed itself, a frantic hammering. The repetition lightened him, redeemed it from the vague purposelessness of the ghostly, suggested human anxiety at fever pitch. His imagination, relieved from the spell, flew to work, building catastrophes after familiar models. His wife and daughter? The disasters of fire, vehicular collision or heart-failure presented themselves in confused and fragmentary pictures. The door now resounded under a ceaseless rain of blows; and, trembling so violently as to feel almost ill, he ran to open it.

On the threshold stood a little, stout bearded man, past middle age. He struck one or two frenzied blows at the air after the door had swung away from him.

“What do you want?” demanded Mr. Gilchrist.

His visitor looked at him vacantly for a moment, seemingly unable to adjust his mind to human intercourse.

“For God’s sake, give me some brandy—if you are a Christian man!”

“Come inside,” said Mr. Gilchrist, and he led the way into the dining-room, the stranger following. “Bless my soul! What is it? An accident?” He spoke nervously, more to himself than to his guest, who replied nothing but stood swaying on his legs and kept from falling only by the clutched-at support of the table. “Dear me—dear me! One moment—I have some brandy here.” He fumbled with the key of the tantalus. “Here you are. Steady, man, steady! Sit down.”

The stranger drank off the brandy and took a deep breath, passing his hand over his brow like one recovering from a swoon. In the moment or two of silence Mr. Gilchrist had leisure to scrutinize him. He was without a hat, and his head shone in the lamplight, a polished dome rising from a narrow forehead and a half-ring of gray wisps over his ears. His eyes protruded, globularly, but it could be guessed that they carried impressions to an active brain. His gray beard converged irresolutely to a point in front of his chin. His clothes were respectable but not well cut, and they were now soiled with earth. One trouser-leg, Mr. Gilchrist noticed, was badly torn. Altogether his appearance suggested a benevolent old gentleman, connected possibly with some dissenting religious body, who had been badly mauled in conflict with a gang of ruffians.

“Feel better?” asked Mr. Gilchrist. “Have some more.”

“No, I thank you, sir,” replied the stranger, and the tone of his voice assured his host that he had to deal with an educated man. “I feel much better. Alcohol, I may say, is an unfamiliar stimulant to me, and the action of a comparatively small quantity is powerful. If I might beg a little further indulgence of your kindness, however, I should be glad to rest myself a minute or two.”

“Certainly, certainly—by all means. You will find that a more comfortable chair. Have you met with an accident?”

The stranger’s protruding eyes flashed with a singular brightness at the question. Then he sighed and again pressed the palm of his hand across his brow.

“Your courtesy, sir, undoubtedly deserves some explanation of the plight you have so generously relieved.” The man’s tone and phrasing indicated a person accustomed to put his thoughts into an elaborated word-structure for the attention of an audience. “I hardly think that accident is the correct description of my misfortune. I am the victim, sir, of a traitorous chain of circumstances, a chain of circumstances so strange as to be scarcely credible.”

“Indeed?” Mr. Gilchrist had reseated himself and now bent forward, his face alight with interest kindled by his guest’s last sentence. “If I can help you in any way, I shall be glad to do so.”

The stranger acknowledged the offer by a downward inclination of the head.

“Your great kindness of heart needs no further exposition, sir—it is self-evident. I have no words sufficient to thank you. I greatly fear, however, that I am beyond human help. A matter of a few hours is the utmost respite from my fate that I can expect. None the less, I am deeply grateful to you for this breathing-space.”

The stranger sighed again, and his countenance settled into a resigned melancholy.

“You make me curious,” said Mr. Gilchrist. “Of course, I don’t wish to intrude——”

The old gentleman raised his eyebrows and made a protesting movement with his hand.

“In all probability, sir, you will soon be made acquainted with a garbled newspaper version of the calamity which has befallen me. Its dreadful nature is bound to flare into publicity. It is useless, therefore, for me to

attempt to conceal it. If you care to hear the true version of a tragedy which every newsboy will be shouting to-morrow morning—a version stranger than the one counsel for defence and prosecution will adopt as a battleground for their wits—I will do my best to gratify your curiosity. I may say that it will be some comfort to me to know that one fellow human being—especially so kind-hearted a one as yourself—is acquainted with the real facts.”

“My dear sir!” began Mr. Gilchrist. “Surely—you are overwrought—an accident—I cannot believe——”

“I do not look like a murderer,” said the old gentleman, interrupting him, a pathetic little smile on his grave face. “Nevertheless I am one. It is the terrible truth, I assure you, sir. I am a murderer, a murderer trapped into crime by that chain of circumstances I spoke of. And I am a man that until to-day never wittingly took the life of any creature, however small.”

“But—my dear sir!” Mr. Gilchrist half rose from his chair. His guest waved him back into it.

“I am speaking the sober truth. You think that you are harbouring a madman. I am as sane as you. If you care to listen, I will relate the story, and when I have finished, if you desire to call in the local police, you are at liberty to do so. I give you my word that there will be no disturbance.”

Mr. Gilchrist sat back in his chair, half-fascinated, half-frightened.

“Go on,” he said briefly, not trusting himself to speak.

“I must first request your patience whilst I relate a few circumstances which, however remote they may appear from the terrible fact that has, among other things, made me your guest, are nevertheless intimately connected with it.

“I am a man in business for myself, in a small way, as the saying is. It might have been a larger way had not my intellectual activities been employed on subjects which I regard as of graver and deeper import than the purchase and sale of ephemeral commodities. For many years my mind has been more familiar with that region known briefly as the occult, than with the intricacies of terrestrial markets. I have striven earnestly to penetrate to

those great secrets which throb behind this earthly veil—with what success I need not specify. Suffice it that a small society of fellow-seekers after the Truth chose me as their president, a position I still hold.

“However small your acquaintance with this difficult subject, sir, you are probably aware—from hearsay, at least—that it has two great aspects, good and evil. The pure in heart may achieve a certain mastery over forces hidden from the multitude and use them for innocent or praiseworthy ends, such, for example, as establishing communication between our loved ones who have crossed the threshold and those who remain here. This is known vulgarly as white magic. But there is a black magic. It is known to every adept that it is possible—difficult, perhaps, but possible—for self-seeking men who have, perchance before they became perverted, had the key to these vast mysteries put in their hands, to control the mighty forces of which I have spoken and turn them, regardless of the suffering they inflict, to their personal advantage.

“It is possible, I say, though exceedingly rare. Few men, good or evil, are so fortunately endowed as to acquire a mastery over those forces for any purpose, and of those who have acquired it the majority are good. In any case they are rare. For myself, despite years of study and anxious striving, I have utterly failed to grasp those forces save in one or two trifling instances. This, by the way. For some time past I have been conscious—I cannot now tell you by what agency I became aware of it—that a group of men, greater adepts than any I have known, had in fact subjected forces terrible in their power and were using them to the danger of the world.”

The stranger turned his bulbous bright eyes to Mr. Gilchrist, who sat silent, gripped in a spell which was partly fear. In the moment or two of silence he heard that infernal clock ticking along with insistent industry. The stranger waited a brief space for some comment, and, receiving none, proceeded.

“You know, I have no doubt, that in the past—in the Middle Ages, for example—certain secret societies existed for purposes partly occult. I use *occult* as a synonym for the spiritual, for all that lies beyond the veil. Such, I may remark, were the Rosicrucians. Others are known to every student of the subject. One might almost class it as common historical knowledge. Few, however, suspect that to-day such a society, immeasurably more

powerful than the ordinary man considers possible, exists. It exists, and by some means it has penetrated to the very arcana of the spiritual world. It wields a power, by its control over forces that to call cosmic is to minimize, quite beyond ordinary resistance. And it wields that power for evil. I could point out several frightful disasters of recent times directly traceable to that society. It is a menace to the world!”

The old gentleman’s eyes flashed excitement at Mr. Gilchrist, who felt in a dream, scarcely knowing whether he was awake or sleeping.

“In one way only can it be overthrown—and it must be overthrown if our civilization is to continue. A group of men—equally adept but pure in soul—must meet and check each of their schemes and finally turn the immense forces, too great for ordinary comprehension, with which they work, against them, wiping them out of existence. Where that group of men is to be found, sir, I do not know; but if the disease is to find a remedy it must first be diagnosed. It was my duty, then, having discovered this monstrous danger, to proclaim it to the world. And, knowing full well the awful risks I ran, I did so. I contributed a long article to a periodical which exists for the diffusion of spiritual truth, and, so far as my knowledge permitted me, exposed the terrible enemy.

“I knew I invited disaster. Immediately I was warned—I cannot tell you by what channel the warning came to me—that the gravest perils threatened me. You, an ordinary man, whose most terrible engine of destruction possible to the imagination is a monster-gun battleship, can have no conception of the powers unchained against me. I cannot tell you with what fervour I strove to acquire control over forces that might befriend me, but in vain. Ever I was thwarted and baffled. I lost what little powers I had. Stripped of every means of defence, I waited in anguish for the blow to fall. What kind of blow it would be and whence it would come I could not tell. I knew only that it was inevitable. An undying enmity was all around me.

“I expected something cataclysmic, world-shaking. Fool that I was, I might have known better. ‘They’ are far too cunning thus to advertise their power needlessly. Day after day I dwelt in a world of terror, and nothing happened, save the complete interruption of any intercourse with the spiritual world. Malevolent forces had closed that door. I waited, each moment expecting

disaster, I knew not from what quarter, as a man waits in a dark wood for the lurking danger to spring at him. Suddenly—a week ago to-day—they commenced to act.”

He stopped to allow the import of his words to have full effect on his host. Mr. Gilchrist opened his mouth as if to speak, but he could not give utterance to a sound.

“I was walking, about six o’clock in the afternoon, along Piccadilly. The thoroughfare was crowded. I felt almost happy in the throng. My mind was for the moment distracted from its ever-present anxiety, and I had almost forgotten my danger. Suddenly a man jostled against me and thrust a piece of paper into my hand. I glanced at it and knew my doom was upon me. Here it is.”

He took a piece of paper from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Gilchrist. It bore only the words, in fat black type: “Prepare to meet thy Judge.”

“But,” said his host, grasping at the familiar in this strange story, “this is merely a leaflet circulated by some religious body.”

“I know,” said the stranger, smiling. “That is their cunning. It conveys little or nothing to an outsider. *But they knew I would know.* I looked around for the man. He had disappeared. The blood surged to my head; I reeled dizzily against a lamp-post and for a moment or two knew nothing. The shock, long expected though it was, was awful. After a brief space my brain cleared. My giddiness seemingly had not been noticed. The street looked normal. I shook myself and prepared to continue on my way. At that moment I happened to look round and saw a large white bulldog sitting on the pavement and regarding me fixedly. Even then—I *knew*. But I affected to take no notice of it and commenced to walk onward. The dog got up and followed me. I walked faster, but the dog was always a couple of feet behind my heels. I stopped. The dog stopped. I went on again. The dog went on again also. There was no doubt of its connection with me.

“I cannot make you realize, sir, the awful fear that surged up in me, mastering me, throttling me. I almost choked. The lights, the houses, the people swam in my vision. For some moments I walked along blind, unseeing. I trust that I am not a coward, that ordinary danger would find me

ready to meet it with some calmness of mind, but in contact now with the peril I had dreaded, such firmness as I have gave way. The seeming innocence of the manner in which my death-sentence was conveyed, the apparently innocuous character of the messenger they had sent, accentuated my terror. I felt that it was useless to appeal to my fellow-creatures for help. The certain reply would have been an imputation of madness. Above all, the purpose of the dog baffled me. It seemed impossible that my enemies, with all the vast forces at their command, should use so petty an instrument to strike at me. I could not even imagine in what manner the dog was to bring about my annihilation. The disparity of means to the end seemed grotesque.

“So strongly did I feel this that I half-persuaded myself that I was under an illusion, that the dog was merely a stray that had followed me for a few yards in the hope of finding a new home. Walking along, looking straight in front of me, for I dared not turn my head, I was almost comforted by a semi-belief that the dog was no longer in pursuit. Presently, with an effort of will, I looked back—to find, as reason told me I should, the animal still at my heels, padding along with its nose to the ground.

“I stopped, more from a suspension of faculties than from any desire to do so, and the dog stopped also. It sat calmly down, looking at me, and I could almost fancy a quiet, diabolic smile on the loose, ugly, dripping jaws. We exchanged a steadfast gaze—I can see it now; its eyes were red-rimmed, bleary, cunning. Standing there, I strove to divine its purpose. Suddenly it flashed upon me. The dog was tracking me to my home. Over the trail it had gone once it would go again, this time accompanied by the active agents of my foes. Why this roundabout method of reaching me was adopted will no doubt seem a puzzle to you, sir—it is so to me. But I was and am convinced of the fact.

“No sooner had I realized this,” pursued the old gentleman, “than I thought over means of ridding myself of it. The obvious way was simple. I walked along the streets in quest of a policeman. The dog got quietly on its legs again and followed. Some hundred yards or so farther on I saw an officer and approached him. It was at the corner where the street flows into Piccadilly Circus, and the open space was a maelstrom of traffic, starred overhead by the lamps which were beginning to glow against the darkening sky. I had to wait an agonized minute or two at the policeman’s elbow

whilst he set two fussy and nervous old ladies upon their right way. At last he turned to me, and a radiance of hope commenced to break over the dark tumult of my mind as I explained to him that I was being followed by a stray dog and wished to give it into his charge.

“He looked patiently down at me from his towering bulk of body, nodded, and asked: ‘Where’s the dog?’ I turned to point it out. To my astonishment, it had disappeared. No shape of dog was anywhere visible. The policeman’s eyes rested upon me with so questioning a look that I felt uncomfortable. I could divine that he was thinking me deranged or intoxicated. My mind was in a state of bewilderment also at the sudden disappearance of the creature that a moment before had hung at my heels with all the quiet persistency of Fate. I stammered, strove to explain, found myself entangled in nervous foolishness rendered worse by the slightly contemptuous, steady gaze of the policeman. I leaped desperately out by the common exit from such embarrassments and tipped the policeman with the only coin I happened to have in my pocket. It was a half-crown. He smiled as I made off quickly, my ears burning.

“Thank God, at any rate I was freed from my enemy. With a bounding lightness of spirits I plunged into the vortex of traffic and made my way across the Circus. I was supremely happy. I remember smiling round at the garish lights, at the thronging people, at the poor, at the wealthy, at the flower-girls, at the vicious. I was glad, unutterably glad, like a prisoner just reprieved, to be among my kind, of whatever sort. I am not musical, but I found myself singing a trivial melody, picked up somewhere from a barrel-organ.

“Thus I proceeded on my way, going eastward, making, in fact, for the station, where I take train to my home some few miles farther down the line than this.

“I was somewhere in the Strand when suddenly I heard a girl who passed me say to her companion: ‘Oh, what an ugly beast!’ I turned sharply, an ice-cold hand clutching at my heart, and saw to my horror the white dog again at my heels. He looked up at me, and I fled, with a cry, down a side street. The dog followed easily.

“In wild terror I ran as fast as my strength, never great, would permit. It was useless, of course. The dog found no difficulty in keeping up with me. I stopped at last from sheer exhaustion, and the creature seemed to grin at my distress. Had a policeman been visible, I would have tried again to hand it over to him, convinced though I was that the attempt would be in vain.

“One means of escape presented itself to me, but I could not avail myself of it. I might have called a taxicab, but I had no money. I ought to have tried that way first.

“A wild rage seized me. I rushed at the dog, kicking at him furiously. The animal dodged me with ease. I could not touch him. I ran on again.

“Thus, now running in mad panic, now walking with the slow deliberation of settled despair, I continued on my way, and always the dog followed. Why I did not go in another direction and throw the animal off the scent, I do not know. My one leading idea was to get home, and perhaps subconsciously I knew that, whatever stratagems I tried, the dog was not to be shaken from his trail.

“I was almost demented with terror when unexpectedly salvation showed itself. My station was not many hundred yards distant—I was in Broad Street, I think—when suddenly there was a snarl and a furious barking behind me. A large dog, belonging to some passer-by, had sprung at my enemy, and they were locked in desperate fight. In a few seconds a crowd collected. I saw a policeman hastening up. It was my chance. With all that remained to me of strength I ran toward the station.

“I heard voices calling after me, but I heeded them not. The sounds of angry strife continued, muffled, and lent me hope and speed. Calling up every energy, I raced along, sped down the approach, saw that it wanted but the fraction of a minute to seven-thirty, dashed through the gate, which clanged behind me, and flung myself into the train for home just as it started. I thought I was safe. As I put my hand out of the window to shut the door, I heard a commotion at the gate. I looked out and saw the dog struggling with the officials, vainly striving to leap the barrier. We moved out of the station, leaving him behind.”

He stopped, looking at his host. Mr. Gilchrist gasped and nodded. The stranger continued:

“For a few exultant minutes I thought that I was saved. But presently, as I calmed and my reason began to work, I realized that ‘they’ had gained their point. They had only to watch and wait. On the morrow a human emissary of my foes would accompany the dog over the trail, starting at the same

time, arriving within a few minutes of seven-thirty at that station platform. From that the direction, at least, of my home could easily be deduced. Convinced that sooner or later I should be journeying on that line, they had only to watch and wait till I appeared. I knew that there was no hope for me, that my doom was certain.

“I reached home, in a turmoil of fears, and fell ill. For a week I did not leave the house, and all through my indisposition the spectre of that white dog dominated not only my dreams but every waking thought. I could see it looking out at me from under the furniture, sitting with patient eyes on my every movement, in corners of the house, barring my way to the door, if I wished to enter or leave a room. It haunted me, kept me at an excruciating point of mental anguish.

“This morning, however, I felt better, and my business imperatively claiming my attention after a week of absence, I decided to go to town.

“I left the house with the feeling of a man who goes out to execution. Nevertheless, human nature revolted at the prospect of dying without resistance, and I went armed. In my pocket was a revolver which had belonged to my father. He had fought in the Indian Mutiny. I was born in India myself. Some of his fighting instincts arose in me as I walked down to the station fingering the weapon in my pocket.

“Dread oppressed me as I entered the train and journeyed cityward. I felt that I was going to meet my fate. None the less I went about my business, and all day nothing occurred, save moments of fear, to alarm me. I made up my mind to return by a midday train—would that I had done so!—though perhaps it would have made no difference. So great a press of work awaited me, however, that it was impossible. One hindrance after another stood in my way, and with rapidly rising fears I was forced to remain and see the time slip away until the only train that remained to me was the seven-thirty.

“My office is a little room at the top of a large building. I keep no clerk. Most or all the other workers in the building had left while I was still writing letters, and the solitude which broods over the city in the evening weighed more and more oppressively on me every minute. My nerves were already at stretch when I heard something thrust into the letter-box. I jumped to my feet, trembling with premonitions. I heard no footfall along

the passage. After a moment, when my heart seemed to stop, I went to the box, and to my horror—drew out a piece of paper identical with the one pushed into my hand a week before. It bore the same solemn words: ‘Prepare to meet thy Judge,’ and nothing more. I believe I reeled and staggered. I know that in a flash of frenzy I flung the door wide and rushed into the passage. I could have sworn—I could swear it now—that I saw the white dog slink round the corner a few yards along the corridor.

“Trembling in every limb, my head on fire, I hastily locked up the office and made my way to the station. The building seemed quite deserted as I left it. I saw no sign of the white dog. Choosing the most frequented thoroughfares, I soon reached the terminus without any cause for alarm. I remember that my heart beat so violently as to make me feel faint as I passed the barrier. I scarcely dared look for the dog, but with an effort of will I did so and assured myself it was not there.

“I chose an unoccupied carriage and settled myself in it—waiting, with throbbing anxiety, for the few remaining minutes to slip away before the train was due to start. Those minutes seemed vast spaces of time in which the movement of the world had stopped, waiting for some catastrophe. At last I heard the bell ring. For one wild, exultant moment I thought that I was safe.

“Then, just as the train commenced to move, I saw a man running along the platform, holding a dog in leash. The animal strained powerfully at the lead, his nose to the ground. On the instant, I recognized it—the white dog! The door of my compartment was thrown open, and man and dog leaped in. A porter slammed the door after them, and we were moving fast out of the station. Short of throwing myself on the rails there was no escape possible.

“The man was dressed in the garb of a clergyman. He was a large, powerfully built fellow, strength of mind and body marked all over him. He nodded and smiled at me as he drew a long breath to recover his wind and sat down. The dog slunk under the seat, where it lay watching me with steady eyes.

“I cowered in my corner in terror. Had I wished to speak, I could not have done so. The sight of one of my all-powerful foes, visible for the first time, fascinated me. I could not take my eyes from him. Occasionally he looked

up at me from his newspaper with a slow, quiet smile which seemed to say: 'All right, my friend. I'll deal with you presently.'

"The train clanged and banged over the switches and gathered speed for its rush into the dark night and the loneliness of the countryside. Minute after minute I sat there in panic, watching him, agonized every now and then by that terrible sure smile with which he glanced at me. The silence in the carriage was the oppressive silence which awaits a tragedy to break it with a lightning-flash.

"Mile after mile the train raced on, and nothing happened. The suspense was maddening me. My lips were dry. My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. I could feel a cold sweat beading my forehead. I took out my handkerchief to wipe it, and a piece of paper fluttered to the ground, close to his feet. I recognized it. It was the second warning. Before I could move, the man bent to pick it up. He handed it to me with that meaning smile and said, with awful quietness: 'Are you prepared?'

"I started with terror and felt something hurt the hand which all the time had been gripping the revolver in my pocket. It was the tense pressure of my finger on the weapon.

"The man nodded and smiled at me again. I gasped, feeling certain that my hour had come. With the fascination of a man trapped and bound, I saw him bend sideways and put his hand into his hip pocket. Instantly—I know not how—there was a deafening report in the carriage, and a film of smoke floated between me and him. He sank to the floor. He rolled slightly with his last gasp, his arm outflung. I had killed him! I stood fixed with horror. In his hand was—not a revolver, but a tobacco-pipe.

"For a moment my senses left me. I knew nothing. I was brought to consciousness by a sharp pain in my leg. The white dog held me in a savage grip, growling in a manner frightful to hear. Frenzy overcame me; I kicked and fought in vain. Then, suddenly recollecting the revolver in my hand, I pressed it to his head and fired. I was free. Free? No, trapped in the swaying carriage splashed with blood, its floor heaped with the large body of the man I had killed. The train was racing along at top speed. In five or ten minutes more we should stop and the crime would be discovered. Mad with horror, I rushed to the door, opened it, flung myself into the black night. I

remember the roar of the train passing me as I rolled down the embankment, have an impression of a bright light whisked away, and then I lost consciousness.

“When my senses returned, I saw the light in your house. Clambering over a wall, I made my way to it, fainting, scarce able to walk, but frantic, it seemed to me, for help. You kindly took me in. For the moment I have respite, but ‘they’ have triumphed. By their cunning manipulation of the forces behind Life, I have been tricked into murdering one who to all outward semblance was an innocent man. In a day or two I shall be standing in the dock, and finally my life will be violently cut short by my fellow-men, accompanied by every circumstance of ignominy. Fully, indeed, are they revenged!

“Now, sir, you know my story; and if, after hearing it, you care to call in the local police——”

* * * * *

At that moment there was a sound of carriage-wheels on the road. They stopped just in front of the house. The stranger sprang to his feet. His eyes swept round the room in a swift, panic-stricken quest for concealment. Then, crying: “No! They shall not take me! They shall not take me!” he rushed from the room.

Mr. Gilchrist, still spellbound by the story to which he had been so intently listening, stood for a moment as though paralyzed, staring at the open door. A familiar whistle from outside, a cheery call—“Gilchrist! Gilchrist!”—gave him back his faculties. It was Williamson—thank God!

Mr. Gilchrist ran out into the hall, found the front door still open from the stranger’s abrupt departure, peered out into the dark night intensified by the two staring eyes of Williamson’s gig-lamps.

“Come in, Williamson!” he called. His voice was joyous with relief. As he spoke, he heard swift feet upon the gravel! The words had barely left his mouth when a violent collision knocked him breathless against the doorpost. It was the stranger, back again!

“The white dog! The white dog!” he gasped in terror.

Mr. Gilchrist clutched at him and fought for breath to speak.

“But, my dear sir——” he began, irritably. This was absurd! Of course there was a dog—the harmless old white bull which was Williamson’s invariable companion. He tried to explain, but the stranger, tugging frantically to get free, would listen to nothing. With the strength of a madman he wrenched himself from Gilchrist’s detaining grasp and fled into the house.

Williamson, preceded by his old dog, came up the gravel path.

“All alone?” he asked, cheerily.

Mr. Gilchrist hesitated, and then, obeying an obscure impulse, lied.

“Er—yes,” he replied. “Come in.”

The absurdity of the falsehood occurred to him at once. Cursing his folly, he tried to think of some plausible explanation as he led his friend to the dining-room, where, of course, the stranger’s presence would stultify his ridiculous statement. He glanced round the room as he entered. It was empty! Where, then? His eyes rested on a suspicious bulging of the window-curtain.

He waved his friend to a chair.

“Sit down,” he said, with an assumption of normality. “What’s the news?”

“There’s news, right enough,” said Williamson, dropping into the proffered seat. “Terrible business on the seven-thirty to-night. Poor old Hepplewhite—shot dead—he and his dog. Ghastly struggle, evidently—blood over everything!”

“Good God!” ejaculated Gilchrist, chilled with a sudden horror. He had given no real credence to his visitor’s fantastic story. This brutal contact with the reality paralyzed him in an awful terror at his own false position. What was to be done? He strove to think—played for time. “And the murderer?” he asked thickly.

“Escaped—for the moment,” replied Williamson in a tone that suggested confidence in the police. “Here, Tiger! Come here!” He addressed the dog,

which was sniffing uneasily about the room.

The dog came up to him obediently, wagging his stump of tail. He carried in his mouth a piece of folded paper which he had picked up and now presented to his master. Gilchrist recognized it with a little shock as his friend opened it.

“Prepare to meet thy Judge!” Williamson read out with mock solemnity, and smiled in superior tolerance of the evangelist enthusiasm which had printed the leaflet.

Gilchrist shuddered and thought suddenly of the terrified man behind the curtain, dimly realizing the significance to that overwrought brain of these fatal words. He glanced at the betraying bulge, saw it move slightly.

Williamson smiled down into the intelligent eyes of his old dog.

“Tiger, old fellow,” he said jocularly, “you’ve made a mistake—you’ve brought this message to the wrong man. It is evidently meant for the person who shot poor old Hepplewhite. Here”—he held it out to the dog—“take it to him. *Find him!*”

The dog took the paper in his jaws, wagged his tail with a comprehending look up at his master, and ran, following the scent which was on the paper, across the room. He stopped, pawing at the bulged curtain.

Williamson stared after him in amusement.

“Is he there, Tiger?” he said, humouring the intelligent animal. “Have you found him?”

Gilchrist stood speechless. What was coming next?

The curtain was flung suddenly aside. The old gentleman stood revealed, stepped forward into the room. His bulbous eyes were unwholesomely bright.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I surrender. You have won. I might, of course, shoot you”—he took a revolver from his pocket—“as I shot your confederate in the train to-night. But I recognize that it would be useless. Your Society would raise up yet other avengers——”

Both Gilchrist and Williamson had shrunk back in alarm from that brandished revolver—were unable, in their astonishment, to utter a word. They could only stare, bewildered.

The old gentleman looked down at the dog which still offered him the paper.

“I understand—perfectly,” he said, with a grim appreciation of some subtlety which eluded them. “In a better cause, I should admire the ingenuity with which you have utilized means which are apparently of the simplest. I do homage to your powers, gentlemen. Or perhaps you yourselves are only half-conscious tools of that occult force you think you control—that occult force which has, with such singular completeness, worked my ruin.” There was a sneer in his voice. He turned to Gilchrist. “As for you, sir, I congratulate you on your faculty of dissimulation. You gulled me excellently well. I can only bow in acknowledgment of the supreme irony with which you beguiled me into telling you the miserable story which, of course, you already knew far better than I. I do not grudge you your triumph. It was superbly well planned. You held me without suspicion whilst you awaited the arrival—for the last time—of the symbol of my doom—*the white dog!*” His smile was an illumination of savage sarcasm.

There was a pause of silence in which Williamson glanced inquiringly at his friend.

The old gentleman laughed in a mirthless mockery which was hideous to hear.

“But now, face to face at last with you whose monstrous plot I was at least able to detect, if I could not baffle it—I yet cheat you!” he cried. “I cheat you of your complete vengeance! You thought to condemn me to the ignominy of a murderer’s trial!” He laughed again. “I elude you—thus!”

With a quick movement he raised the revolver and fired.

The two friends, after the moment in which they recovered from the shock, bent over his body.

“I don’t understand!” said Williamson, horror-stricken and mystified. “Who and what was he?”

Gilchrist answered him in one terse word.

“Mad,” he replied, pushing away the white dog, which sniffed innocently at the body.

A POINT OF ETHICS

He leaned forward across the flower-decked dinner-table and raised his glass.

“To many happy anniversaries, darling!”

The pretty woman he addressed raised her glass also. Gowned in a simple evening robe whose discreet *décolletage* revealed shoulders still youthfully rounded, she was the incarnation of that delicate refinement which lifts beauty into charm with one deft touch. The single dark rose at her breast was its present symbol. It was also, indubitably, the deliberate symbol of something more. The large, emotional eyes which smiled upon him were radiant with happiness.

“*Many* anniversaries, Jack!” she echoed, shaking her head slowly in emphasis, her gaze in his. “All as happy as this—all of us together!”

Both turned, as with a common thought, to the demure little five-year-old girl who watched them with grave eyes from her place at the dinner-table. She smiled at their smiles, confidently.

“I’m as fond of her as you are, Evelyn,” he said, with evident sincerity. “Never fear! I couldn’t love her more if she were my own daughter.”

“You couldn’t be kinder to her, Jack,” said the young woman, in affectionate agreement. “Oh, my dear, we are very fortunate, both of us, Dorothy and I! Without you!” she sighed. “A whole year! A whole year of perfect happiness! I thought I was happy before—but I did not know what happiness was—until it began a year ago to-day!”

He smiled.

“Nor I, Evelyn. Looking back, it seems that I only began to live on the day I married you.” He glanced around him. “A year ago!—You were right, dear, to have our little dinner here to-night, and not at River Lawn. You were

right to keep this place going—it reminds us both of our starting-point.” His tone warmed with affection. “But then, you are always right!”

She beamed with gratitude.

“I wanted to keep it because it was *my* home—it was what I brought to you. You gave me our home at River Lawn, Jack—and you know how I love it. But this—this is where you came to me, and it’s all sacred to me. I couldn’t bear to change a thing in it. Besides,” she added, smilingly lifting her argument out of sentimentality, “it is really an economy, isn’t it? With your work we must have a city home as well. Why change this flat for another which would perhaps be less convenient, and which we should have to refurnish?”

“Quite,” he agreed. “I gave into you about it long ago. But I didn’t like it at first, I’ll admit.”

“You are too big a man, Jack, dear, to be jealous of the past. And I am sure Harry would not mind, if he could know.” Her eyes looked past him, dreamily reminiscent. “Poor old Harry!” she said, after a little silence.

“I should like to have met him,” he said, conversationally, getting on with his fish. “He must have been a good chap.”

“Oh, he was! I wish I could have got some news of him—of how he was killed. No one in the regiment seemed to know anything. It is dreadful to go out like that—no one knowing how!” She shuddered. Then, with an instinctive movement to break the spell of unwanted memories, she pressed the bell for the maid to clear the course from the table.

The conversation resumed on the everyday matters of his profession. She thoroughly identified herself with her husband’s interests and discussed them, as was her wont, with intelligent sympathy. She was one of those women who stimulate all the latent potentialities of their men. He—it was obvious from the clear-cut features—was both resolute and clever; a man who would go far. Already Satterthwaite was a name in the Courts for which clients would pay big fees.

They were discussing the important case of the day when suddenly she looked round, startled.

“Jack! Someone has come in—or gone out. I heard the hall door slam!”

“Imagination, my dear,” he replied, smiling sceptically. “The maids are busy—they would not go out. We should have heard the bell if there were a visitor. No one has a key except ourselves——”

The words were scarcely uttered when the door behind them opened. The child, who sat facing it, stared in amazement for a second, and then slipped off her chair and ran toward the intruder with a wild shout of joy.

“*Daddie!*”

Mr. and Mrs. Satterthwaite sprang up from their seats, turned to see a youngish man, clad in an ill-fitting lounge suit, standing in the doorway. The young woman clutched at the back of her chair, her eyes wide in terror.

“Harry!” She breathed the cry almost voicelessly in her stupefaction. “*Harry’s ghost!*”

Satterthwaite snatched back the child, who had recoiled from the flaming anger in the stranger’s face.

“What does this mean?” asked the intruder, fiercely, ignoring the little one. “Evelyn!” The summons was uttered with outraged but confident authority.

She shrank back, covering her face.

“No!” She spoke as to herself. “No!—It can’t be! He’s dead—he’s dead!”

Satterthwaite intervened, his jaw setting hard, the level tone of his voice evidently sternly controlled.

“May I ask who you are?” he enquired, coldly.

The stranger faced him. Anger met anger in their eyes.

“Certainly. I am Harry Tremaine. And perhaps you will be good enough to tell me who the devil you are—and what you are doing with my wife in my flat?” The man’s voice trembled with fury. His face worked with passion. He took a step toward the young woman.

She drew quickly away from him, sheltered herself behind her companion, whence she stared at him with fascinated eyes.

“My name is Satterthwaite—and I am dining with my wife!”

“Your—wife——!” He repeated the words slowly as though scarcely crediting such audacious impudence of assertion. Then he laughed in harsh mockery. “Don’t talk nonsense!” He looked down at the child at Satterthwaite’s side. “Dorothy!—come here!”

Satterthwaite restrained the child’s movement of obedience with a firm grip. “Excuse me,” he said quietly, “I think the youngster is better absent from this discussion.” He led the bewildered little girl to the door, opened it, and called for the nurse. “Put Miss Dorothy to bed!” he ordered. “And then all of you go out for the evening. Go to the movies. Here!” He held out a note. “Have a good time—and get out at once! Mrs. Satterthwaite and I want to be alone in the flat this evening.”

He closed the door and returned to the others. The stranger, dominated for the moment by his quiet, masterful manner, had made no movement to interfere, stood, as he had left him, by the doorway. But his eyes were fixed still wrathfully upon the young woman who stared back at him, fascinated, clutching at the table for support. Her lips were ashen, parted in a soundless terror.

Satterthwaite turned to her.

“Do you know this man, Evelyn?”

She made an effort, answered.

“It—it is Harry—or his ghost!”

The stranger laughed in bitter scorn.

“What foolery!—Don’t pretend I died since yesterday!”

Amazement came into both their faces.

“Since yesterday?” they repeated in one bewildered echo.

The stranger frowned.

“What is there strange about that?” he asked, irritably, impressed, nevertheless, by their evidently genuine astonishment.

“Where—where were you yesterday, Harry?” asked the young woman unsteadily, as though scarcely daring to probe some awful mystery.

He laughed shortly in impatience.

“Why, of course——” he began in confident tones. He stopped, a baffled look suddenly in his eyes. “Of course——” he began again, less confidently. Then he gave it up. “I—I can’t remember—it’s funny!—I can’t remember where I was yesterday——” He bit his lower lip, looked around him slowly with bent and puzzled brows, plainly uneasy at this unexpected forgetfulness. “But of course I must have been here!” He put an end to his embarrassment by dogmatic assertion.

Satterthwaite contemplated him for a moment with eyes that searched him to the depths.

“H’m!” he said, meditatively. “There’s something extraordinary about this!—Won’t you sit down, Mr. Tremaine?” He pointed to a chair. “Let us discuss this matter amicably—it’s not so simple as you think, and hostility won’t help us.”

Tremaine hesitated a moment, a flicker of angry revolt in his eyes. But there was a note in Satterthwaite’s quiet tones which more than invited compliance, and he seated himself in the chair with a shrug of the shoulders which justified him in himself.

“This is my flat—and my wife,” he said, “anyway!” The assertion sounded curiously weak.

The young woman watched him speechlessly.

Satterthwaite caressed his chin with that little gesture which was habitual to him when commencing the cross-examination of a witness. He began in the suave, deliberate tones familiar to the Courts.

“What is the last thing you can remember, Mr. Tremaine?” he asked.

Tremaine stared at him.

“I—I think——” he began, hesitatingly, almost automatically responsive to Satterthwaite’s seductive voice. Then he stopped, the baffled look again in his eyes. “What the devil has it got to do with you?” he demanded, in exasperation.

Satterthwaite was unruffled.

“It has a great deal to do with me, Mr. Tremaine,” he said, “and with all of us here. So please try to answer my questions.”

Tremaine’s eyes blazed at him.

“What right have you to question me?—What are you doing here at all, that’s what I want to know?”

Satterthwaite soothed him with a gesture.

“We’re coming to that presently. Answer my questions now—and afterward you can put any questions to me that you like. Now—try and remember!”

Tremaine relapsed sullenly. It was evident that he was secretly conscious of the inferiority in which his absence of memory placed him. His eyes sought the young woman as though to elicit some key-point of remembrance, came back empty.

“Well?” he said, with suspicious ill-humour.

Satterthwaite was courtesy itself.

“Now, think! Carry your mind back! You were in the Army, weren’t you?”

“Of course!”

“You remember that—perfectly?”

“Yes—of course I do!” His tone was impatient.

“Good! You remember being in France?”

“I should think so!”

“In what part of France were you last?”

“In the Argonne.”

“Right! Now—when did you leave France?”

Tremaine hesitated, bit his lip. The eyes went blank again.

“I—I can’t remember.”

“Do you remember leaving France at all?—Do you remember the voyage?”

There was a silence whilst Tremaine evidently made an effort of memory.

“No,” he said, at last, “I cannot remember it.”

“Ah!—Now, what is the last thing you can remember in France? You were in the trenches, I suppose?”

“No—we had left the trenches behind us. We were fighting in the forest—I can remember that—a sort of ravine with splintered trees—we were attacking——” A new note of interest came into his voice, a satisfaction at recovering these memories. “By George, yes! Of course, there was a terrific attack on—we were going for the Kriemhild Line. What happened——?” He hesitated. “I was running forward—the Boche was shelling like mad——” He seemed to be visualizing a scene, his face screwed up, his eyes narrowed, his lower lip between his teeth. “I saw a whole bunch go down—and then——” He stopped.

“And then?”

“A sheet of flame. I—I can’t remember anything more. I—I must have been hit, I suppose——”

“I see. Now, can you remember what you were wearing just then?”

“I was in shirt and breeches. My tunic had been torn off the day before—breaking through the undergrowth. I remember that perfectly.”

Satterthwaite nodded.

“And your identity disc?”

“I’d lost that the day before also—I remember thinking I should have to get a new one.”

Satterthwaite smiled.

“We’re coming to it,” he said, encouragingly. “Now—just before you came into this flat, where were you?”

“In a street-car. I got off at the corner in the usual way, and let myself in with my key.”

“You had that key in France, I suppose?”

“Yes, I had it with a few others on a ring in my breeches-pocket. I kept it for the day I should come back.”

“Quite. Now—before you got into that street-car, where were you? Where had you been?”

Tremaine hesitated again.

“I can’t for the life of me remember!—I—I sort of woke up in that street-car, as if I had been to sleep on my way home. I remember looking out and thinking to myself—of course, that’s where I am—nearly home. It seemed quite natural.”

Obviously, the man himself was puzzled. There was a short silence, and then Satterthwaite spoke again.

“And you remember nothing of what you did between the day you attacked the Kriemhild Line—and finding yourself in the street-car?”

Tremaine frowned in a desperate effort to collect his thoughts.

“No,” he said at last. “It’s an extraordinary thing but my mind seems a complete blank!”

“Can you remember the date of that attack upon the Kriemhild Line—the day you saw that sheet of flame go up?”

“October tenth,” came the reply without hesitation.

“What year?”

“1918, of course.”

Satterthwaite smiled.

“Do you know what year this is?”

The other stared at him, a sudden fear in his eyes.

“Not 1919?” he cried. “Don’t say I’ve lost a year?”

“1920!”

“Good God!” He jumped up, gripped in a panic that drove the blood out of his face, and switched round to his wife. “Evelyn! Where have I been? Haven’t I been here all this time?”

She took a deep breath.

“I see you to-day for the first time since you sailed in April, 1918, Harry,” she said, steadily.

He stood swaying on his feet, hand pressed to his brow, through a long moment of realization. No one spoke. Then he dropped his hand, turned to his wife again.

“And you?—When——?” he indicated Satterthwaite with a helpless gesture, “when did this happen?”

She met his eyes bravely.

“I married—Jack—a year ago to-day!” she answered. The effort of her speech was obvious.

“But you couldn’t!” he exclaimed. “It’s bigamy!”

Satterthwaite went without a word to the escritoire standing in a corner of the room and took out a paper. He came back with it, handed it silently to Tremaine. It was an official War Department notification.

Tremaine stared at it.

“My God!” he muttered, appalled.

“You are dead, my friend!” said Satterthwaite, grimly. “Killed in action, October 10th, 1918.”

Again there was a long silence. Tremaine sank heavily into a chair, stared straight in front of him. An expression of combativeness came slowly into his face, his jaw set. At last he uttered an aggressive grunt.

“Well, I’m not!” he said. “I’m very much alive. So that’s that! Whatever has happened, I’ve come back! This is my flat—and my wife and child. And you can clear out just as soon as you like!” His eyes flamed hostility as they met Satterthwaite’s. “Quit!”

His wife sprang forward.

“Harry!” she cried, imploring she scarcely knew what.

He turned to her.

“I’ll talk to you presently,” he said, in a voice of smouldering resentment. “I’m not blaming you—but I guess you might have waited a bit. We’ll square this out by ourselves when he’s gone.”

Satterthwaite smiled, and his smile was by no means acquiescent.

“I guess you’ll have to wait for that, Mr. Tremaine,” he said, in even tones that had an edge to them. “I’m not going just yet.”

Tremaine glared up at him.

“What?” he cried, incredulously.

“I’m not going,” repeated Satterthwaite. “You don’t realize the situation, my friend. This woman has been living with me for a year as my wife. I do not propose to make her name a public scandal. Officially, you are dead. Well—remain dead!”

Tremaine laughed mockingly.

“And leave you my wife, my child—all this!” He waved his hand round the flat. “Thank you!”

Satterthwaite shrugged his shoulders.

“I’ll buy your property of you at your own valuation. Your will has been proved. The amount of your estate, plus interest, shall be refunded to you. I’ll give you, in addition, any reasonable amount as compensation. You are the victim of circumstances, my friend—but, as a straight man, there’s only one thing for you to do. You can’t ruin this woman’s life!”

Both men, following their thought, turned to glance at her. She stood tense, deathly pale, looking from one to the other, evidently in an atrocious dilemma, unable to utter a word.

Tremaine swung round again to his rival, sneered scornfully.

“What kind of fool do you take me for? Do you expect me to give up my wife and child, my home—give up my whole existence and pretend to be someone else—just to oblige you? You must be mad!—I’ve come back and here I am—come to stay,” he ended, doggedly, “to pick up my life again!”

There was a shade of sympathy in Satterthwaite’s eyes as he contemplated him.

“But can’t you see that it’s impossible to pick it up again where you left off?” he said. “Can’t you see that as Harry Tremaine you can never be happy again? You can’t get away from what has happened—it will always be there, haunting you—and you’ll be reminded of it—pointed at. The other women will make your wife’s life a hell in the thousand little subtle ways they have. And besides, *what have you been doing for the past two years?* You’ve been living somewhere—as somebody. That existence will always be waiting in the background—ready to spring out on you—and you can’t guard against it, for you don’t even know what it was!”

The young woman bent forward.

“Can’t you remember, Harry?—Can’t you think where you’ve been—what you’ve been doing?” she asked, anxiously. “Oh!” she added, with a little despairing gesture, “I only want to do what is right—what is best for all of us!”

Tremaine shook his head.

“I haven’t the remotest idea of where I was at lunchtime to-day!” he said. “I may have come straight out of hospital, for all I know.”

Satterthwaite nodded, humouring him.

“You may—of course,” he said. “But it’s highly improbable. Two years is a long time to stay in hospital. Almost certainly you have been living somewhere, in new relationships. Be reasonable, my friend. Can’t you see that the only thing is to sell out to me—and clear off, go right away—start a fresh life?”

Tremaine revolted.

“I’m damned if I do!” he replied. “Right is right—you can’t get away from it. I’m Harry Tremaine—and I’ve come back to my wife and child—to my own existence—and I’ve got a right to them!” He rose from his chair. “Enough of this talk! I’m master of this flat—and I give you just time enough to pack up your traps. Get a move on!” His voice quivered with an anger he instinctively accentuated as a protection against the other man’s arguments. “I want to be alone with my wife! Get out!” He moved forward menacingly.

Satterthwaite did not stir.

“I think not,” he said, steadily. “Not like that.”

Tremaine’s anger flamed up in him.

“Get out!—or I’ll throw you out!”

Satterthwaite smiled.

“If you wish to fight for her——?” he said, grimly inviting.

With a savage snarl, Tremaine tore off his coat.

His wife sprang forward in terrified appeal.

“Harry!”

He flung her off brutally.

“Stand out of this!” he said. “This is a man’s fight! I’ll deal with you afterward!”

An atmosphere of primitive passion filled the room. She cowered away, watching the rivals with fascinated eyes, like a squaw for whom two braves unsheath their knives. Both were big, powerful men. Satterthwaite made no movement while Tremaine flung aside his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves—but his eyes were warily alert and his fists clenched massively at the end of the arms held loosely ready for sudden action.

With a savage bellow of maddened hatred, Tremaine rushed at him blindly. Satterthwaite’s right arm jerked up to guard—and like lightning his left fist shot out from the shoulder, crashed full between his adversary’s eyes. Tremaine went over backward, arms in the air, his head striking the table with an impact that shattered glass and crockery, rolled over to the floor. He lay motionless.

His wife had darted to his side, bent over him.

“Oh, Jack!” she cried, looking up to the victor. “You haven’t killed him?”

Satterthwaite bent over him also.

“No,” he said. “Get some water!”

She took the jug from the table and Satterthwaite splashed his face. Tremaine drew a difficult breath, opened his eyes, looked up and around him, dazed.

“Where am I?” he asked, feebly.

“You’re all right,” said Satterthwaite, bathing away the blood which trickled down his nose. “Don’t worry.”

Still half-stunned, the stricken man made an abortive, ill-coördinated effort to rise.

“Here, let me help you,” said Satterthwaite. “Get into this chair.” He lifted him up, supported him to a big armchair by the fireplace, deposited him in it.

“Thanks,” said Tremaine, feebly, “—extremely good of you.” He looked around him with vacant eyes. “Where am I? What happened?—I—I was in a street-car——”

Satterthwaite shot a swift glance of intelligence to the young woman who was, after all, his wife as well. She drew near, her breath held at a sudden possibility, her eyes searching the face of this man who but a moment before had so uncompromisingly claimed her. Had he——?

“Don’t worry about anything now,” said Satterthwaite, kindly. “You’ll feel better in a moment.”

His erstwhile adversary smiled up vacantly into his face.

“I’m better now,” he said, passing his hand gropingly across his brow. Then, as he removed it, he stared stupidly at the blood upon his fingers. “What happened?” he asked, weakly. “How did I get here? I was in a street-car—was there an accident?—I remember the street-car——”

“You’ll remember all about it presently,” Satterthwaite assured him, watching him narrowly with critical eyes.

“I suppose you brought me here,” he continued in his dazed voice. “Very kind of you—I’m much obliged.” He looked round, perceived the young woman with the water-jug in her hand, and smiled feebly. “Your wife, I presume?—I’m very sorry, madam,” he added, politely, “to put you to so much inconvenience.”

She stared at him for a moment as though suspecting his sincerity, and then turned away her head, a wild expression in the eyes that sought Satterthwaite’s face. He signalled back discretion.

“Here’s your coat,” he said, holding it out. “Let me help you on with it.”

Tremaine gazed at it, obviously puzzled, and then glanced down to his rolled-back shirt-sleeves.

“Was there a row, then?” he asked, mystified. “A fight?”

“There was a little trouble,” conceded Satterthwaite.

“And you took me out of it, I suppose?” he said, with genuine gratitude. “I am exceedingly obliged to you, sir—going to this bother for a complete stranger.”

“Not at all—not at all,” said Satterthwaite, easily. “Here, let me help you.”

The assistance was accepted. Tremaine rose shakily to his feet, stood docilely while Satterthwaite guided his arms into the sleeves of his coat. There was a curiously subtle difference in his expression; quite another, a gentler, more courteous personality looked out of those features which were Tremaine’s with a placid smile such as Mrs. Tremaine had never seen. Close though his head was to Satterthwaite’s, he evinced not the slightest sign of recognition.

“Thank you, sir,” he said. “I’ll get along now.”

“Where do you live?” asked Satterthwaite, with a veiled glance at the young woman.

She held her breath, on this opening threshold of the mystery of the past two years.

“At the Newport Hotel,” he replied. He took a few steps and then stopped, his hand pressed to his brow. He turned to Satterthwaite. “I wonder whether you would mind my sitting here a little longer, sir?” he asked, apologetically. “I still feel somewhat faint and dizzy.”

“By all means,” replied Satterthwaite. “You are quite welcome to stay until you are recovered.”

The young woman marvelled at the quiet self-control of his voice. She felt as though she must shriek to break a nightmare.

“You are very kind,” he said. “I am afraid my wife will be anxious about me _____”

His wife! The young woman choked back a cry. *His wife!* Then——

“Is it too much to ask if you would telephone to her, sir?” he continued. “She would come and fetch me.”

“Certainly I will,” replied Satterthwaite, his face an impassive mask.

“My name is Durham—Room 363 at the hotel.”

“Right. Come and sit down in here.” He led the way into the adjoining drawing-room. “Make yourself comfortable whilst I ring through to Mrs. Durham.”

He hospitably settled his guest in the most luxurious chair of the elegantly furnished room, and then went out, closing the door after him.

His wife was awaiting him outside. Her face was white. Her eyes, preternaturally large, implored him. She clasped her hands tensely against her breast.

“Oh, Jack!” she cried, her voice nevertheless held too low to be overheard. “We can’t let him go like that! It is Harry—after all!”

He moved forward, and she followed him to the telephone.

“It is Harry all right,” he agreed. “It’s clear enough what has happened. He was shell-shocked. The hospital authorities found nothing on him by which to identify him. No one happened to recognize him. When he recovered consciousness he thought he was someone else—was, in fact, someone else. There are half-a-dozen cases on record, to my knowledge—cases that have nothing to do with the war. Dissociation of personality is the technical term of it. He just ceases to be Tremaine—and becomes Durham, with all its implications.”

“But, Jack!” she expostulated. “We *know* he’s not Durham!”

He shrugged his shoulders as he lifted up the telephone receiver.

“What good will it do to proclaim our knowledge?” he asked. “It insists merely on double bigamy—smash-up all round!”

“Then——?” she clutched at him. “You’re going to——?”

He turned to answer the challenge of the telephone operator, gave a number.

“Hallo!—The Newport Hotel—Will you ask Mrs. Durham to come to the telephone, please?—She’s staying at Room 363—right!—I’ll hold on!”

“Jack! Jack!” His wife implored him. “It’s not right—it *can’t* be right!—We must tell her!”

His attention was claimed by the telephone.

“Hallo!—Is that Mrs. Durham?—My name’s Satterthwaite, no, you won’t recognize it.—Your husband has met with a slight accident—nothing serious—he’s here and he wants to know if you’ll come round and fetch him as he feels rather shaky—yes——” he gave the address, “—yes—ground-floor flat. Very good. We’ll expect you.”

He put up the receiver, turned to his wife with a grim smile.

“Now we shall see what Harry’s other choice is like,” he said.

She was not to be diverted.

“But, Jack—you’ll tell her?—You *must* tell her!” she implored.

He looked her full in the eyes. His voice was grave.

“Evelyn! Are you tired of our life together? Do you prefer him to me?”

She turned away her head with a hopeless gesture.

“Oh, don’t ask me! Don’t tempt me!—I don’t want to think of myself—I only want to do what is right! And how can it be right to—to let him go away like a stranger from all that was his!”

He laid his hands upon her shoulders, forced her gaze to meet his again.

“And is it right, Evelyn, to break your life, to break my life, to break this woman’s life—to put Harry himself into an impossible position—out of a quixotic regard for pure ethics?”

“Oh, I don’t know!” she said, shaking her head in mental anguish. “I only know that he’s Harry—and that we’re disowning him——”

“But he does not know that he is Harry Tremain—he’s quite content to be Durham!”

“And if he wakes up again and remembers?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Wait till it happens. We can only deal with the actual situation. At the present time he’s quite happily Durham!—Now, dear,” he smiled affection, “trust me! Leave it all to me—just keep quiet!” He kissed her on the brow. “It will all work out.”

She turned away, shuddering.

“He was my husband,” she said, drearily.

“He *was*!—And your husband was killed in action on October 10th, 1918. The man in the drawing-room is a complete stranger by the name of Durham.—Now, let us go in to him.”

She resigned herself, with one last protest.

“I don’t like it, Jack! I won’t promise! Right is right!”

“In this case it is wrong! Come!”

He led her back to the drawing-room. Their visitor rose politely from his chair.

“Don’t get up,” said Satterthwaite. “Your wife is coming along.”

“Thank you,” he replied. “It is very good of you to take so much trouble. I shall be quite all right when my wife arrives to take charge of me.” He smiled in half-serious self-depreciation.

The three of them sat down. The Durham personality was amiably loquacious. The young woman watched him speechlessly, noting, with an icy chill at her heart, a hundred little familiarities of gesture as he sat in that old familiar chair all unconscious of any previous presence in it.

“I’m very muddled still,” he confided. “I can’t remember anything since being in that street-car. The row, whatever it was, is a complete blank to me—I can’t imagine even how I got into this street. Extraordinary, isn’t it?”

“Very,” agreed Satterthwaite, coolly.

“It’s not the first time I’ve had a lapse of memory like this,” he went on. “A shock does it. I went through the war—and—would you believe it?—I woke up one day in hospital utterly unable to remember anything about myself except that my name was Durham! I couldn’t remember where I came from—nor whether I had any relatives—couldn’t remember anything except just my name. And—this is the strange part of it—I never have remembered. They discharged me from hospital—shell-shock it was—and I just started life afresh.” He smiled confidently at the young woman. “I sometimes wonder whether I was married before, madam—but I hope not. I couldn’t part with the wife I’ve got. I married her eighteen months ago and she’s everything to me. I don’t think there’s another woman like her in the world! And she feels the same about me. That’s the right sort of married life, isn’t it?”

He waited for her agreement. Her tongue seemed to be sticking to the roof of her dry mouth. She could only nod, speechlessly, and try to smile. Something seemed to be crying out in her: “Harry! Harry!” Another part of her consciousness prayed desperately for guidance. Should she—could she—ought she to speak—to break this pathetic little idyll he sketched for her?

She looked curiously at his clothes. They were cheap and ill-fitting—frayed at the trouser-ends. So different from the spruce Harry she had known!

As though something of her thought had communicated itself to him, he clapped his hand suddenly to his breast-pocket, fished out a wallet, glanced into it, put it back.

“Whew!” he breathed in deep relief. “I had a nasty turn—thought perhaps I had lost that in the row. It contains all I own in the world!” He smiled. “It’s all right, though!” He glanced around him appreciatively. “But it wouldn’t buy the things you’ve got in this room, all the same. I admire your taste, if you’ll pardon my saying so, madam. I’m glad my wife is coming round—I’ll show her the sort of drawing-room we’re going to have some day, when we’ve made good!”

His cheerful smile was heart-breaking. She felt as though she must jump up and run across to him, shrieking that it was his—all his! That he and she had bought it all together, every bit of it. And yet she could not stir—could only stare at him in a fascination that was dumb.

Satterthwaite sat apparently unmoved, but his jaw was set hard.

“Perhaps you’ll come in for a legacy some day,” he said, casually.

His wife glanced at him, reading his thought. Of course, Jack would not do anything mean, would compensate him somehow! She was suddenly very grateful to him. The idea of a future anonymous restitution lightened her conscience a little.

“It’s not likely!” said their visitor, indifferently. “We have neither of us any relatives—my wife and I. And I don’t care so long as I’ve got her. When we get some youngsters we shall be the happiest family going!” He smiled—and she thought of Dorothy, peacefully asleep in the other room. She shut out the picture with an effort.

The door-bell rang, and, with an enormous relief, she sprang up to answer it. Anything to put an end to this torture! For one moment, in the hall, she hesitated.

“Help me! help me, O God, to do what is right!” she prayed in dumb agony. And the question came up inexorably before her, vast, overpowering, not to be solved. Right!—what was right?

She opened the door.

An insignificant-looking little woman of the lower middle-class stood on the threshold, nervously agitated, her eyes wild with alarm.

“My husband?” she asked, breathlessly. “Mr. Durham?”

“He’s here,” replied Mrs. Satterthwaite, coldly. “This way.”

She led her to the drawing-room and Harry Tremaine’s two wives entered together, the one beautiful, refined, exquisitely dressed—the other commonplace, dowdy, the cheaply attired product of a cheap city suburb, good-hearted vulgarity in every line of her. Mrs. Satterthwaite looked from the man who had been her husband to the woman who was now his wife—and her heart turned suddenly to stone.

“Here is Mr. Durham,” she said. With something of a shock, Satterthwaite admired her consummate ease of manner.

The little woman had rushed forward to her husband.

“Oh, Ed, Ed!” she cried, ignoring Satterthwaite, who stood up politely. “What is the matter?—You’re not hurt?—Not badly?”

“I’m all right, dear,” he said, embracing her. “I’ll tell you all about it presently. These kind people took me in and looked after me.”

She turned to them.

“Oh, thank you so much!” she said, effusively. “It *is* good of you!—And I don’t know what *would* have happened if anything serious had gone wrong with Ed to-night!—You see, we’re sailing for Buenos Ayres to-morrow! And he’s got such a good post—an agency—and if anything had prevented his going——”

“Never mind that, my dear,” said Durham, cutting short her loquacity. “These kind people do not want to go into our private affairs. Come along. I’ve inconvenienced them enough already.” He held out his hand to Mrs. Satterthwaite. “Good-bye, madam—and many thanks.”

She looked him in the eyes as she took his hand. They were the eyes of a stranger.

“Good-bye, Mr. Durham,” she said, and turned away.

Satterthwaite escorted the couple to the door.

“Your hat is here,” he said, as he took it off the clothes-peg where Tremaine had hung it. “Good-bye.—Good-bye, Mr. Durham.—What boat do you sail by to-morrow?” The enquiry was in the most casual tone of courteous interest.

“The *Manhattan*.”

“Pleasant voyage—and good luck to you both!” he said, cheerfully, and closed the door. He stood for a moment listening to their happy voices as they went out of the building and then turned to find his wife standing by his side.

“Jack!” she cried, and her eyes searched his face as if to read acknowledged partnership in a crime. “He’s gone?”

He nodded, smiling at her.

“Gone, right enough—and he’ll get his legacy. I can trace him quite easily now we know the name of his boat. That gives us a clear conscience.”

“Does it, Jack?—Does it?—Oh, I wish I could be sure!—Durham is not the man Tremaine was!”

“He’s a happier man than Tremaine would be, anyway! Think of their delight when they get that legacy!” He led her back into the dining-room, where the remains of their anniversary feast were yet upon the table. “And, dear!” he looked into her eyes, “we are happier people than we should have been had Durham not replaced Tremaine!”

She shook her head, still doubtful.

“But if he remembers?” she queried.

“He goes a long way off, into a new environment. The chances are against his remembering at all. If he does,” he shrugged his shoulders, “he will probably himself put it down as a hallucination from which his devoted little wife will nurse him back. Don’t worry, my dear. We did the right thing.”

“If only I could be sure!” she said, with a sigh.

* * * * *

The next morning Dorothy woke up to see her mother bending over her bed.

“Where’s Dada, Mummy?” she asked.

“Dada?” said Mrs. Satterthwaite, as though she did not understand.

“Yes,” said the child. “Dada—Dada who came back last night!”

Her mother shook her head, smilingly.

“You dreamed it, dear,” she said. “Dada was killed in the war.”



THE LOVERS

He opened the door into darkness and fumbled for the switch. The spacious, beautifully furnished living-room of the flat—long, dark bookcase filled with mellowed leather bindings; large, soft bearskins compensating for the insufficiency of the delicate Persian carpet on the parquet floor; a few precious prints spaced with an exquisite reticence upon the walls; an Oriental bibelot here and there emphasizing the quiet charm of English eighteenth-century furniture with its touch of the cunningly grotesque; two great leather-covered chairs by the fireside—was suffused with soft light.

He stood in the doorway—tall, lean, handsome, forceful with a touch of asceticism—and smiled to the corridor.

“Here we are!” he said, his voice on a note of happiness. “At last!”

He stretched out his arms to the girl upon the threshold. She came into the light—tall almost as he, long fur coat half-open over her tailor-made costume, finely modelled head poised in a graceful, winsome upturn of the face, smiling at him in a radiance of eyes and mouth—and, on the movement of an irresistible impulse, cast herself into his embrace.

“At last!” she echoed. “Oh, Jim, dear!—at last—at long last!”

He held her, and she snuggled into his shoulder, face upturned to his, drawing his kisses down to her with the magnetism of her lips.

The quaint enamel clock on the mantelpiece ticked, just heard, the passing seconds of eternity, the only sound in the silence of their union.

Then, with the long breath of recovery from the timeless swoon of a kiss prolonged to its uttermost limit, she turned her head slowly to gaze about the room.

“Oh, Jim!” she said, in affectionate reproach, “and you told me you were a poor man!”

He shrugged his shoulders, his lips mobile in a little smile.

“Well, dear,” he replied in whimsical apology, “compared with the daughter of a man who owns half a city—compared with what you might have had!” He looked into her eyes. “Helen! You won’t regret? They’ll rub it in to you—the title you’ve thrown away—the position in society—what they’ll be pleased to term your hole and corner marriage——”

She laughed happily.

“Oh, Jim!—I’ve got you and you’ve got me—and nothing else matters—it seems to me that you and I are the only two people in the world!” She assured herself of a tightening of his embrace with a touch of her hand on his as she looked up into his eyes with a slow, smiling shake of the head that affirmed her love. “As if only you and I ever existed—and had always loved! As if all through eternity we had waited for this! As if I was born to be just Jim Dacres’s wife!”

He looked down upon her, eyes into eyes.

“Darling!” His voice was low and earnest in a sincerity beyond doubt. “Jim Dacres’s wife you are—and, please God, I’ll never let you go!”

With one more kiss she disengaged herself, came into the centre of the room, threw her fur coat back from the shoulders with a smile that invited the assistance he was prompt to give.

“Are we all alone?” she asked, glancing round, struck by the quietude of the flat.

“All alone, dear,” he replied, folding her coat over a chair. “I told Mrs. Wilkinson she could go out. I thought it would be good to have it all to ourselves for this first evening—you and I alone in Paradise, darling!” He kissed her, drew her toward the fire. “Warm yourself, my beauty—and pretend it is my heart!” He squeezed her shoulders with broad, strong hands.

She shook her head at him in roguish reproof, as she spread her fingers—the new gold ring upon one of them—before the blaze he stirred.

“Pretty, pretty!” she rebuked him. “Where has Jim Dacres learned to make love, I should like to know!”

“In your eyes, dearest!” he replied, smiling into them. “In your eyes that open right back into a soul that knows immemorial secrets and knows them all as love!”

She felt quietly for his hand and held it, without a word, through moments where speech was profanation.

Then, with a long breath, feminine curiosity awaking in her, she turned her head and glanced once more around the room.

“It’s charming, Jim!” she asserted. “I didn’t know you had so much taste. Where did you get all these beautiful things?” She left the fireside, began to roam about the room, peering into cabinets, picking up one precious object after another, turning over the pages of the books that lay upon the tables.

He watched her lithe, graceful movements with admiration.

“All over the place,” he answered, negligently. “China, Japan—a few in Italy——”

“And this?” she asked, holding up a large crystal ball, supported in a lotus cup upon the back of a carved ivory elephant studded with amber and turquoise and coral, its feet upon an ivory tortoise. “What is this?”

“Oh—that! I got that in India. Some old crystal-gazer’s outfit. It’s a few hundred years old—symbolizes the universe, you know. The world rests upon an elephant and the elephant upon a tortoise. I don’t know what the tortoise stands on——”

Her face was bright with interest.

“And have you ever looked into it?”

“Of course not.” His tone was contemptuous. “I don’t go in for that sort of thing. I didn’t buy that—an old Hindoo priest gave it to me—a nice old chap who was good enough to adopt me more or less, years ago now.”

“Oh, Jim! Do let us look into it!” Her voice was ecstatic in a sudden excitement. “Do let’s look!”

“You won’t see anything,” he emphasized his pessimism in a grudge at the interest she diverted from him to this inanimate object. “It’s all rot, you know—only people with brain-sick imaginations ever see things—or think they see things.”

“Oh, but do let’s try!” She came across to him, the crystal in her hand. “Do, there’s a darling!” The appeal of the kiss-pouted lips in the face turned up to him, eyes bright with ingenuous vivacity, was irresistible.

He shrugged his shoulders with large good-humour.

“All right—but it’s waste of time.”

“Is anything waste of time when we are together, dear?” She nestled up to him, drew the kiss that was inevitable. “It’s all part of the romance. Now, be good and do as I tell you. Switch off the lights—the firelight is enough.”

He obeyed, with a gesture of tolerant complaisance that could refuse no whim. The room relapsed into shadows shifting in the blaze of the fire that he had stirred.

“Now come and sit close by me here,” she dictated, delightfully imperious to this tall strong man, seating herself in one of the big chairs by the fireside. “There is room for two. That’s right.” He squeezed his long body into the seat beside her. She held up the crystal ball. “Now you hold it with one hand and I will hold it with one hand—like this!” With her free hand she clasped the hand that remained on her knee. “That’s all I want to see, dear—our joint fates, linked together.” Her voice was soft and tender, thrillingly sincere. “Just you and I—for ever—past or future, darling, what does it matter?—it’s all one long life that is only real when you and I touch.” She finished with a sigh of happiness.

He responded in a gentle pressure of her hand. Together they stared into the crystal sphere they jointly held. Minute after minute passed in silence, in a pervading sense of intimate communion where their pulse-beats, in the contact of their hands, regulated themselves to an identical rhythm.

“I see nothing,” he murmured, vaguely disappointed, “nothing at all.”

“Patience!” she breathed, intent on the crystal, but sparing him a little squeeze of the fingers in recognition of his presence. “Look!—keep on looking!”

Again there was silence. The ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece became almost hypnotic in its monotony. The fire dulled down, its light no longer reflected in leaping flashes in the crystal.

“Look!” she whispered. “It’s clouding over—going milky! Do you see?”

He nodded assent, unwilling to break the spell by speech, mysteriously awed as he, too, saw a milky cloud suffuse the depths of the crystal. Holding their breath, they waited, closely linked, for they knew not what of vision.

As they stared into it, almost unconscious now of their own bodies, of the muscular effort that held the crystal globe in unvarying focus from their eyes, they saw the cloud break and clear in a widening rift that seemed to open into infinity.

“Look!” she murmured. “*It’s coming!*—Look—*People!*—crowds of them—running and jostling each other! Look, it’s a fête of some sort—a lot of them have cockades! Do you see?”

In fact, the depths of the crystal were suddenly inhabited. A throng of tiny figures, men and women, surged, broke up, flocked together again in high excitement, arms waving in the air. Over their heads other figures leaned out from the upper windows of a row of more distant houses—evidently the scene was a public square—and waved also in diminutive enthusiasm. Their costumes seemed like fancy dress—men in long, bright-coloured coats with enormous lapels and tight-fitting trousers with broad stripes of some contrasting colour—women in high-waisted dresses and poke bonnets or no bonnets at all—men and women, and these the greater number, the dominant majority of the crowd, in the nondescript vestments of squalid, ugly poverty. The better-dressed men and women wore prominently, all of them, a cockade or rosette of red, white, and blue.

The crowd packed close together in a common impulse, was agitated by a common emotion that set a forest of arms waving above their heads and contorted their faces in cries that were inaudible. Something was happening in that square—something that evoked fierce passion—invisible behind the densely serried mob whose backs alone could be seen.

“Look!” breathed the girl in the chair. “Look!—that poor girl!” There was a curious accent of vivid sympathy in the whispered ejaculation.

A young girl was forcing her way through the throng, her face covered in her hands, her shoulders shaking with sobs, weeping convulsively in a paroxysm of despair. The crowd, intent on the spectacle beyond, parted and made way for her automatically.

“Oh,” murmured the girl in the chair, “I feel so funny—I feel I want to cry, too—as if a terrible calamity had suddenly come upon me—a frightful danger to someone I loved——” She shuddered, “oh, it’s awful!—it numbs me—it’s—it’s as if I felt what *she* was feeling!”

The girl in the vision took her hands from her face, looked about her with eyes of wild misery.

“My God, Helen!” whispered the man in the chair, in a thrill of excitement. “*It’s you!*”

“Shh!” she breathed, gazing intently into the magic scene. The air about them seemed mysteriously charged with tumultuous passion, with the inaudible vociferations of that surging mob. To both, it seemed as though they were in contact with a real crowd, beset by the vague, fierce emotions that gather and roll in the collective, primitive soul of humanity in congregation. It set their hearts to a quicker beat, bewildered their brains with unheard clamours.

The girl in the vision—so strikingly like the girl in the chair that she seemed a duplication of her personality—drew herself erect on the edge of the crowd and wiped her eyes. Evidently, with a great effort, she was mastering herself. The girl in the chair drew a hard breath, as though of some supreme determination. Then, taking a few steps, the figure that they watched moved close under the houses of the nearer side of the square and,

looking up at the doorways as though seeking an inscription, commenced to walk along the pavement.

The crystal held her still as its centre—like the lens of a cinematograph following always the chief personage upon the screen—and, watching her, the man and woman in the chair forgot the globe that they held with cataleptic rigidity, forgot the diminished scale of the vision. Their perceptions adjusted themselves like those of children who day-dream among their toys, and it seemed to both of them that they gazed into a real scene with full-sized human emotions at clash in the acute earnestness of present life.

The girl, her face white and tense, her eyes fixed in the courage of timidity brought to despair, moved along the houses. Suddenly she stopped, looking upward to a portal surmounted by a trophy of tri-coloured flags and a shield on which the three words “*Liberté—Egalité—Fraternité*” were crudely emblazoned. A couple of ruffianly men in quasi-military uniform, exaggeratedly large cocked hats coming down over their ears, short pipes in the mouths hidden by untrimmed, pendent moustaches, enormously long muskets with bayonets fixed leaning against the bandoliers across their chests, guarded the doorway. The girl spoke to them, with vehement gestures, evidently imploring entrance. They barred her path, callously untouched by her agonized entreaty. She pointed up to an inscription below the trophy “*RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE—Représentant en Mission,*” smiled at them in a heart-breaking assumption of coquetry, candid innocence never more purely virginal. One of them shrugged his shoulders and spat upon the cobbled pavement without removing his pipe. The other winked broadly, and, still retaining his musket, reached out with his disengaged hand. The girl shrank back, horror in her eyes—and then, as if bethinking herself of an unfailing resource, felt feverishly in the neckerchief which covered her bosom. She drew out a packet of notes, offered them. With a broad grin on their faces, the two ruffians parted to allow her passage.

She climbed an uncarpeted, dreary staircase and hesitated for a moment outside a door inscribed “*le citoyen représentant du peuple Desnouettes.*” She knocked timidly, opened, and entered.

Across a large bare room a young man was seated, writing, at a table. A broad tri-coloured sash barred his blue, wide-collared coat and white waistcoat. He had divested himself of the cocked hat with three absurdly large plumes of blue, white, and red which lay upon the table and the long hair of his uncovered head reached almost to his shoulders. He looked up, as if startled, at his visitor, looked up with a young face whose intellectual keenness, whose vivid, passionate eyes above the long nose and almost ascetic mouth were strangely, disconcertingly reminiscent of—of——

“*Jim!*” gasped the young woman in the chair, feeling herself in that curious state of split identity where the unaffected, remote Ego registers without controlling the adventures of a dream.

“Shh!” he murmured in his turn, bewildered to find himself as it were looking at his own personality and, though as at the other side of a partition in his soul, experiencing the feelings of the man at whom he gazed. An echo of a surprise, of a mysterious surprise that disturbed him to the depths—of something that had come, startlingly new and powerful though not yet fully manifest, into his life—reverberated in the recesses of his being as he contemplated the girl. And then a counter-impulse flooded him, the impulse that made him set his mouth, rejecting with an assertion of his own personality wedded to some vague ideal, the vulgar influence of a human emotion. He felt as though the girl approached *him*, as she moved toward that young man who regarded her with a stern frigidity.

“*Citoyenne?*” he was surprised to find himself murmuring the coldly polite query, as though repeating it after that insultingly superior young man.

He heard the gasp of the young woman at his side as of someone infinitely remote from him. His real being was in that large bare room where the superb young republican scrutinized the young girl with a cold glance that put her out of countenance. Yet how beautiful she was as she blushed up to her eyes, youthful modesty in confusion! He felt something flush warm within his breast, a vague emotion that dissipated the assurance underneath his sternly maintained aspect. Before she had spoken, an alarm to the threatened supremacy of his cold reason rang through the depths of him. He reacted with a severity that he obscurely felt to be excessive, reiterated

almost with menace "*Citoyenne?*" Was the word really uttered from his lips? He did not know.

She came close, poured out her trouble in a flood of nervous, anguished speech that he comprehended perfectly without being able to arrest a single definite word in his memory—it was as though that part of him which understood was something deep down, lying beyond the necessity for spoken language. Of course! he comprehended with a kind of awakening memory—that old *émigré* who had stolen back disguised, in defiance of the laws, whom he had arrested for plotting against the safety of that Republic One and Indivisible of which he was the incorruptible servant, whose name he had but just put on the fatal list of the next batch for the guillotine! He chilled, mercilessly; wondered for a moment at his own inexorability, and then, as his identification with the scene completed itself, understood it.

For a crime against himself, against another individual, he might have had compassion. The conspirator against that fanaticized ideal of his soul, the young Republic fighting in rags for its life, for the ultimate freedom of all humanity, was guilty of the unforgiveable sin. He steeled himself, in a pride of approximation to that Brutus, to those other sternly incorruptible Roman republicans with whom his imagination was filled. No human tears, no human despair however poignant, should move him from his path of duty. He felt his teeth set hard over the absurd feebleness in his breast as his eyes rested, coldly he hoped, upon that beautiful girl who stood, strangely disturbing in her closeness, and stretched out her arms to him in agonized appeal. As if telepathically, his soul was filled with her passionate, eloquent entreaty—he had to fight down the tears which threatened his eyes in sympathy with those which suffused the beautiful orbs which looked into his, in despair of softening them.

And she—the woman in the chair, remote spheres away, trembled at a trouble in her soul, at an awakening of something else in her—something that was wrong, unpardonably at variance with every standard of her life, as she looked into those stern but fascinating eyes in the ascetic face and pleaded her cause. She despised herself for the blush she felt creep over her. Her father's life—her father's life!—what else dared she think of? This superb young man was an enemy, an implacable enemy, the incarnation of all the crimes wreaked upon her class! Yet her dignity imposed upon her,

and she dared not practice that false coquetry upon him that, in a sublime abnegation of her own pride, she had promised herself to use as a supreme resource. She could only plead, plead passionately, in utter sincerity, the best in her appealing to the best in him—and she scorned herself for admitting that there was that best to evoke.

A devil stirred in him, subtly malicious, tempting him with an intellectual bait that was the disguise of passions of whose reality he was but vaguely cognizant. These proud *aristos*! The bitterness of a youth of humiliations surged up in him, avid for vengeance. He encouraged it as a protection against himself. He would show them—these oppressors of the people, these enemies of the republic—who sent their womenfolk to corrupt the virtuous representatives of the nation! Two could play at that game! He smiled in the thought of the insult he prepared.

With a quick movement he rose from his seat and, on an impulse that was almost blind in its swift fulfilment, put his arm round the girl's waist and kissed her full on the mouth. The act was done before her instinct of self-protection could assert itself—and then she pushed him away in sudden revolt, stood facing him with panting bosom and a countenance where emotions chased each other in alternations of white and red. For a moment she contemplated him, breathing tumultuously, and then, with a gesture of disgust, she wiped her lips. Her eyes looked straight into his with angry dignity, withered him with their fierce disdain. A bitter smile wreathed her lips.

“*Er, bien, citoyen*—you have had your pay. My father's life!”

Did he actually hear the words? The low, scornfully vengeful laugh which came involuntarily from him was like an echo, far off, of that mocking laugh, inaudible now, in the bare room where the young commissary, arrogant with the outrage he had inflicted upon this representative of a superior race, drew himself up in his conscious incorruptibility.

“Your father dies to-morrow, *citoyenne*!” The marble coldness of his voice was a triumph of which he was not sure until it rang in his ears. He exulted in its echo, like a saint self-consciously a victor over temptation.

Their eyes met, looked into each other with a sudden furious, unappeasable hatred—a hatred which flooded them with a passion that was bigger than themselves—that soul-devouring hatred, clutching instinctively at death for its expression, which is the other face of violent love. Between these souls, in commotion far beyond their consciousness, indifference was not possible. They had met, and the world was in upheaval.

He heard the hiss of a long breath drawn in through clenched teeth—he distinguished no longer between the girl like a brooding invisibility in the chair beside him and the panting girl confronting that suddenly pale young patriot whom he watched with inexpressible fascination. He saw the insult, like livid lightning, in her face before she hurled it at him.

“*Canaille!*”

The word rang close in his ear, and yet infinitely far away, on an accent of vindictive emphasis that struck to his soul.

A fury surged up in him, a blind fury that annihilates with one ruthless blow of its insulted strength.

He stamped a signal on the floor.

“You also, *citoyenne*, will die to-morrow!” The decree, cold as the bloodless lips which uttered it, echoed in him to a savage satisfaction.

The girl remained motionless, head high, in superb indifference to his threat. The door behind her was flung open. The two ruffianly guards ran in, sprang to grip her arms in obedience to his imperious gesture. She smiled at him, splendid in unshakable disdain.

“*We prefer to die!*”

He motioned them out, livid with a rage beyond words. She went, proudly, unresistingly between her brutal captors. At the door she turned her head and smiled at him again, a smile full of significance.

“*Canaille!*”

He sat down to his table and, in a furious scrawl, added a name to his list.

... The vision dissolved in blackness, in an obliteration, for timeless moments, of all thought....

They found themselves looking into a long dark hall, its gloom inadequately relieved by high barred windows. Straw littered the floor and was collected into little heaps along the walls. Dimly discerned in the shadows was a throng of people, men and women—some promenading up and down in solitary dejection, some in groups seated upon the straw at a game of cards, some leaning propped against the wall in listless despair. He gazed into that Hades-like abode of misery with a curious anxiety at his heart, an anxiety whose cause for the moment eluded him. He watched, waiting in a vague expectation of some event that approached and was yet unseen.

A door in the foreground opened and, with a little intimate shock, he saw enter that mysterious duplication of his personality that was he and yet was not he—the sternly ascetic young *représentant en mission* whose plumed hat and sash of office proclaimed his authority in this dreadful place. A subservient turnkey followed at his heels, called a name.

A young girl—*she*—she of the bare room overlooking the square, she of—of—he failed to identify another appearance he knew ought to be familiar—started up from a bed of straw where she had been sitting in company with an old man. She approached, in quiet command of herself, neither hastily nor reluctantly. Obviously, she was indifferent to whatever might be required of her. Only when she perceived the identity of her visitor did she start back in a sudden little hesitation, vanquished as soon as felt. She came coolly up to him, regarded him with contemptuously hostile eyes, awaited his business with her.

He was trembling with emotions that almost overpowered him—the soul that watched felt itself gripped in an agony of remorse, of fear, of—something else that he would not acknowledge. He stammered evidently as he spoke.

“*Citoyenne*, come with me—you are free!”

She looked at him in blank surprise.

“Free?”

The inaudible words were plain to those two watching souls who had long ago forgotten the crystal that they held. Both thrilled with a sense of crisis in which they were intimately involved.

The young man reiterated his assertion eagerly.

“And my father?” The girl turned her head toward the melancholy figure bowed in dejection on its heap of straw.

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Your father is guilty of a crime against the Republic. I can do nothing for him. But you have committed no crime, *citoyenne*”

Her eyes looked into his, probed him.

“Nor have many here. Why do you release me?”

He lost control of himself in his eagerness to withdraw her from the danger into which he had himself wantonly plunged her.

“Because—because I love you! Because I cannot let you die!—Because—I cannot help it—you are all of life to me, *citoyenne*!”

She looked at him, her face like a carved sphinx, her eyes inscrutable.

“I go—wherever my father goes!”

He stood, deathly pale, wrestling with a terrible temptation. She watched his agony, without malice, without sympathy, cold like a slave in the market who may be bought—for a price. All of him that was human yearned for her, yearned for her unutterably in a surge of desire that all but overcame him—and yet an austere inner self, that self which had vowed itself to the idealized service of the Republic in youthful fanaticism, stood firm although it agonized. He felt himself a worthy spiritual successor of that Scaevola who stood with his hand in the fire, as he answered, cold sweat upon his brow.

“*Citoyenne*, it is impossible. I cannot buy even your love with my dishonour. Your father has committed a crime against the Republic—but you have committed none.”

She shrugged her shoulders in calm indifference. An insulting smile came into her face.

“Then I will do so!” She turned toward the prisonful of victims with the exultant gesture of a martyr who demands the stake, and cried, evidently with full lungs: “*Vive le Roi! À bas la République!*”

“*Vive le Roi!—À bas la République!*” came like a murmured echo from somewhere beyond defined space, in defiant mockery of all that he craved.

He watched her turn away from him, an immense despair submerging him, and went slowly, head down, toward the door as though himself condemned.

She turned for one last look at him as he disappeared, a strange wild ecstasy in her face—and then flung herself face downward upon the straw in a paroxysm of hysteric sobs.

Whence came those murmured words, charged with unutterable passion, with the intensity of a soul that gathers its essence for its leap into the infinite dark?

“Now—now I can love him! Death, death! come quickly!—now I have the right to love!”

There was a glimpse of a face suddenly radiant through its tears—and then again blackness, a suspense of thought.

He stood with his back to the room, looking out upon the square filled with a surging mob. In the middle, upon a raised scaffold, stood the terrible red-painted uprights with the gleaming knife under the linking beam, poised ready for the swift fall of its diagonal edge. The mob swirled in a sudden turbulence under the windows. He knew what it meant.

There, forcing its slow passage through the maddened crowd, came the fatal cart—a rough vehicle filled with hatless men and women whose necks were bare and whose hands were bound, men and women who seemed deaf to the vociferations of the bloodthirsty mob that raved about them. He shuddered—slipped his right hand into his pocket, held it there, his gaze fastened in horrible fascination upon that slowly moving cartload of already

almost lifeless human beings. He saw, clearly, only one figure, a girl in white, and he waited—in an agony which held him rigid.

The cart lurched its slow way to the scaffold, stopped. The victims began to descend. He saw the figure in white mount the steps to the machine, saw it turn its head at the last moment toward his window—and, as though it were the signal expected, he whipped the pistol from his pocket, glimpsed the dark hole of its barrel, and fired.

The man and woman in the chair stared into a crystal ball whose depths were suffused with a milky cloud.

“Oh, Jim!” she murmured. “*The last time——!*”

“Shh!” he said, with a squeeze of her hand. “Look! It’s coming again!”

Once more the cloud parted—they peered, breath held for further revelations, into a crude contrast of bright light and intense shadow, upon a striped awning at an angle from a wall glaring in the sun, upon a narrow street where dust rose yellow like an illumined cloud above a dark throng of Asiatics, their white robes almost blue in the shadow, who gesticulated and pushed each other as they packed themselves into a semicircle of eager faces. Their vision adjusting itself to the violent juxtaposition of high light and deep shadow, they stared into the comparative sombreness under the awning, to the object which held the interest of the crowd.

In a cleared space, in front of a trio of barbaric musicians who squatted cross-legged upon the ground in serious management of pipe and tom-toms, a dancing-girl postured in fluidic attitudes of her lithe, slim body. Arms and legs covered with bracelets, she turned, stretched, and twisted herself in accompaniment to a rhythm which escaped them. Indefatigably she danced, heedless of the eager, appreciative eyes upon her, her face expressionless in a rapt absorption where consciousness of her environment seemed lost. The crowd shouted inaudible encouragements in flashes of gleaming teeth, flung flowers and small coins on to the mat whereon she danced, swayed with contagious waves of enthusiasm. The girl danced on, indifferent to the applause, ecstatically absorbed in the perfection of her art. Only one or other of the serious musicians lifted an occasional bright, sharp glance to the increasing spread of coins upon the mat.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the rear of the crowd, a jostling and elbowing which propagated itself to the front rank. The throng parted, with alarmed turns of the head to some disturbance behind them. A huge elephant appeared, gliding forward with slow and stately motion to the rhythmic wave of its sensitive trunk. Upon the gorgeous cloth of its back was poised a richly carved and gilt *howdah* surmounted by a gigantic umbrella in scarlet and gold. Beneath that umbrella reposed a languid young man, handsome with aquiline nose and splendid eyes under the magnificent turban which crowned his dark head. He lifted his hand in a gesture to the mahout perched on the neck of the elephant, and the great animal stopped, left in a clear space by the crowd which fell back reverently from its neighbourhood.

Still the girl danced on, heedless, unperceiving perhaps, of the prince who watched her from his lofty seat. The musicians, after one quick glance upward of apprehension, risked boldly and played on with undisturbed solemnity. She danced with a sinuous grace that held the eye in fascination, with an intensity of restrained movement, daringly provocative though were her postures, which thrilled the watcher with a sense of suppressed and concentrated passion whose potentialities might not be measured. She danced, the incarnation of the fierce pulse of life that beats beneath the fallacious languor of the East, her body charged with vitality as it bent and straightened with lithe precision to another curve, her face carven, expressionless, as though her soul were withdrawn to its mysterious centre. The prince clapped his hands in irrepressible enthusiasm. She stopped dead, stood rigidly upright facing him, arms close to her sides, arabesqued breastlets thrust forward, a slim statue that quivered with magically arrested life, in a motionless effrontery that challenged his regard, his very power. Their eyes met, looked into each other while the musicians ceased to play. What was that of intense communion which sped between them? With a sudden gesture the prince flung a handful of golden coins into the mat, made a grave inclination of his head.

The elephant moved onward. With a smile of triumph, with a breath long-drawn through her nostrils, and eyes that closed ecstatically for a moment as in a dream realized, the girl followed in the train of his gorgeously attired retinue....

They knew—those watchers who gazed as through the rent veils of eternity, apprehending with minds that had ceased to be corporeal—recognizing themselves once more, though in an incarnation immeasurably remote, an incarnation whose transient language was long ago forgotten.

The vision changed abruptly. They gazed into the hall of an Oriental palace, arabesqued arches in a colonnade on either side, tessellated marble in cool colours patterning the floor, ebony-black slaves waving peacock fans above a cushioned divan on which the prince reclined. An indulgent smile played over his handsome features as he toyed with the unbraided hair of the beautiful girl who sat at his feet, in confident lassitude against his knee, and turned her head back to gaze up into his face with eyes voluptuously fond. She sighed with happiness—her face no longer expressionless as in the public dance, but charged with a yearning intensity of love. He, too, yearned over her with his grave smile, bent his head down for the kiss her lips put up to him....

Again the scene changed. It was night in the colonnaded hall, moonbeams patching the tessellated floor, flickering points of yellow flame swinging slightly with the hanging lamps in the gloom under the intricacy of the arches. A shadow moved out of the darkness, stood in the moonlight, waited for a moment, then dropped a veil from its face. It was the dancing-girl. She turned questing eyes about her as though, at risk to herself, she was fulfilling an appointment that was not yet met.

Another shadow slid out of the gloom under the arches, approached her—another woman, young also and also beautiful, but with a beauty—its character was startlingly vivid to those watchers—that was insinuatingly treacherous, the beauty that smiles as it betrays. She stood now with the erstwhile dancing-girl in the moonlight, spoke to her with an assumption of gravely concerned and pitying friendship, shook her head dolefully as though in distress at her own message. The dancing-girl revolted with a vehement gesture of denial, of impossibility—but her dark eyes flashed and her nostrils quivered. The other persisted, in emphatic asseveration, her face a study in subtle malice. She pointed to the heavy curtains which draped the just-seen extremity of the hall, a fiercely assertive significance in her gesture.

The girl shrank back, shuddered. Then, with a slow turn of her body from the tempter, she relapsed into herself, into a fierce meditation where her eyes swept the shadows about her, where her lips uncovered her teeth in a quick-caught breath and her clenched fist went slowly, tensely, up to the side of her head in an agony that was beyond words. The other woman contemplated her, just restraining a smile, diabolically malicious—appealed once more to those hanging curtains for proof of her sincerity. The girl, forlorn, gripped in some immense unhappiness, nodded sombrely, with set teeth. With one last unobserved smile of evil triumph, the other woman vanished.

For a long moment the girl hesitated. Then, with stealthy, feline step, her shoulders crouched, she commenced to move along the hall. Her gaze, a gaze of wide-open eyes set in the horror of some torture of the soul, was fixed as though fascinated upon those heavy curtains which she approached. She attained them, stopped, stood with one hand in a final hesitation upon the folds, her bosom heaving with fiercely primitive emotions. Then, in a violent determination, she flung them aside.

Beyond, in a small torch-lit apartment, the prince reclined in company with another woman. His head turned in sudden anger to the intruder. Before he could make a movement of defence or escape, the dancing-girl had sprung upon him, with a bound like a tigress, a long knife flashing in her hand....

Even as they gasped their horror, they found themselves once more staring at the milky cloud suffusing the depths of the crystal globe.

“Oh, Jim!” she breathed, in an awe-stricken recognition, “that was *my* crime—the crime for which you punished me——”

“Look!” he murmured. “Look! It is not finished yet.”

In fact, the cloud was parting once more, parting this time over a scene in ancient Egypt. Once more they recognized themselves, princess and priest of a temple, in a drama that passed vaguely, too quickly in its remoteness to be fully grasped, before their sight.

Scene after scene unfolded itself in the depths of the crystal, in a succession of varying settings, in an ever-briefer duration, an ever more vague drama of relationship, whose blurred outlines were perhaps the effect of their

fatigued attention, no longer able to follow in their details visions possibly as minutely exhibited as the first. Always their two personalities, in ever-changing incarnations, met and reacted in wild passions that claimed them fully. In the eternal history of their lives, all was possible, all had happened, every variation of experience—save only indifference to each other. An unseen link held them always, tightened into contact from the moment of propinquity. On islands in a blue sea furrowed by long-oared and primitive galleys; in cities of Cyclopean masonry that glittered, as if vitrified, in a burning sun; in dark forests where skin-clad savages went furtively with stone-barbed spears and knelt in worship of the animal that they had just slain; by the side of reedy lakes where hairy, scarce-human creatures crouched and gnawed the bones they plucked from the embers—always they two met and always they were lovers, fortunate sometimes, tragic sometimes, but always lovers.

Beyond humanity, far into the mists of time where strange shapes bodied themselves, unrecognizable, and were dissipated into others yet more strange, the visions continued in ever-increasing recession—leading back into a distance where they lost all sense of personal participation among vague and formless shadows.

They watched, in a breathless fascination.

Still farther back, beyond those shadows, something began to glow in the depths of a night that cleared to transparent blackness, a ball of fire, of living light that pulsed with intense incandescence in an uttermost remoteness. And, as they watched, it divided itself, split into two smaller spheres that circled about each other, throwing out flames that reached like clutching arms in vain endeavour to reestablish unity. For an incomputable period—it seemed æons to those souls who watched—they circled, held in mutual attraction and yet still apart despite the reaching streamers. And then slowly, slowly, they approached—their light heightening to a yet more vivid brightness as they drew near....

The crystal globe slipped from numbed fingers into the fireplace. As though roused from a dream by the crash of its contact with the brass curb, the girl started and turned to her companion. He picked up the crystal, starred and fissured with its fall—henceforth useless.

“Oh, Jim!” she cried in poignant regret. “We shall not see—— What is going to happen *this* time?”

She held his hand between her two, gazed up into his face in fond anxiety, yearned out to him.

He put down the crystal, drew her close, enfolded her.

“Love!” he answered. “Love—once more and for always! And, to us, dear, nothing else matters. It is the one reality.”

In each other’s eyes they saw, with a perception transcending physical vision, the divine light of those sundered spheres that drew together.



HELD IN BONDAGE

Two French officers, wearing the red velvet bands of the medical service upon their caps, followed an old woman down the staircase of a pleasant villa-residence on the outskirts of Mainz.

“The bedrooms will suit perfectly,” said the elder of the two officers, a major, in German. “And now a sitting-room?”

The old woman led them along a passage and, without a word, threw open the door of a room lined with books. The two officers entered, looked about them.

They were startled by a man’s voice behind them.

“Good day, messieurs!”

They turned to see a tall civilian, pince-nez gleaming over exceptionally blue eyes, fair moustache, fair hair cut short and brushed up straight from a square forehead, smiling at them from the doorway.

“I am Doctor Breidenbach—at your service,” he said courteously in accentless French.

The major stepped forward.

“I am Major Chassaigne, monsieur. I—and my assistant, Lieutenant Vincent here—have been allotted quarters in your house. Here is the *billet de logement*.” He held out a piece of paper. “It is issued with the authority of the Army of Occupation and countersigned by your municipality. I regret to put you to inconvenience——”

“Not at all! not at all!” interposed the German, affably, taking the billeting order. As his face went serious in a scrutiny of the document, the two officers had an impression of extreme intelligence and ruthless will-power. He looked up again with a nod of assent, his smile masking everything behind its gleam of blue eyes and white teeth. “Perfectly correct, monsieur!

Please consider my house at your disposition. I am charmed to be of assistance to any of my confrères.” He smiled recognition of their red cap-bands. “Although you wear another uniform than that which I myself have but recently quitted, we serve in a common cause—the cause of humanity, *n’est-ce pas?* which knows no national animosities.”

“We desired a sitting-room,” said Major Chassaigne, ignoring this somewhat unctuous profession of altruism.

The German waved his hand about the room.

“If this will suit you——?”

“Your library, monsieur?” queried the lieutenant.

“My work-room,” replied the doctor. “Before this deplorable war interrupted my studies, I had some little reputation in my special branch of mental therapeutics. If you are interested in psychology, normal and abnormal, you will find here a very complete collection of works upon the subject. Use them freely, by all means. Well, if you are satisfied, gentlemen, I will leave you, for I am a busy man. I was just about to visit some patients when you arrived. *Auf wiedersehen!*” He smiled and left them.

Vincent turned to his senior, with a puzzled expression.

“What is it about that man I do not like?”

The older man shrugged his shoulders.

“Too friendly by far. They are all the same, these *boches*—they would do anything to make us forget,” he said, divesting himself of his belt. “I am going to have a rest and a cigarette before we walk back into the town.”

The young man wandered around the room, scanning the titles of the books on the shelves, picking up the various bibelots scattered about. Suddenly he uttered a startled cry.

“*Mon Dieu!* Look at this!”

The major turned to him. In his hand he held a small snapshot photograph. He stared at it, trembling violently.

“What is the matter?”

“Look!—*It is she!*” The young man’s face was a study in horrified astonishment.

Chassaigne looked over his comrade’s shoulder at the photograph. It represented their host arm in arm with a good-looking young woman.

“*She?*” he queried, with a tolerant smile. “Be a little more explicit, my dear Vincent.”

The young man turned on him.

“You remember the deportations from Lille? The women and girls the *boche* snatched from their homes?—My fiancée was among them.” His voice checked at the painful memory. “Other women have been traced, returned to their relatives. She has never been heard of again.”

“My poor friend!” murmured the major, sympathetically.

Vincent stared once more, as if fascinated, at the photograph in his hand.

“It is she—in every detail! Yet——” his tone was puzzled. “No! I cannot believe it! It is some chance resemblance. This woman is obviously happy—content, at least.” He looked up, passed over the photograph. “Chassaigne, you are an analyst of the human mind. What relationship do you diagnose between those two people?”

The major took the print, scrutinized it critically.

“Friends, certainly—lovers, possibly,” was his sententious verdict.

“Then it cannot be!” cried the young man. “My fiancée was—is, I am sure of it—incapable of a faithless acquiescence in the wrong done to her.”

“Can one ever be sure about a woman?” said the major, with a gentle cynicism. “However, I agree with you that it is improbable that the person in the photograph is your lost friend. It is, as you say, a chance resemblance.”

“If I could only be certain of it!” The young man was obviously stirred to the depths. “*I must* make sure, Chassaigne.—I must get to know this woman

—find out who she is!”

Both men turned at the sound of the door opening behind them. A young woman, tall, dark, strikingly handsome, stood timidly upon the threshold. It was the woman of the photograph.

“Doctor—Doctor Breidenbach?” she faltered, as though disconcerted by an unexpected meeting with strangers.

Vincent stared at her, held in a suspense of the faculties where he seemed not to breathe. At last he found his voice.

“*Hélène!*” he cried. “*Hélène!* It *is* you!” He sprang to her, clutched her arm. “What are you doing here?”

With a frightened gesture of repulsion, the young woman disengaged herself from his grasp. She drew herself up, looked at him without the faintest recognition in her eyes.

“*Ich spreche nicht französisch, mein Herr!*” she said in a tone of cold rebuff.

“*Hélène!*”

She shrank back in obviously offended dignity, and, without another word, haughtily left the room.

Vincent reeled away from the closed door, his hands to his head.

“My God!” he groaned. “Am I going mad?”

Then, ceding to a sudden impulse, he eluded his friend’s restraining grasp, dashed to the door.

“*Hélène!*”

He found himself confronted by the smiling figure of Doctor Breidenbach.

“Pardon the unintended intrusion, messieurs!” he said, good-humouredly apologetic and taking no notice of Vincent’s excited appearance. “My ward, Fräulein Rosenhagen, was unaware that I had guests.—I merely wished to

reassure myself that you require nothing before I go into the town. Is there anything you desire of me?"

"Nothing, thank you," interposed Chassaigne, quickly, before Vincent could speak.

"*A tantôt*, then!" He nodded amicably and went out.

"We ought to have questioned him!" cried Vincent, resentful of the missed opportunity.

"We ought to do nothing of the kind, my dear Vincent," replied Chassaigne. "Calm yourself. Be sensible. What question could we possibly ask that would not be ridiculous? You may be utterly wrong."

"*It is she!* I swear it!" asserted the young man, vehemently. "Do you think I cannot recognize a woman I have known all my life?"

He commenced to pace up and down the room in wild agitation. His friend contemplated him with a gaze of genuine solicitude.

"You may be mistaken for all that," he said, gently. "Doubles, although rare, exist——"

Vincent stared at him in exasperation.

"My fiancée had three little moles just above her right wrist—I looked for those three moles when I held that woman's arm just now—*and I found them!* Are doubles so exactly reproduced as that?" he asked, furiously.

"It sounds incredible, certainly," agreed Chassaigne. "But her attitude——"

"I know," said Vincent, recommencing his pacing up and down the room. "She looked at me like a complete stranger. But," he ground his teeth in jealous rage, "if she has consented to live with that man—she might have pretended—to hide her shame——"

"My friend," said Chassaigne, seriously, "in that young woman was neither shame nor pretence. I observed her closely. She genuinely did not recognize any acquaintance in you. She genuinely did not even know French. She was genuinely resentful of your familiarity. That was no play-acting

performance. She was taken by surprise. She had no time to prepare herself for it.”

The young man beat his brow.

“Oh, I am going mad!” he cried. “It was she, I swear it!—and yet—she did not know me! It baffles me.” He stopped for a moment, then looked up with a new idea. “Chassaigne! You are an authority on these things. It is possible—by hypnotism or anything of the sort—to change a personality completely—so that they forget everything—start afresh?”

Chassaigne met his glance, hesitated.

“It is—perhaps—possible,” he said, slowly. He went up to his friend, put his hand on his shoulder, drew him to a chair. “Sit down, my dear fellow. Let us be calm and think this out. If you are right—if this young woman is indeed your—your friend—your suggestion might *perhaps* be the key to the enigma. But we shall achieve nothing by getting excited.”

Vincent allowed himself to be gently forced into the chair. He looked white and ill, thoroughly shaken. His friend, contemplating him, was impressed by his appearance. Could such a shock be produced by a merely imagined resemblance? He felt that it could not—and then those three moles! His mind reverted to the young woman, to her indubitably genuine non-recognition, and he felt more than ever puzzled. With a quiet deliberation he drew up a chair and seated himself close to his comrade.

“Now let us analyze this problem,” he said. He spoke in a calm, consulting-room voice which eliminated in advance all emotion from the discussion.

Vincent looked up, his eyes miserable.

“Have you ever known of such a case?”

“Of a personality *permanently* changed? No.”

“Is it hypothetically possible?”

“Hypothetically—yes.”

“By hypnotism?”

“By hypnotism and suggestion.”

“But a woman cannot be hypnotized against her will, can she?”

“No—technically not—but her will may be stunned, so to speak, into abeyance by a sudden shock or by terror and then, virtually, she might be hypnotized against her will. It is possible.”

The young man took a deep breath.

“That acquits her moral responsibility. But you say it is hypothetically possible to change a personality *permanently*? It sounds fantastic to me. Would you please explain?”

Chassaigne leaned back in his chair and lightly joined the finger-tips of his two hands. He spoke in the impersonal tone of a professor elucidating a thesis.

“Well, my dear fellow, to begin at the beginning we should have to analyze personality—and human personality is a mystery I confess myself unable to explore. You are aware, however, that there are people who have double personalities—even triple and multiple personalities—which differ utterly. For some reason which eludes us, one of these submerged personalities in an individual may suddenly come to the top. He, or she, entirely forgets the personality which was theirs up to that moment, forgets name, relations, every circumstance of life—and is completely someone else, quite new. There is a recent case, exhaustively studied, of a young woman with four such personalities—over which she has not the slightest control, and which differ profoundly, mentally and morally. I mention this merely to show you how unstable personality may be.”

“These are pathological cases,” interposed Vincent. “My fiancée was a thoroughly well-balanced woman.”

Chassaigne nodded.

“Before the war when you last saw her. She must have gone through great stress since. But let us continue. Under hypnotism a person is extraordinarily susceptible to the suggestions of the operator. He will carry out perfectly any rôle indicated to him. The reason is that in the hypnotic

condition the conscious personality is put to sleep and the subjective mind—the dream-creating consciousness which is independent of the will—is paramount. That subjective mind possesses little if any power of origination, but it has a startling faculty of dramatizing any suggestion made to it. Tell a hypnotic that he is President Wilson at the Peace Conference and he will get up and make a speech perfectly in character, amazingly apposite, expressing ideas that are normally perhaps quite alien to his temperament. Tell him that he is Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo and he will act the part with a reality that is impressive. He believes himself actually to be Napoleon. Under hypnotism, then, the personality which is mirrored in the Ego—which you believe to be the essential, unchanging you—may be utterly changed——”

“Yes,” objected Vincent. “But that is only during the hypnotic trance. It is not permanent.”

“Wait a moment,” said Chassaigne. “Suggestions made during the hypnotic trance may and do persist after the subject has awakened from it. I may, for example, suggest to the hypnotized person that when he wakes he will have forgotten his native language—and he will forget it. If he knows no other, he will remain dumb until I remove the suggestion. I may suggest to him that a person actually in the room is not there—and he will not perceive him. I may suggest that in a week, a month, a year, at such and such an hour, he will perform some absurd action—and punctually to the moment, without understanding the source of his impulse, he will perform it. Post-hypnotic persistence of suggestion is a scientific fact.”

“Then—in this case?”

“In this case we have to do with a clever and possibly unscrupulous man who is a specialist in manipulating the human mind. Of course, he practises hypnotic suggestion as a part of his profession—it is the chief agent in modern mental therapeutics. *It is possible* that by some means he got this young woman into his power after she was dragged from her home. It is possible that he was violently attracted to her, and finding that she did not reciprocate his sentiments, proceeded to subject her individuality to his. How would he do this? He would drug or stun her volition by terror—as, for example, a bird is helplessly fascinated in fear of the snake. Then, using

some common mechanical means such as the revolving mirror—staring into her eyes—anything that would fatigue the sensory centres of sight—he would induce a hypnotic trance. In that trance he would suggest to her that her name was no longer Hélène whatever it was—but Fräulein Rosenhagen, that she was a German woman ignorant of French, that she was perfectly happy and contented in his society. In the supernormally receptive state of the hypnotized mind he could give her lessons in German, which would be learned with a speed and accuracy far surpassing that of ordinary education. He would suggest to her that all his lessons persisted after waking. Finally, he would constantly reiterate these suggestions in a succession of hypnotic trances—once the first has been induced, it is easy to bring about the second—until he had reconstructed her personality, or rather imposed a new one upon her consciousness.

“There, my dear Vincent, presuming that you are correct in your recognition of this young lady, is a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon which confronts us. For that the young woman genuinely did not recognize you, I am certain.”

“She is held in the most diabolical slavery ever conceived, then!” cried Vincent, in despair. “A slavery of the soul! But can nothing be done?”

Chassaigne shrugged his shoulders.

“Something can be attempted, my dear fellow. I promise nothing.” He rose from his chair. “Now, I want you to promise to keep quiet—not to interfere. Fortunately, I speak German, and can talk to her in the language she believes to be her own. Wait a minute.” He roved round the room, opening the cupboards under the bookcases, the drawers in the writing-table by the window. “Ah, here we are!” he ejaculated. He held up a small silver mirror which revolved quickly upon its single support under the motion of his fingers. “I expected that our friend the doctor would possess this little instrument.” He smiled. “Very considerate of him to go out and leave us to ourselves! Now we will try and profit by the circumstance. I am going to find that young lady and bring her to you. You will maintain the attitude of a complete stranger who regrets an impulsive familiarity for which a mistake in identity is responsible. Master yourself!” He put the little mirror on the table and went out of the room.

A few moments later he returned, held the door wide open for the young woman to enter. He spoke in fluent German.

“My young friend, Fräulein, will not be consoled until he has had the opportunity of a personal apology!”

The young woman inclined her head gravely, and somewhat shyly advanced to the centre of the room. Vincent rose to his feet, his face deadly white, trembling in every limb, and bowed. Ignorant of German, he could not utter a word. Chassaigne turned to him, spoke to him in French.

“Look closely at Fräulein Rosenhagen, *mon ami*—and satisfy yourself.”

The muscles of his face tense under the effort to repress his emotion, to appear normal, the young man looked at her for a long moment. She returned his gaze without a quiver of the eyelids, smiled with the kindness which sets a stranger at his ease.

“It is she—it is she,” he muttered, hoarsely. “I swear it!”

Chassaigne turned to the young woman.

“My young friend is much affected by your extraordinary resemblance to a lady he knew, Fräulein,” he said, smilingly, in German. “But he perceives now that he was mistaken. You will, I am sure, pardon an emotion that a person of your charm will readily understand. My friend was greatly attached to the lady he thought he recognised in you.”

The young woman smiled upon Vincent in feminine sympathy for a lover.

“Is she a German?” she asked in a rich deep voice that made him start.

Chassaigne replied for him.

“No, Fräulein—she is a Frenchwoman brought to Germany against her will.”

He observed her narrowly as he spoke. Her face remained calm. His words, evidently, awakened no latent memory in her.

“How dreadful!” she said. Her rich voice vibrated on a note of unfeigned sympathy which was, nevertheless, impersonal. “Poor man! And he does

not know where she is!”

“He has no idea, Fräulein,” replied Chassaigne. “But let us leave this painful subject. Will you not keep us company for a few minutes? We are strangers in a strange land.” With a gallant courtesy, which, however, omitted to wait for her assent, he took her right hand and led her to a chair. His quick eyes noted the three moles upon her wrist. She seated herself almost automatically. He registered, in support of his theory, her easy susceptibility to a quietly insistent suggestion. “Will you not tell us what is most worth seeing in Mainz?” he asked, smilingly.

She looked up at him.

“Alas, mein Herr, I cannot!” she said. “I have never been in the city.”

“Indeed?” He expressed mild but courteous surprise. “Perhaps you have only recently come to live here yourself?”

“Yes—er—no!” She smiled at her own confusion. “I mean we have been here some time—but we travelled so much before we came here—that I—I have really lost count——”

Chassaigne made a reassuring little gesture which relegated the matter to a limbo of indifference.

“You travelled with Doctor Breidenbach, I presume?” he asked, casually.

“Yes. We went to a great many places. He was in the army then.”

“When you first met him?”

“Yes.” Her first tone of confident assertion changed almost as she uttered it to one of puzzled doubt. “Yes—I—I think so—I really forget.” She smiled in self-apology. “I have a very bad memory, you see, mein Herr,” she said, as if in explanation. “Doctor Breidenbach is treating me for it.”

“Ah?—Doubtless he is doing you a great deal of good?” Chassaigne seated himself upon the edge of the table and smiled down upon her in paternal benevolence.

“Oh, yes,” she began, impulsively. “You see, we are going to be married. But Doctor Breidenbach thinks it would not be right to be married until my memory is perfectly restored. So”—she hesitated, then smiled up with an innocent naïveté—“so you see I am doing all I can to concentrate and—and get it right.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” groaned Vincent in a low tone of anguish, turning away and staring out of the window.

Chassaigne frowned admonition at him in a quick glance unperceived by the young woman. Unobtrusively, he put one hand behind him, picked up the revolving-mirror from the table, held it behind his back. He nodded assent to her little self-revelation.

“Of course. No doubt you are making very rapid progress. Doctor Breidenbach is a very clever man, is he not?”

“Oh, yes—very clever. And so kind!”

Chassaigne nodded again, his smile holding her confidence. As if absent-mindedly, he brought the little mirror in front of him, played with it. He noticed that her eyes fixed themselves instinctively upon it.

“Pretty toy!” he remarked, casually. “It belongs to Doctor Breidenbach I suppose?”

She stared at it in a strange fascination, shuddered suddenly.

“Yes,” she said, with a little gesture before her eyes as though trying to throw off a spell, “yes—I—I think so——”

“A scientific instrument, I presume?” continued Chassaigne, imperturbably, as if merely interested in a curiosity, twirling the support between his fingers so that the mirror rapidly revolved. Imperceptibly he leaned forward, brought it nearer to her eyes. “It suggests sleep, I think,” he continued in a quiet level voice that had suddenly acquired a peculiar intensity. “Sleep. Sleep, *Fräulein!*”

She stared at it, open-eyed, stiffening curiously. A phrase of protest seemed frozen on her lips.

He held it very close to her face, revolving the mirror in a long-continued series of rapid flashes before her eyes.

“Sleep!” he commanded in his intense level voice.

Her breast heaved in a long, sleepy sigh. She shuddered again, stiffened suddenly, sat rigid, entranced. Vincent, watching, crept forward, tense with anxiety.

“What are you going to do?” he whispered.

Chassaigne motioned him to silence with a gesture of his forefinger. He turned to the young woman.

“You are asleep, are you not?”

She did not reply.

“You hear me?”

“Yes.”

Her lips moved, but beyond that she did not stir.

“In that sleep you remember things which you had otherwise forgotten.” He turned to Vincent, whispered: “What is her name?”

“Hélène Courvoisier.”

Chassaigne bent over her, picked up her wrist with the three moles.

“Do you remember Hélène Courvoisier?”

“No.”

“Not even the name?”

“Not even the name.”

There was a short silence, and then Chassaigne spoke again in insistent level tones.

“I suggest to you that you are yourself H          !”

Vincent, guessing the purport of the words, held his breath in suspense. To his despair the young woman responded with a far-away but genuinely mirthful laugh.

“No! How absurd!” she said, laughing like a person under a drug. “I am Otilie Rosenhagen! I was always Otilie Rosenhagen!” She laughed again, hysterically, but more and more freely, more and more loudly, more and more the laugh of a person normally awake. Still laughing, she shuddered, passed her hand across her brow, relaxed suddenly from her stiff attitude—and ceased to laugh with a glance around of bewilderment. She fixed her eyes upon Chassa          .

“I—I think I feel unwell,” she said, rising brusquely from her chair. “Excuse me!—I—I cannot stay!”

Without a glance behind her, she went swiftly from the room.

Vincent watched her go, anguish and despair in his eyes. He turned to Chassa          .

“Well?” he asked, hoarsely.

Chassa           made a gesture of annoyance. He shrugged his shoulders.

“I might have guessed as much!” he said. “He has rendered her immune to the suggestion. You see, the trance was induced easily enough. As I thought, she was accustomed to being hypnotized by that mirror and the mere sight of it was almost sufficient. Without that, I should certainly have failed to hypnotize her at all, for Breidenbach would assuredly have impressed upon her the suggestion that she could be hypnotized by no one but himself. He has furthermore guarded himself by impressing upon her that the suggestion of being anybody but Otilie Rosenhagen will suffice to break the trance. He cannot be sure that such an impressionable subject may not be hypnotized, possibly by a chance accident—such things occur—in his absence. But he can be sure that any counter-suggestion on the vital matter will defeat itself—as we have just seen.”

“But can no one remove the suggestion?” cried Vincent. He glared around the room, clenching his fist. “The infernal scoundrel! By God, I’ll kill him!” He fingered the revolver, in the holster strapped to his belt.

Chassaigne laid a restraining hand upon him.

“If you do—you will in all probability kill the only man in the world who can replace the factitious personality of Ottilie Rosenhagen by the real personality of Hélène Courvoisier!”

Vincent stared at him.

“Do you mean that?”

“He certainly can remove the suggestions he has himself made. It is doubtful whether any other can.”

“He must be forced to do it! We must inform the authorities!”

“Agreed, my dear fellow!” Chassaigne’s voice was soothing. “But we must first get evidence—real evidence—that this young woman is not Ottilie Rosenhagen but Hélène Courvoisier. What evidence have we got now that we could put up before a tribunal? None. Merely your alleged recognition, as against her own emphatic denial that she is the person you maintain. And at the present time not even the most cunning cross-examination could elucidate the fact that she had ever known the French language. Ottilie Rosenhagen does not know French—and, at this moment, to all intents and purposes, she *is* Ottilie Rosenhagen!”

“Then we must get hold of him ourselves!”

“He will simply laugh at us as madmen—apply to have us removed from his house. No, my dear fellow, we cannot force the pace. Wait. Be patient. Arouse no suspicion in his mind. Our opportunity will come, be sure of that. The real personality of Hélène Courvoisier is there all the time, latent. I am confident that we shall—somehow—succeed in bringing it to the surface again.”

The young man shuddered.

“I wish I could see how!” he said, hopelessly.

“You will see it. I guarantee it,” said Chassaigne, forcing his cheerfulness. “Now, come away out of this house. We will go into Mainz, dine, spend the evening at a café, and forget it—or talk it over, as you will. We can do nothing more now.” He smiled at him. “Come! As your superior officer, I command you!”

The hour was late when the two officers returned. Before going out, Chassaigne had provided himself with a key, and they let themselves into the house. It was quiet, its occupants apparently in bed. Throughout the evening there had been but one topic of conversation and, as it was yet unexhausted, they went into Doctor Breidenbach’s library, switched on the lights, and sat down for a final smoke before retiring.

“What we require,” said Chassaigne, for the twentieth time, as he lit his cigarette, “is demonstrable evidence, something that makes it certain that you are not under an illusion. Even in my own mind, I cannot help confessing, there is a doubt. Look at it from my point of view. You assure me that you recognize the young woman. Good—but your recognition may be an error, although sincere. You strengthen your case by pointing to the three moles. But, if I were questioned, I should be bound to admit that you did not mention those moles until you had seen them on this woman. You may be suffering from a not uncommon delusion of memory which refers to the past a thing now for the first time perceived. The strongest piece of evidence we possess is that, under the physical analysis to which we subjected the young woman, I found that she was a hypnotic subject, that she was impressible, and that her personality as Ottilie Rosenhagen is practically without any memories of the past. *But we could not discover any trace of any other personality.* She rejects as ridiculous the suggestion that she is not Ottilie Rosenhagen. That proves nothing, in the special circumstances we are considering. She might or might not still be Hélène Courvoisier. But the theory on which we have been working presupposes a crime so unique, that, quite frankly, to be entirely convinced I want to come upon some trace of a submerged personality which tallies with your assertion. If she is Hélène Courvoisier that personality is certainly there. But how are we going to get at it?”

Vincent shook his head.

“I cannot imagine,” he said, wearily.

He looked up to see Chassaigne staring in astonishment at the door behind his chair. Startled, he twisted himself round to see what was happening—and gasped.

Framed in the doorway, a dressing-gown over her night-attire, her dark hair loose over her shoulders, was the young woman. In her hand was a bedroom candle, alight. Her face was expressionless and placid. Her eyes were open, looked fixedly in front of her. She moved into the room with a gliding step.

“She is asleep!” whispered Chassaigne. “Speak to her, Vincent!—who knows?—Perhaps another stratum of personality!”

The young woman glided straight toward the lieutenant, who gripped at the arm of the chair in his emotion. She was close upon him ere he could force himself to speech.

“Hélène!” he said in a tense, low voice, looking up into her eyes as if trying to bring her dream down to him. “Do you know me?”

She bent over him, kissed him softly upon the brow.

“Maxime!” she murmured, her tone vibrant with tender affection. “Maxime! You have been away so long!”

She spoke in French!

Chassaigne jumped in his chair, but before he could utter a word, a new voice spoke sharply.

“Otilie!”

The two officers turned to the doorway to see Doctor Breidenbach standing there, his face clouded with menace, his eyes angry.

The young woman started, looked wildly about her in the bewilderment of one suddenly aroused from sleep. Then after one horrified glance at her attire, an amazed stare at the two officers, she sank down on to a chair and covered her face with her hands. Trembling violently in every nerve of her

body, she crouched there in a misery of shame, too overwhelmed to utter a sound.

The German advanced into the room, stood over her.

“Otilie! Come away at once!”

Vincent, now on his feet, flushed with rage at the brutal tone of the command, comprehensible enough to him despite his ignorance of the language.

Chassaigne went quietly behind the German, locked the door, and slipped the key in his pocket.

Breidenbach, his eyes fixed on the girl, reiterated his command.

“Monsieur!” broke from Vincent in an angry expostulation which ignored his comrade’s gesture to silence.

The German looked round upon him, forcing his face to a smile in which the vivid blue eyes behind the pince-nez failed to participate.

“You are certainly entitled to some explanation of this unseemly occurrence, gentlemen,” he said in French. His voice, perfectly controlled and reinforcing his smile, suggested an appreciation of piquancy in this equivocal situation, invited the sense of humour of the Gallic temperament. “I need not tell you that Fräulein Rosenhagen is entirely innocent of any intent to disturb you. She is, I may say, under my medical care. She suffers from somnambulism, and you will understand that it is comprehensible she should wander to this room where she is accustomed to receive treatment.”

Vincent, with difficulty, controlled himself to silence in obedience to his friend’s warning glance. Chassaigne stepped forward.

“Quite, monsieur,” he said, easily, smiling as though he fully appreciated the position from all points of view. “A case of abnormal subconscious activity. I am myself greatly interested, professionally, in this common neuro-pathological symptom. May I suggest that, since your patient has come here in response to an obscure instinctive desire for the accustomed treatment of which she is doubtless in need, you now satisfy her? I should esteem it a privilege to assist at a demonstration of your methods.”

The German's eyes flashed a suspicion that was instantly veiled.

"The hour is late, monsieur," he said, coldly.

Chassaigne shrugged his shoulders good-humouredly.

"In our profession, monsieur—the service of humanity," he said with sly malice, "one is on duty at all hours."

The German's eyes expressed frank hostility.

"I do not consider it advisable," he said. His tone was curt.

Chassaigne glanced at the young woman still crouched upon the chair.

"As a professional man of some experience, monsieur," he said, imperturbably, "I do not agree with you. I feel sure your patient would benefit by it. Let me beg of you!"

The German trembled with sudden anger.

"This is an unwarrantable interference, monsieur! The patient is in my charge. I decline absolutely!" He turned to the girl. "Come, Ottilie!" he added in German.

She ventured a shrinking glance up at him, stirred as if to rise.

Chassaigne raised his hand in a gesture which checked her. His eyes met the German's in a direct challenge.

"Unreasonable as it sounds, monsieur, I have set my heart upon witnessing your methods. It is a whim of the conqueror—the force of which you, who have served in Belgium, will appreciate." His right hand slid into the pocket of his tunic. "I must insist!"

"I refuse, then!" The German was livid with rage. He turned and plucked the girl violently from her seat. "Out of my way, monsieur!"

Dragging the girl after him, he took two steps toward the door—and stopped suddenly. Two more steps would have brought him into contact with the muzzle of the revolver which Chassaigne levelled at him.

“Foreseeing your possible ill-humour, monsieur,” said the Frenchman, with a mocking suavity, “I took the precaution of locking the door. This young woman has inspired me with so violent an interest that I cannot bear to see her suffer unrelieved. And I might remind you that should you unfortunately lose your life by the accidental explosion of this revolver—I should find it comparatively easy to restore her to complete mental health myself.”

The German glared at him.

“I do not understand you!”

“You do—perfectly!” Chassaigne turned to his friend. “Vincent, conduct that young lady to a chair!”

The girl, who had been released by the German in the first shock of his surprise, stood paralyzed with terror, staring speechlessly at the revolver in Chassaigne’s hand. Unresistingly, she allowed herself to be led to a chair by the young man who was as speechless as she.

Chassaigne nodded satisfaction.

“Good! Now, Vincent, draw your revolver and cover this gentleman yourself. Be careful to hit him in a vital spot should you be compelled to fire.”

Vincent obeyed with alacrity, dangling the heavy weapon with fingers that evidently itched to pull the trigger.

“Monsieur,” said Chassaigne with grim courtesy to the German who had remained motionless under the menace of the revolver, “I invite you to take a seat. You may keep your hands on your knees, but do not move them until I give permission.”

The German sat down heavily, his eyes gleaming evilly at the Frenchman.

“Now, monsieur,” said Chassaigne, in succinct tones, “since you say you do not understand, I will be more explicit. I desire that you should induce in this young woman the hypnotic trance which is your habitual treatment for her indisposition——”

A gleam of cunning flitted in the German’s eyes.

“Very well,” he said, with sulky submission. “If you insist!”

“But with this difference,” continued Chassaigne, “*that your habitual suggestion shall be reversed!*”

The German started—controlled himself quickly.

“I do not understand,” he said, maintaining his pose of sulkiness.

“I mean that instead of suggesting to her that she is and always has been Ottilie Rosenhagen—you suggest to her that she is really H  l  ne Courvoisier, a French girl deported from Lille!”

The muscles stood out suddenly upon the German’s lean jaws, even as, with a strength of will Chassaigne could not but admire, he smiled mockingly into his adversary’s face.

“You rave, monsieur!” he said, and his tone emphasized the insult.

“Rave or not,” replied Chassaigne, calmly, “I want you to try the experiment. It is a whim of mine.” He handled the revolver suggestively.

“And if I refuse?”

“I shall shoot you!”

The German laughed outright.

“Ottilie!” he cried, in German, “these Frenchmen have gone mad. They pretend that you are not Ottilie Rosenhagen but a French girl—and they want to take you from me!”

The girl sprang from her seat with a cry of horror, rushed to him, and flung her arms about him.

“Oh, no, no!” she cried. “I am German—I am German—I was never anything but German! Oh, don’t take me away from him! I love him! I love him! He is all I have in the world!”

Vincent watched the action with jealous rage.

“My God!” he muttered. “I shall kill him in another moment if this goes on!”

The German smiled at them triumphantly.

“You see, gentlemen! Your suggestion is fantastic! This girl is my fiancée, and she is German to the core!”

Chassaigne’s face was stern.

“Vincent! Remove the lady!”

The young man had to tear her by force from the German, who remained immobile in his chair in a mocking respect for the revolver.

“Fantastic or not,” said Chassaigne, “I demand that you try the experiment. If you refuse—it is because you dare not do it!”

The German shrugged his shoulders.

“Very good, monsieur. I refuse. Think what you will!”

Chassaigne drew his watch from his pocket.

“I give you three minutes to decide,” he said. “Vincent! Put the lady in that armchair and be ready to shoot when I give the word. Two bullets are more sure than one!”

The girl, dazed with fright, looking as though she were in some awful dream, collapsed nervelessly into the chair. Vincent posted himself by the German’s side, his levelled revolver held just out of reach of a sudden snatch.

The German tried one more expostulation.

“This is madness!” he cried. “You surely do not propose to commit a cold-blooded murder!”

“One!” said Chassaigne, grimly. “Two more minutes, monsieur!”

The German laughed diabolically.

“Very well, then! Commit your murder! Much will it profit you! I am the only man in the world who can influence that young woman. Whatever you may think, you cannot transform her personality. Otilie Rosenhagen she is and Otilie Rosenhagen she will remain!”

“Two!” said Chassaigne.

“You may as well shoot now! Don’t wait for the third!” jeered the German. “I deny that she is other than Otilie Rosenhagen. I utterly refuse to experiment upon her at your dictation. Shoot! I defy you!” The man certainly did not lack courage. He smiled mockingly as Chassaigne’s revolver rose slowly and deliberately to a level with his eyes. “Shoot! Outrage for outrage, your murder of a German civilian may well balance the deportations you prate about!” It was significant that in this fateful crisis it should be that particular crime which occurred to him for parity.

The taunt seemed to strike the spark of an idea in Chassaigne’s brain. Still menacing the German with his revolver, he held out the key to the door in his left hand.

“Vincent! In Doctor Briedenbach’s hall there is a telephone. A hundred yards away there is a post of infantry. Ring up the commandant, tell him that I have arrested Doctor Breidenbach on the charge of abducting a French subject, ask him to send along an armed escort at once—not less than half a dozen!” He glanced at the girl, who was apparently in a swoon upon her chair. “It is important that the force should be imposing! Hurry!”

Vincent snatched at the key, and dashed from the room.

The German smiled in grim contempt. Chassaigne, still covering him with the revolver, smiled back, not less grimly. They waited in a complete silence, through minute after minute. The girl upon the chair did not stir.

Suddenly they heard the rhythmic tramp of a body of armed men on the gravel outside, a sharp voice of command, and then, after a brief pause, the heavy multiple tramp again, resounding through the house, louder and louder in its approach. At the sound, the girl sat up brusquely, stared wild-eyed at the door.

It was flung open. Vincent entered, pointed out the girl to the French officer who accompanied him, evidently in confirmation of a statement made outside. The officer barked an order. A file of helmeted infantrymen, bayoneted rifles at the slope, marched heavily into the room. The girl shrieked.

“Oh, no! no! Don’t take me!” she cried—and *her cry was French!* “Don’t take me! I will not go! I will not go!” She sprang up from her chair, looked frenziedly around the room in a terror-stricken search for an avenue of escape. Her eyes fell upon Vincent remained curiously fixed upon him. Suddenly, with a cry of recognition, she rushed into his arms. “Maxime! Maxime! Protect me! Oh, don’t let them take me! Don’t let them take me!”

Chassaigne smiled. He had won. As he expected, the shock of this armed entry so vividly recalled the night of terror in Lille when the girl-victims were snatched from their violated homes, had sufficed to reawaken the personality which had then agonized in its last moments of freedom.

Vincent enfolded her, murmuring reassuring words as he caressed the head that hid itself upon his breast. Her body shook with violent sobs.

The German stood up, placed himself, with a shrug of the shoulders, between the double file of infantrymen. The officer produced a notebook, asked a few questions of Chassaigne, jotted down the replies. He turned to the girl.

“Your name, mademoiselle?”

She looked up.

“Hélène Courvoisier,” she replied, unhesitatingly.

SHE WHO CAME BACK

The clock upon the mantelpiece struck, discreetly, the hour of eleven in the night-stillness of the study where old Henry Arkwright worked. He glanced up with busy, preoccupied brows to the dial, confirming his half-registered impression of the tale of strokes. Eleven o'clock! He would work for another two or three hours yet. He sucked cheerfully at his pipe as he signed the just-written counsel's opinion; folded the stiff, long documents and tied them neatly with their original tape; took yet another legal case from the pile in front of him. He felt himself in form to-night, enjoyed the efficiency of his brain that worked so swiftly and surely in this solitude. The complete silence of the house was subtly grateful to him. He was immune from all disturbance. The servants had long since gone to bed. His concentration upon his task was unthreatened, the stores of legal knowledge held ready for his use in that practised brain of his unobscured by any concrete trivialities. Eleven o'clock—yes, he could put in another three hours good work before, exhausted to-night like all the other nights, he went slowly up the empty stairs to his empty bedroom. He adjusted himself to consideration of the affidavits he unfolded.

What was that? The faint ringing of the door-bell, far away in the servants' quarters but distinctly audible in this sleep-hushed house, persisted until it came to his full recognition. He looked up, puzzled, from the papers in the shaded light of his reading-lamp, glanced around the book-lined study where the fire-glow flickered redly in the absence of full illumination. Who could it be at this time of night? The far-away faint ringing continued, eloquent of an unrelaxed pressure upon the bell-push at the porch. He listened to it with exasperated annoyance, resentful of this interruption of his labours, trying to imagine an identity for this inconsiderately late visitor. Whoever it was, he himself would have to open the door. The servants were long ago asleep. They would not hear the bell. With a petulant exclamation, he rose from his desk, went out into the darkened hall.

Stimulated into haste in instinctive response to the determined urgency of the summons of that bell, its sound quite loud and definite out here, he

fumbled hurriedly for the electric switch. Then, the lights full on, he went quickly to the door and opened it. A cold wind blew in upon him from the darkness into which he peered, seeing, at first, nothing. The ringing had ceased. A doubt of reality, a suspicion of hallucination, shot through him, was dispelled upon the instant. From the shadowed side of the porch a woman's form moved into the broad beam of light. A curious, inexplicable, sudden consciousness of his own heart, vaguely not normal in its action, filled his breast as he stared out to her in a momentary suspense of recognition. Then she turned her face full upon him.

He started back, shocked to his inmost as though he had touched a live electric wire.

"Christine!" he gasped, in incredulous amazement. "Christine!—*You!—Come back?*"

The eyes in the woman's drawn face opened upon him as from a tight-shut agony, searched what was to her his dark, featureless silhouette in the illumination from the hall. Her whole soul seemed to yearn out to him in doubt and in desperate appeal. He saw her lips move before she spoke.

"Will you let me in?" she asked, humbly. "Harry!" She breathed his name as though she dared not pronounce it.

He felt himself turn dizzy under this unexpected emotional shock. He stared at her dumbly, the scathing phrases of indignant repudiation, so often mentally rehearsed for such a moment, eluding him. Christine! He could not at once adjust himself to her reality, looked at her again to make unmistakably sure. Christine—come back.

"Harry!" she breathed again in timid humility.

He shuddered in a cold gust from the darkness as he stared at her. She was hatless, coatless, in that bitter wind. He saw her shiver as she half-ventured to stretch out a hand toward him.

A sudden impulse, as from a source superior to him—he thought it was pity—mastered the righteous indignation he had been trying to bring to utterance.

“Come in,” he said, thickly, and made way for her.

She entered. He shut the door behind her, turned to look at her as she stood in the full illumination of the hall. Once more her eyes had closed. Her lips were compressed as over an almost unendurable agony of the spirit. She swayed on her feet, arms limply by her sides, as though only stayed from falling by a supreme effort of the will. How old and haggard she looked!—the thought traversed him like a flash, linked itself to another—twenty-five years! What had happened to her in that twenty-five years? Little of good fortune, assuredly—with the professional eye that appraised a new witness in the box, he noted the poor, threadbare quality of her white dress, unadorned by any of the jewellery that had once been her delight.

The chilled blueness of her skin struck him as he scrutinized her. He touched her hand, automatically and impersonally, for confirmation of his impression.

“You’re frozen!” he said. His accent of ill-humour rang oddly familiar in his own ears. It was the old annoyance at yet another of the impulsive follies so typical of her. “What are you thinking of, to come out like this?” he added, sharply. “Here!” He flung open the study door. “There’s a fire here—sit down and warm yourself!” The tone of unsympathetic authority was—he remembered it—instinctively just the old tone he had so often used to her in that life now so remote as almost to seem a previous existence.

She opened her eyes again, the large emotional eyes that had not changed, looked at him, looked *into him*. Incredulity spread over her face.

“By your fire? Can you, Harry?—Can you, after everything—after all these years—can you still have me by your fire?”

Tears came up in those big eyes which looked so yearningly into his, and her mouth twisted itself into a pathetic little smile—the ghost of the smile that he had known in a younger face. He felt oddly uncomfortable.

“Come along!” He commanded her almost brutally, defending himself from any relaxation of hostility. “Come and warm yourself!” He lifted one of her hands and its chill struck to the centre of him. “Why have you no coat?—You must be mad!”

She smiled at him, and did not answer. He drew her into the warm study, pulled a chair close to the fire for her, pressed her down into it. Then he turned to switch on the full lights.

She stopped him with a gesture.

“Please, Harry!—Just like this—in the firelight.”

He obeyed and returned to her. Coldness seemed to emanate from her body as he came close. What sheer insanity! She must be chilled through and through, he thought.

He shrugged his shoulders to himself, disclaiming responsibility, and, for his own self-respect, played the host.

“Can I get you anything, Christine?” he asked, ungraciously. “Anything to eat or drink?”

She lifted her large eyes toward his face and shook her head slowly, without a word.

Baffled by her manner, he struck at what he thought to be the heart of the awkward situation.

“What do you want? What have you come for?” he demanded, harshly. “Money?”

She shook her head again and smiled.

“No, Harry. I want nothing, except just to be with you once again—for a little time.”

A long sigh, from the depths of her bosom, escaped her as she turned her head down again to the fire and stared dreamily into its red recesses.

“Just to be with you,” she repeated, softly, as to herself, “once more.”

He stood over her, not knowing what to say. Silence filled the room.

She looked up at him, timidly.

“You’re not pleased to see me, are you, Harry? You never wanted to see me again?”

He did not answer.

“Of course—how could you be?” she murmured to herself, gazing once more into the fire. “You never could forgive—never!”

He forced himself to a politeness he felt to be magnanimous.

“I don’t want to dwell on past injuries, Christine,” he said, coldly. “I should be pleased to know that what you did brought happiness.”

“Happiness!” she repeated, almost inaudibly, in ironic mockery, her gaze still fixed upon the fire.

Suddenly she looked round to him.

“Harry!” she said, impulsively. “Harry!” Her eyes went beyond him for a moment to the litter of papers on his desk, returned to him. “Harry! I know I am disturbing you”—the old pathetic smile came into her face—“but I want to ask you a favour—” she hesitated, as though her courage failed her—“the favour for which I came.”

He hardened himself for a refusal.

“What is it?” he asked.

“I want you to give up your work for just one hour—I want you to sit by the fireside and talk to me. Won’t you? Won’t you let me come first for just once—as—as I used to want to in the old days?” Her eyes, fine as ever, implored him in almost irresistible appeal. “I have dreamed of this for so long!” She went on as in a reverie, after a little pause, staring once more into the fire. “You never would, Harry—and perhaps—if you had——” She sighed. “You were so ambitious!”

He stood immobile, typically reluctant to break his habits. Those cases were important. He was coming to himself now, the effect of the first shock diminishing. Some of the old anger awoke in his heart as he looked down upon her. The old sense of disturbance returned. It was just like her to come

and break up his night's work. And now—after all that had happened! He resented her presumption, stigmatized it as sheer callousness.

She looked up, feeling his thoughts perhaps.

“Harry! Can't you—for just this once? I don't ask you to forgive.”

Her eyes held him, enfeebled his resistance.

“I've got nothing to tell you, Christine,” he said, gruffly. “Nothing. I didn't ask you to come back, but since you have come—well, I will not shut you out in the cold. You can sit by the fire if you like.”

She smiled—the little ghost of her twenty-year-old smile upon that worn and middle-aged face. He clenched his teeth at it, at something in himself.

“Have you really nothing to say to me, Harry? Not a question to ask?”

He armed himself against the pathos of her appeal.

“No,” he said, curtly. “Nothing.”

She shut her eyes as though under a blow. Then, with a tacit admission of its justice, she smiled up at him again. Evidently, her courage was held at high tension.

“I know I don't deserve it,” she said. “I don't deserve to be sitting here again, after all these years. But, oh, Harry, you *could* be generous—once, at those rare times when I could really touch the real you as I so often longed to do. Are you still hard, Harry?—still so hard?” She sighed, wearily, turned her head hopelessly once more to the fire.

He watched the play of its glow over her features, was struck by her bad colour. The coldly observant part of him noted the fact that she was, or had been, ill. Half-starved, too, added this detached professional self. Suffering, physical and mental, was stamped upon her face. He acquiesced in it, grimly. Her frivolous wickedness—he remembered the callously jaunty tone of the note she had left for him—had met just retribution. He wondered what had happened to the man.

She looked up again, answering, with a subtle perception, the question in his mind.

“He’s dead, Harry—dead years ago. Very dead. To me, he never really lived—not as you have lived, always, through every moment of my—” she paused—“my Hell.”

A sentiment of pity pricked him sharply. Poor little Christine!—she had certainly paid, and paid heavily. He repressed his commiseration, in alarm at himself. He must think—think sensibly. Did she intend to come back for good? He reacted violently against the idea. It was impossible. He would be a laughing-stock, the butt for the pointing fingers, the sly allusions, of his fellows in the Courts. His pride revolted. No, no—he must get her out again somehow, before the servants knew.

Once more she read his thought.

“No one shall know that I have come, Harry. It’s just for this one hour and then I’ll go again. But just for this one hour—Harry!” She stretched out her arms to him. “Be generous!”

He fenced stubbornly.

“What, exactly, do you want, Christine?”

She smiled at him, her face radiant.

“I want—I want just to pretend that it all never happened. I want, just once, to sit with you by the fireside as though I had been here all these years—as though you and I had learned to be the comrades I had dreamed we should be. I want to sit with you as we should have sat, both of us now growing old, looking back on all the beautiful things of our life together. Harry!” She lifted her arms to him again, yearning out to him. “Just once—just once to pretend—to be as we might have been—and then I can go away and really and truly die, satisfied. Be generous, Harry, be generous just this once if you never are again.”

An obscure feeling stirred in him, a sense of tears that threatened as he looked down into the eyes that swam with moisture.

“You nearly broke my life, Christine,” he said, with a hardly achieved attempt at harshness.

“I want to forget it,” she answered. “To believe—for just one hour—that I made your life, as I wanted to help make it. Oh, Harry, Harry, I love you—I have always loved you, wherever I have been and whatever I have done—and I want to believe, oh, for just such a little minute, that my love was not really in vain. I just had to come!”

He pressed his hand over his eyes, did not answer.

She pointed to the comrade chair by the fireside.

“Harry—Harry dear—sit down and talk to me as we ought to have been able to sit and talk—old married lovers with never a cloud between us.”

“Oh—don’t!” he said. “Don’t, Christine!” He burst out with a sudden anger. “Why have you come back? I—I wanted to forget, forget always.”

She reached for his hand, touched it with fingers that were still cold.

“And we are going to forget—going to forget it quite, for just a little hour, Harry, Harry darling!”

Her voice, on the old remembered note of fondness, touched him with a strange power. Something crumbled in him.

He sat down suddenly in the indicated chair, stared, he also, into the fire.

“It’s a bitter mockery, Christine!”

“No,” she answered. “It’s the real thing—for just once—the real thing.”

They sat in silence for long moments where the clock ticked loudly. She stretched her hand out to him.

“Harry! Hold my hand in yours—like you used to do—in the old days before you married me. It will help so much. Can you remember it?—the old touch that used to thrill?”

He obeyed without a word, took her little palm between his two large hands, pressed it close. Its death-like coldness struck him and, in defiance

of it, he emphasized his contact. With a sudden tenderness that was awkwardly unpractised, he endeavoured to instil a little of his own warmth into it. As he did so, he felt as it were a sluice-gate open in him. A long-repressed sentimentality asserted itself, invaded his lonely soul like a flood. He looked at her. If only—his protective secondary personality, dominant for so many years, reacted jealously, perverted his regret—if only she could have understood him a little more!

It was she who spoke.

“I’m so proud of you, Harry—so proud of your success!”

He almost started—remembering how he had hoped that she would read his name in the newspapers, in a vindictive desire that she should regret what she had thrown away. He saw, suddenly, that it was only her opinion that had ever really mattered to him.

“My dear,” he said, feeling himself a tolerant old man who could afford to be kind from his altitude, “perhaps if I had never known you, I should never have worked so hard.”

She smiled at him as though there were no irony in his words, but only a beautiful truth.

“Harry—Harry darling!” she murmured. “I have helped—helped a little, haven’t I? My love has been what you said it would be—the vital force on which you could always draw? Do you remember that, the night we were engaged?”

This cool assumption of a dream, utterly opposed to the facts, startled him. He looked at her, and had not the heart to contradict. Suppose it had been so? Could he surrender himself to this make-believe which she was playing with an almost childish simplicity? It was suddenly very tempting to him.

“I remember, my dear—and I promised,” his voice broke a little while he hesitated on a self-reproach, “never—never to cut myself off from it—never to say the harsh word which you warned me would freeze your sensitive little soul.”

“And you never have, Harry,” she murmured, softly. “You’ve always remembered—always been gentle and kind and loving—all these long years of happiness together.”

His eyes felt sympathetically uncomfortable as he looked into hers, moist in the firelight.

“Twenty-seven years, dear,” he said, caressingly, consciously defiant of the jealous self that watched. He had taken the plunge. “Twenty-seven years last week since we married.”

She nodded her head in acquiescence.

“We’ve had our life-time, Harry dear—and we have not wasted it, have we? Every year has been full, full to the brim, with sympathy and love.” She sighed, gazing into the fire. “And that’s the only thing in life that matters—the only thing. Success without love would have been very barren to you, wouldn’t it, Harry?” Her eyes came round to him.

“Dead Sea fruit, my darling,” the illusion was almost perfect to him, the irony without bitterness, scarcely perceived, “dust and ashes at the core.” He smiled at her from a strangely sentimental self that was almost foreign to him and yet his own. “Christine, without you I should not really have lived.”

She answered him with a movement of the fingers now warm between the hands still holding them.

“Nor I, Harry, without you. You and I were each other’s Destiny.”

He, too, nodded his head solemnly.

“Yes, dear,” he agreed. “I believe that.”

“And, thank God, we have not thwarted it, Harry. We have enjoyed it to the full.”

He pressed her hand tightly for his only answer. Dream or reality, was it? He had almost lost the power to distinguish. He looked into her face, softly happy and somehow nobler and purer than he had ever known it, pressed her hand again in a vague necessity to substantiate the tangible actuality of

her presence. It was really Christine sitting there, filling that usually empty chair, breathing with slight rise and fall of her bosom as she gazed into the fire. And if the other were a dream—the happy past that she called up in imagination—just an old man’s dream, why he would allow himself, that sentimental self in him that none but himself had ever seen, the happiness of the illusion to the full. There was none to ridicule him for a childish make-believe, unworthy of his dignity.

“Christine,” he said, gently, “are you happy?”

She smiled at him upon her sigh.

“Very happy, dear.”

Again there was a silence between them. Presently she looked up once more.

“It’s splendid the way Phil is getting on, isn’t it, dear?”

He glanced at her from his own dream, uncomprehending. She went on, as though discussing a subject thoroughly familiar.

“Do you remember we said we would call him Philip—our first boy—long before we had him? When we used to talk about him, in those first happy months of being together, it didn’t seem possible that it could ever be really true, did it, dear? And yet there he is—twenty-four years old! It’s difficult for me to think that I ever could have been his mother. When I look at him, so tall and big, it seems impossible that he could once have been my baby.”

He stared at her. What was she talking of? They had never had a child. Then it came to him——

“Yes, dear. He’s a fine chap.”

She smiled at him gratefully.

“I think we were right to let him marry, don’t you, dear? I know he’s very young—but it’s perhaps better than if he waited until he became set in his own habits and could no longer share the youthful high-spirits of his dear little wife—as you very nearly waited too long, didn’t you, dear? Another

year or two of getting wrapped up in your own ambitions and you might have crushed all the young life out of me.” Her tone was dreamily sincere.

“Don’t, Christine!” he said, thickly. “I know a lot of it was my fault——”

“Shh!” she soothed him with a gesture of her disengaged hand. “We’re talking about Phil and his charming little wife. She’s just the sort of girl I would have chosen for him, Harry. Young, sensible, pretty, with eyes that look you straight in the face—and she loves him, Harry, like I loved you, with all her young soul.”

He made a little choking sound and pressed her hand—so warm and loving now!—with a convulsive tightness.

“And soon, Harry,” she went on, “we shall be grandparents, you and I—looking forward beyond the next generation to the one after—*living forward*. Life is very wonderful, isn’t it, dear, in its continuity? Our little lives cease, but something of us goes on and on, in generations that we can’t even imagine. Oh, it’s very wonderful!” She sighed. “To think we might have missed it all, if we had not loved!”

“Christine!” He could scarcely speak. “You’re torturing me!”

“Shh!” she said. “It’s all real—it’s all real *now*. Everything else was a bad dream from which we have waked together.”

“If only we could keep awake!” he said, pressing her hand in his as though he would never let it go.

She looked at him archly.

“You were always pessimistic, Harry, weren’t you? Do you remember how you used to say we should never have the little girl for whom we longed, just because we longed for her so much? And now there’s Jeanie! Jeanie who’ll be having her twenty-first birthday in a month or two! And you are proud of her, aren’t you, Harry? Of course you are! We are both proud of such a daughter, just the daughter we imagined.”

He closed his eyes.

“I remember—I remember how we used to talk of the daughter we were going to have. It seems very long ago, Christine, those first months of our life together.”

She smiled.

“And there she is, all our dreams of her coming true, asleep upstairs and very likely herself dreaming of the woman’s life that is opening before her. She’s very real to you, isn’t she, Harry?”

He forced himself to speech with an effort.

“Yes, dear. Go on.”

“She’s worth all the anxieties we had with her—the anxieties we never imagined. Do you remember, when she was a little golden-haired prattler, that awful time when she was ill? Do you remember how I nursed her, night and day—and how you would come tip-toeing to her tiny cot and look down upon it, praying with all your soul that she would not die? I think that was when you first began really to love her very much, Harry—when you thought you might lose her.” She nodded her head in dreamy reminiscence, staring into the fire. “I remember how proud I was when you gave up your work for a day or two because you felt you could not leave the house while she was in danger. It was such a miracle for you to do that—like Joshua stopping the sun—and all because of our tiny little Jeanie. It made me love you, oh, ever so much more, Harry!”

“Go on!” he said, closing his eyes again. “Go on!”

“And then how proud of her you were while she was at school! She always had your brains, Harry, didn’t she? Always she was at the top of her class. I remember”—she smiled—“I used to fear that she might grow too clever and wear spectacles. But there was just that bit of me—of the frivolous me—in her, wasn’t there, Harry? And so just like her mother she grew up to like pretty frocks and look as charming in them as I used to want to look for you to admire me.”

“Never so charming as you used to look, Christine, when you were twenty-one,” he said, his eyes lighting up with a genuine memory. “No one could look prettier than you did.”

Her warm fingers curled in his hard hands and her smile came up to him.

“Thank you, dear. It is nice of you not to forget.”

He breathed a long sigh.

“For every day of twenty-five years, Christine, I have seen you as you used to look then.” There was an emphasis in his subdued and deliberate enunciation that was eloquent of past agonies.

“It was the real Christine, Harry, that twenty-one-year-old Christine who was so proud to be your wife and knew herself to be so unworthy of you.”

“No, no!” he said, hoarsely. “Not unworthy—I didn’t understand then. If only I had understood—if I had not been so absorbed in the things I wanted to do——”

“Shh!” she soothed him. “It was all very beautiful, our life together, Harry dear. Do you remember the holidays we had alone together? Do you remember Switzerland, and the great mountains that towered up behind our hotel, the snow upon their summits orange against deep blue in the first sunshine of the dawn? Do you remember how we used to wake up to look at them, and said it was just like the pictures, only more wonderful because we were actually there? Do you remember being among the great fields of narcissi, with blue gentian higher up, and reminding me that this was what you had promised to show me—those fields on fields of wild flowers which you had seen when you were a young student, years before? Do you remember the mountain stream with the big boulders where we ate sandwiches on a little patch of turf between the rocks, and you kissed me just as those other people came down the path? I remember—I remember how I went hot all over and yet was very proud and happy, because it was the first time that any one else had ever seen you loving me. You used to pretend—do you remember?—to be a little cold and distant toward me when we were in company, your dignity much too big to admit that you were in love.”

“Don’t, Christine—don’t!” he murmured, the breath of a soundless sob escaping him in a broken exhalation. “If only we had had them—those holidays we meant to have!”

“We did, dear,” she pursued. “We did have them. They’re all there—among our dreams. Look at them and you will see that they are true. The memory of them isn’t spoilt by anything that was not just right. Can’t you call them up again—the holidays we used to promise ourselves for the days when you were successful? Can’t you see them? Can’t you see that lovely time in Italy—the big blue lake, with the yellow houses and the red roofs close under the mountains and fairy islands in the middle? Can’t you see Venice and the black gondola in which we sat, urged forward like a living thing over the still water in which the palaces were reflected? Can’t you call back that wonderful night of silent peacefulness when, arms around each other, we leaned out over our balcony and listened to the gondoliers singing to each other under the stars? Don’t you remember the bridge in Florence where you stopped and said: ‘This is where Dante met Beatrice’—and we looked into each other’s eyes and knew that we, too, were a Dante and Beatrice, born for each other’s love? Don’t you remember, dear? Can’t you see them, all those wonderful years together, when you and I were young?”

“Christine, Christine!” he murmured. “If only they were true!”

“They are true, dear—they are true,” she asserted. “They are the truest things we have—the dreams of our souls which they will dream again and again long after we have no body. And not only holidays—our life together had work in it, too, didn’t it, dear?—hard and successful work. Do you remember the big case which made you famous?”

He nodded, a smile of genuine reminiscence on his face.

“The Pembroke case?”

“Yes, dear,” she continued, “the Pembroke case. Do you remember how hard you worked then?”

“By Jove, I do!” he agreed, with an emphatic little laugh. “I never worked so hard in my life!”

“Do you remember how I used to sit by the fire here at night, not daring to make the slightest sound, while you worked at your desk, going through all those masses and masses of papers in readiness for the next day of the trial? Do you remember how sometimes you would look up, not saying a word, but just assuring yourself that I was still there and going on with your work

all the fresher because you saw me? Do you remember when at last, in the small hours, you finished for the night, you would come across and kiss me, oh, so quietly, and lay your head against me for comfort because you were so tired!”

He did not answer. His eyes stared into the fire, his lips thinned in a tight pressure against each other, as the mental picture of the fact came up in conflict with this ideality. They had been terrible, those nights of solitary work.

She continued, undeterred.

“And then, on the last day of the trial, when you had made that great speech—the first big speech of your career—and got your verdict, the night when all the newspapers were full of your triumph, do you remember your home-coming, dear?”

“By Heaven, I do!” he interrupted, with a sudden outburst of bitterness. “I came home and looked around me—and wished that I were dead in the hopeless emptiness of it all!”

“No, dear, no!” she corrected him. “You came home and found me waiting for you in my prettiest dress and we had dinner together, just you and I alone, because the moment was so big that we couldn’t possibly share it with any one else. Do you remember how solemn we tried to be, you and I—you looking so dignified in your evening clothes and I just as dainty as I could be? And then suddenly you jumped up like a schoolboy and darted round the table to kiss me—and we kissed and laughed at ourselves, and kissed and laughed again, every time the servants went out of the room—a couple of happy children. And I loved you so much because you were so very clever and yet could be such a boy. And then we got solemn again as the bigness of it all came over us—real, real success at last! The paths of all the world seemed open to us, didn’t they, dear? And we drank to it, success and love! And then, quite close and looking into my eyes, you said the loveliest thing of all the lovely things you ever said to me—you said that your great success, the one success that really mattered to you, was that you had won my love, my real, real love that bound my soul to yours for ever. Oh, Harry, I would have died for you that night!”

She ceased and he was silent. The might-have-been came up before him with intolerable vividness. If one could but begin over again!

“And now,” she gently moved the hand that all this time had lain in his as they crouched close together over the fire, “and now here we are—all the years of hard work, so successful that we need not worry any more, behind us—nothing really important to do except to sit hand in hand and dream over the happy past, an old Darby and Joan who have lived their lives——”

He jumped to his feet.

“Christine! Christine!” he cried. “Let us make it true! Let us forget—forget all the bad dream—go on again together just as if what you said were true!”

She looked up at him, a strange and awful fear coming into her eyes, the face that had gained colour going ashen once more.

“Oh, Harry!” she said, in a tone of infinite reproach. “You’ve broken it! You’ve let go my hand!”

He ignored this infantile remark, went straight to his point in the brutally over-riding manner characteristic of him.

“Let us forget it, Christine, forget that you ever went away from me. I’ll never remind you of it. We won’t argue past responsibilities. We’ll start afresh. Christine, I’m a lonely old man—I want you. I want you to sit by the fire with me, to talk over, if you like, the might-have-beens that we threw away, I as much as you. I want you, anyway. I can’t bear loneliness any more—not now, after you have come back to me!”

She rose to her feet also, shivering, her eyes closing, biting at her lower lip as though in suppressed pain. She shook her head.

“No, Harry, not now. I—I must go away now, go back.”

She turned and moved, with a curious detachment from him that reminded him somewhat of a sleep-walker, toward the door.

He jumped in front of her.

“You shall not go, Christine! You have come back—and you shall not go again!”

She opened anguished eyes at him.

“Harry,” she said in a tone of profound melancholy, “you know you cannot keep me like that. Remember the last time you tried to hold me caged behind a closed door!”

He did remember—the day when, disapproving of some intended excursion, he had, in a cold passion, turned the key upon her—the day he had come back to find a broken lock and curt note. He had learned his lesson. He stood aside from her path, entreated instead of dictating.

“Stay with me, Christine! Stay with me!”

She shook her head.

“I cannot,” she said. “I must go back. It was only for one little hour I came. We have had it, Harry, and I must go.”

“But you will return? I shall see you again?”

She smiled a wan smile at him.

“Who knows, Harry?”

“Where are you going? Where do you live?”

“Please, Harry!—ask no questions. Let me go.”

There was a dignity about her which silenced him. He opened the door for her and they went out into the hall. In a dazed preoccupation, he went up to the outer door and opened it to the night. Then he turned and perceived her coatless condition.

“Good Heavens, Christine, you can’t go out like that! Wait a minute. I’ll lend you my fur coat. It’s better than nothing.”

He darted into the adjoining clothes-lobby, returned with the garment. The hall was empty; the door still open. She had gone.

He ran out and down the drive after her, crying her name: "Christine! Christine!" There was no response, neither sound nor sign of her. She had vanished.

Bitterly disappointed, he returned to the house, closed the door behind him. As he went into the clothes-lobby to replace the unneeded coat he was startled by the telephone bell.

He hastened to the instrument, picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!—Yes—Yes—what is it? Who are you?—*the police?*" He repeated the last word in a tone of bewilderment, listened.

"Yes," he replied, "Yes—Mrs. Christine Arkwright—yes—that is my wife—yes——"

The silence of the empty hall seemed to envelop him as he listened. He interjected an impatient exclamation.

"Yes!—you found a letter and traced me—yes!—Go on!—What is it all about?"

He frowned, contorted his face as though the distant voice was not clearly audible.

"What?—what do you say?—died suddenly?—I don't understand.—Where was this?"

He nodded as though now receiving more intelligible information.

"No—I don't recognize the address at all! What sort of place is it?—oh, a second-rate boarding house. Well, I think there must be some mistake—what?"

He listened again.

"No," he persisted categorically, "I say I think there must be some mistake. You say that a Mrs. Christine Arkwright died suddenly in a second-rate boarding-house—at that address I don't know—and you've traced me out—I quite understand all that. But I say I have good reason to think there is a mistake somewhere—it couldn't be—— What?"

He smiled with a grim superiority as he listened.

“What?—You say there’s no doubt of the identity?”

His brows puckered suddenly in the frown with which he prepared the annihilation of a stupid and stubbornly insistent witness.

“Now, pay attention, my friend!—When did this event occur?” He asked the question in the tone of one confident of establishing an impossibility by a counter fact. There was a moment of pause—and then his expression changed. “To-night?—*At eleven o’clock?*”

The clock in the study struck, discreetly, twelve.

FROM THE DEPTHS

The S. S. *Upsal*, 2,000 tons, the Swedish ensign at her taffrail, her one black-spouting funnel still daubed with remains of war-time camouflage, lifted and plunged doggedly into the teeth of the September south-west gale that lashed her with cold rain from the streaming gray clouds which curtained close the foam-topped gray-green waves into which she crashed with recurrent walls of spray high above her forecastle, and which mingled in an indistinguishable whelm with the dirty murk of beaten-down smoke low upon the track of her bared and racing propeller. The men upon her bridge crouched, oilskins to their ears, behind the soaked canvas of the “dodger” which protected them, peering into the mist from which at any moment might emerge the towering bulk of a liner hurrying up-channel to the hungry ports of Europe. They were silent. Conversation was a futile effort in the buffeting blasts that stopped the words in their mouths. The only sounds were the crash and thud of green water that slid off in foaming cascades from the forecastle to the well, the harp-like moaning of the wind-tautened stays, and, in brief lulls, the sizzling of rain and spray upon the heated funnel and the creaking of boat-gear whose serviceable character in such a humble “tramp” was a phenomenon reminiscent of unwonted marine perils that had but recently ceased. No longer did her look-out scrutinize every flitting patch of foam in apprehension of the dreaded periscope. The violences of sea and sky were dangers as of yore. From the depths came now no menace.

The group upon her bridge was more numerous than is customary on a cheaply run little freighter of her class. In addition to the second officer whose watch it was, and the look-out man on the opposite corner of the bridge were three others. Two of them, young men oilskin-clad like their companions, stood close together in an attitude which indicated a personal acquaintanceship independent of the working of the vessel. The third man held himself aloof, his back to them, staring over the troubled sea to a point on the starboard quarter. Somewhere in that direction, wrapped in the mists of rain and trailing cloud the last rocky outposts of England whitened the

waves which surged and fell back about them in ceaseless and ever-baffled attack.

The buoyant twist and roll which accompanied the lift and plunge of the *Upsal*, the frequent racing of her propeller, indicated that she was running in ballast. Almost for the first time in her drab, maid-of-all-work career, indeed, the *Upsal* carried no cargo. She was on a special mission. A Scandinavian salvage syndicate, having come to an arrangement with the underwriters of a few out of the hundreds of vessels which strew the bottoms of the entrances to the British seas, had chartered her to locate and survey a group of promising wrecks, preparatory to more extended operations. The two young men were their technical engineers; Jensen, the taller of the pair, and Lyngstrand, his assistant.

The third man, who stood aloof from them, was Captain Horst, the master of the ship. He was, of course, primarily responsible to his owners and not to the syndicate who had chartered his vessel. Until they reached the location of the wrecks the submarine engineers were merely passengers. Reticent and sombre as he had been since the commencement of the voyage, he ignored them now, stood apparently lost in abstract contemplation of the gray waste of sea. But one who could have looked into his face would have been impressed and puzzled by his expression. The cruel mouth under the little red moustache was curiously twisted. In the haggard eyes which roved around the restricted horizon was an oddly apprehensive uncertainty, unexpected in such a determined countenance. His glance looked down, apparently fascinated, upon the seas which raced below him as the *Upsal* lifted on yet another crest, as though there were something strange in being so high above them—and then jerked up, automatically, to the horizon as in swift, instinctive doubt of impunity. A psychologist would have suspected that he allowed a fear of some kind, so long abiding as to have become a subconscious mental habit, the relief of free play when he knew himself unwatched.

The two submarine engineers paid no attention to him. They gazed across the untenanted sea ahead to where the white spray leaped, almost lantern-high, in unsuccessful embraces of the tall column of The Bishop. Then, when the lighthouse, loftily unmoved above the eager seas, ascetically alone in the wide desolation of foam-streaked gray, had slipped abeam, had

receded into the mist behind them, when there was no object to claim the eye on all the tumultuous stretch of ocean ahead, Jensen turned to his companion and pointed downward. Lyngstrand nodded assent, and they both staggered across the wet, reeling bridge toward the ladder which led below.

The skipper, staring aft, his back on them, blocked their passage. Jensen touched him on the shoulder. He swung round abruptly, with a startled curse. Then, recognizing them, he moved aside grudgingly. His face was turned from them as they passed.

The two young men descended to the deck below. They were berthed in the saloon under the poop, but they took their meals in the charthouse immediately beneath the bridge, in company with the skipper who slept there. In addition to meal-times, the charthouse was a convenient refuge from the weather common to all of them. It was their objective now, and, just dodging a flying sea that fell with a heavy far-scattered splash upon the deck, they flung themselves inside and shut the door. Then, removing and hanging up their dripping oilskins, they slid round to a final seat upon the leather-covered lockers which filled the space between two sides of the walls and the screwed-down centre table.

“Filthy weather!” said Jensen, producing pipe and tobacco-pouch. “But we ought to get there to-night. We’re changing course now to the north-west. Feel it?”

In effect, even as he spoke the *Upsal* swung round to starboard. A long lurching roll substituted itself for the corkscrew plunges which had been the predominant motion, and the spray flung itself viciously at the port side of the ship to the exclusion of the other.

Jensen, having lit his pipe, produced a type-written sheet of paper from his pocket. It was a list of ships, followed by indications of latitude, longitude, and other particulars.

“No. 1—*Gloucester City*, 7,500 tons, Latitude 50 degrees 55 minutes North, Longitude 9 degrees 14 minutes West, 60 fathoms, torpedoed 20th September, 1918,” he read out. “Get the chart, Lyngstrand, and let us prick down its exact position.”

His fair-haired junior obediently spread out a chart of the exit to the English Channel upon the table.

“20th of September!” he said, reflectively. “That’s curious, Jensen! Exactly a year ago to-day!”

“Coincidences must happen sometimes,” replied Jensen with the superior indifference of three or four years’ seniority. “I see nothing remarkable in it.”

“It just struck me,” said Lyngstrand, apologetically. “No—I suppose there’s nothing remarkable in it—it might just as well have been any other day.”

Jensen threw a cursory glance at the chart.

“You’ve brought the wrong one,” he said, snappily. “This doesn’t go far enough north. Look in the drawer there—there must be another one.”

“It is up in the wheelhouse, I think, Jensen,” demurred the young man, mildly.

“Yes—I know—but old Horst is certain to have a duplicate. Look in the drawer and see!” replied Jensen, with an impatience invited by the docility of his junior.

Lyngstrand obeyed, rummaging among a number of charts in the drawer of the locker under Captain Horst’s bunk.

“Here we are!” he cried at last, unrolling one of them. “This is a special one, evidently! Someone has marked it all over with red ink.”

Jensen snatched it from him, spread it out. In fact, as Lyngstrand said, it was marked in many places with little red-ink crosses, and under each was a date. Jensen ran his finger across it, stopped just off the south coast of Ireland.

“By all that’s wonderful!” he cried in a slow, long-drawn accent of amazement, raising his head and looking at his companion. “*He has marked our wreck!* Look!—Fifty-fifty-five North, Nine-fourteen West—and there’s the date under it 20/9/18!”

“Then all those other crosses——?” queried Lyngstrand, in a voice of puzzled interest.

“They must be—— Wait a minute!” He compared some of them with the indications on his list. “Yes! They are wrecks, too—all torpedoed ships—look! this and this and this are marked on the chart! There are others not marked—but there are many more marks than there are ships on our list. They must be all torpedoed ships!”

“But why?” asked Lyngstrand. “Why has he got them all marked like this?—Where did he get this chart, I wonder?”

Jensen glanced to the bottom of the sheet.

“*This is a German chart!*” he exclaimed.

Lyngstrand stared at him.

“German——!” he began, and stopped. They looked into each other’s eyes in a long moment when suspicion defined itself as almost certitude. For that moment they forgot the sickly rolling of the ship threshing and wallowing on her way to one of those tragic little red crosses. They forgot everything except the slowly dawning possible corollaries of this discovery.

Before either could utter another word, the lee door of the charthouse opened and Captain Horst stood framed in the entrance. He glared across at them, his face livid with a sudden anger, his eyes blazing. Then, with a scarcely articulate but vehemently muttered oath, he sprang across the little room, snatched the chart from the table, thrust it into the drawer, locked it up and put the key in his pocket. He turned and scowled at them in a silence which they were too awed to break. His eyes, fiercely blue, seemed to search into their very souls. Theirs dropped under the intolerable scrutiny. He uttered an exclamation of angry contempt and, without further speech, walked out of the charthouse.

The two young men looked at each other.

“That is the second time this morning!” said Jensen, at last, glancing toward the door now once more closed on them.

“What is?” asked Lyngstrand, curiously.

“*That he has cursed in German!*—Lyngstrand! I am beginning to see into this!”

“But it’s impossible!” exclaimed Lyngstrand, his mind leaping to his friend’s deduction and then rejecting it. “He is a Swede, like ourselves!”

“He is a German!” said Jensen, positively.

“But he speaks Swedish without a trace of accent!”

“And other languages also, I expect—French and English, as well—better than you or I speak them, I have no doubt. Swedish would much facilitate service in the Baltic—and your German naval officer was linguistically well equipped for any possible campaign.”

“German naval officer!” echoed Lyngstrand, incredulously.

“I will bet on it!” asserted his friend.

“But—a German naval officer commanding a rotten little tramp like the *Upsal*?” said Lyngstrand, emphasizing his incredulity. “I can’t believe it!”

“Even German ex-naval officers have to live, my friend,” responded Jensen, axiomatically. “And—I ask you—what is open to them but to take service in the mercantile marine of other nations? There is no more German fleet—there are not enough merchant vessels left under the German flag to employ all their trained officers. On the other hand, all the Scandinavian nations have multiplied their trading fleets—they cannot find officers enough for them. A first-class seaman like Horst, speaking Swedish like a native, would find plenty of owners only too willing to employ him.”

“It sounds plausible,” agreed Lyngstrand, but somewhat doubtfully.

“Plausible!” repeated Jensen, scornfully. “It is more than plausible—the more I think of it, the more certain I am. Consider! Is Horst the typical rough merchant skipper? You know perfectly well he is not. You said yourself, the first evening we came aboard, that although he had the soul of a pig he had the manners of a gentleman. How does he speak Swedish—like a man who has spent half his life knocking about harbour drinking-shops? No! He expresses himself with that precise accuracy of the man employing a language well learnt, indeed, but nevertheless foreign to him—

like you and I speak English, my friend. And his clothes!—Did you ever know the skipper of a tramp steamer wear a stiff white collar while at sea? Then his curt way of giving orders—no question about discipline, but you should see some of our Swedish forecastle-hands stare at him! One of them stared a moment too long just before you came aboard. He knocked him clean out!—He is a German naval officer, I will swear to it!—More than that, I am convinced that he commanded a submarine!”

“That chart, then——?”

“Is the chart of his sinkings!”

“By God!” said Lyngstrand, solemnly, setting his teeth and staring sternly at the charthouse wall. “If I were sure of it——!”

“What do you mean?” asked Jensen, struck by this sudden change from his friend’s ordinarily meek demeanour. “What has it to do with you?”

Lyngstrand turned to him with a bitter little laugh. He seemed, indeed, a different man.

“More than you think, my friend,” he said, briefly. “I am not good company for U-boat commanders!”

“But why?—You lost no one——?”

Lyngstrand’s serious eyes held his.

“You remember I went to America in 1917, Jensen? I met a girl there—we were betrothed. She was coming to Europe to me last year. She never arrived. Her ship—a neutral—a small Norwegian ship, the *Trondhjem*, on which I had arranged for her passage—was torpedoed in the Atlantic last September—*spurlos versenkt!*” He finished in a tone of bitter mimicry, and then suddenly hid his face in his hands through a silence which Jensen felt incapable of breaking. At last he looked up again. “If ever I trace the scoundrel who murdered her——!” The ugly menace in his voice supplied the final clause to his unfinished sentence.

“A difficult task!” murmured Jensen, sympathetically.

Lyngstrand glanced at the closed drawer of the locker.

“When I think that perhaps on that chart—one of those little red crosses ——” He crashed his hand upon the table. “By God, Jensen! I would give something to have another look at it!”

Jensen laid a friendly hand on his shoulder.

“We will do our best, Lyngstrand, to see it again. But don’t torture yourself about it now. Come out on deck. The barometer is rising, and if the sea goes down to-morrow we shall want to keep clear heads for our investigation of the *Gloucester City*.—Come!”

He rose and held out his friend’s oilskins, helped him on with them.

They went out and stood in the shelter of the lee-deck, watching the foam-froth sink down and melt in the depths of the malachite waves that rolled away from them, until soon after eight bells the white-jacketed steward clanged out his announcement of dinner.

They found Captain Horst already at his place at the table in the charthouse. It was significant of the unexpressed but clearly felt antipathy which in the past few days had grown up between the skipper and his passengers that he had commenced his meal without waiting for them. Jensen, however, was a level-headed young man who had not the least intention of jeopardizing the enterprise for which he was responsible by ill-timed open bad-temper. He nodded a greeting with a smile which totally ignored the strained circumstances of their last meeting.

“I think the weather is moderating, Captain Horst,” he said, pleasantly, as he sat down.

“*Ja*,” responded Captain Horst, gruffly, throwing a perfunctory glance through the unshuttered forward windows of the charthouse.

“We ought to reach the neighbourhood of our wreck some time to-night?” pursued Jensen in affable enquiry.

Lyngstrand had addressed himself in silence to the food the steward set before him, but he glanced up as though some undertone of significance in his friend’s voice had caught his ear.

“Thereabouts,” conceded Captain Horst in a tone which sufficiently indicated that he was disinclined for conversation.

But Jensen was cheerfully loquacious.

“I wonder whether we shall hit on some other wreck instead?” he surmised. “These seas must be strewn with them.”

Captain Horst shrugged his shoulders.

Lyngstrand looked up.

“If I were a German U-boat commander,” he said, with a quiet deliberation, his eyes straight on Captain Horst’s face, “I should not dare to sail over these seas again. I should see drowning faces sinking through every wave.”

His last sentence seemed to ring through the silence which followed it. Captain Horst sat impassive, but his brutal jaw looked hard and his cruel mouth thinned during the moment in which he returned Lyngstrand’s glance.

“Bah!” he said. “The dead don’t come back!” There was something of defiance in his harshly contemptuous tone. “They are finished with—for ever!”

The blood went out of Lyngstrand’s face as he bent down again to his plate.

There was no further conversation during the meal.

The afternoon was spent by the two young men, in company with the half-dozen divers under their orders, in overhauling the diving-dresses, air-pumps, etc., which might be required on the morrow.

The gale had obviously blown itself out. The western sky had cleared, the rain had ceased, the wave-tops were no longer torn in flying spume, there was less violence in the rolling surges in whose trough they wallowed. When, a little after four bells, they were summoned to tea, the sun was setting in a golden splendour that promised a peaceful dawn.

Excited by the prospect of the next day’s work, the two young men forgot their suspicions of Captain Horst, could talk of nothing but their plans for

diving despite the after-swell of the gale which would surely still be running. The captain listened to their impatience with the ghost of a grim smile, but volunteered no part in the conversation.

“Do you propose to keep under way all night, Captain Horst?” enquired Jensen.

“No,” he replied. “By my dead reckoning we ought to be in the vicinity of the wreck at about eight bells to-night. I shall anchor then if the glass is still rising. To-morrow we will take an observation and get as close as we can to the position of the *Gloucester City*—presuming that you have it correctly stated.”

His tone was perfectly indifferent, but Lyngstrand thought suddenly of that chart with the little red crosses—and particularly that cross on their indicated spot, 50° 55′ N., 9° 14′ W, with the fatal date of exactly a year ago—20/9/18. Surely it could not be mere coincidence! He thrilled suddenly with a dramatic perception. If—if it were so—if the man so calmly smiling at him had really sent the *Gloucester City* to the bottom!—and now, on the anniversary of the crime, was coolly proposing to anchor himself as near as might be over her ocean grave, preparatory to disturbing it on the morrow!—No! He ridiculed himself. It was impossible! No man could have the iron will—he glanced straight into the blue eyes of the impassive Horst, read nothing—no man could stand the strain without betraying himself. The murderer brought back to the scene of his crime broke down into confession—and, if he were the murderer of the *Gloucester City*, Horst was being brought back with ironic inexorability to the site of his assassination, brought back by those subtle, apparently normal, everyday circumstances from which there is no escape.

He wondered to what extent Horst had been informed of the purport of their voyage when the *Upsal* was chartered. He could not, certainly, have been left in ignorance—but, on the other hand, he could not well refuse to navigate the ship without losing an employment which, however humble, was assuredly to be coveted by a man in his position. A penniless naval officer had poor prospects in Germany. Bah! (he thought to himself in a sudden revulsion) he was accepting Jensen’s unsupported surmises as though they were reality. The thing was impossible! Another glance at the

hard but emotionless face opposite him reassured him. He banished his hyper-dramatic idea in a spurn of self-contempt for his too excitable imagination.

Conversation languished. There was no community of thought between the skipper and his passengers, and his presence was a check upon the mutual confidences of the two young men. Meals together were an ordeal escaped from as soon as terminated, and Jensen and Lyngstrand speedily went out on deck again with the murmured allegation that the overhaul of their gear was not yet finished.

They did not come together again until some three hours later, when, her white anchor-light hoisted between her masts, the *Upsal* was pitching at her cable to the heavy swell which rolled down upon her from the darkness of the night. The two young men had been yarning with the chief engineer in the pleasant warmth of the engine-room, when a glance at the clock reminded them that it was the hour when the steward brought biscuits and cocoa to the charthouse. Light-hearted as boys, their unpleasant thoughts of the captain dissipated by the cheerful talk in which they had been indulging, they scrambled up the iron-runged ladder from the warm, oily depths to the black, damp chill of the outer night.

In this sea-smelling gloom where the wave-tops ran past them with faintly phosphorescent crests, the unwonted stillness of the ship's engines was suddenly vivid to their consciousness as she eased and tugged at her anchorage.

"Well, here we are!" said Jensen, stopping for a moment to peer around him.

"I wonder what lies beneath us?" queried Lyngstrand, developing his comrade's thought. As he, too, probed the darkness where the cruel waves ran, easy familiars of the night, he had an uncomfortable little mental picture of the *Gloucester City* foundering, with torn side, into their chill depths—a year ago. What shrieks and cries had hushed, for ever, into the silence which encompassed them?

Both shuddered.

"Come along," said Jensen. "Our cocoa will be cold."

At the charthouse door they hesitated for a moment on an indefinable impulse, peeped through the unshuttered window which allowed a broad ray of light to fall across the deck.

Captain Horst was seated at the table, his head in his hands, his back to them. Spread out before him was the chart with the little red crosses. He sat motionless, staring at it, as though absorbed in reverie. The three cups of cocoa were steaming on the table. His was untouched.

For one wild moment Lyngstrand thought he might be able to surprise a glance at the chart. He turned the handle of the door as stealthily as he could. Slight as the sound had been, however, Captain Horst had heard it. When they entered he was stuffing something into his breast pocket, and the chart was no longer on the table.

They drank their cocoa in silence, Horst staring moodily at the floor, Jensen and Lyngstrand risking a glance of mutual comprehension. Suddenly two loud, sharp knocks broke the stillness—knocks that seemed to be on the charthouse wall.

Captain Horst raised his head.

“*Herein!*” he cried, automatically, obviously without thinking.

Jensen shot a swift look at his friend, eyebrows raised at this German permission of entry. Horst bit his lip, suddenly self-conscious. He repeated the authorization in Swedish.

No one entered.

Expectation was just passing into a vague surprise, when the knocks were repeated—three heavy blows, obviously deliberate, upon the after-wall of the charthouse.

Horst sprang up, with a savage curse of exasperation. He was self-controlled enough, however, to utter his thought in Swedish. “I’ll teach them!” he exclaimed, as he flung open the charthouse door. “Fooling around here!”

He disappeared into the night and they heard the tramp of his heavy sea-boots as he ran round the charthouse. But no other sound woke upon his

passage. The circuit completed, they heard his angry yell to the look-out man on the bridge above, heard the quietly normal response, the surprised denial. The interior of the charthouse was a hushed stillness where Jensen and Lyngstrand sat exchanging a smile of malicious enjoyment. Horst vituperated the stammering look-out man in a flood of ugly oaths that were plainly a break-down of nervous control.

The door opened again for his entry.

“Extraordinary thing!” he scowled across at them. “No one there! You heard them, didn’t you?” He seated himself with an angry grunt.

Before they could answer, the knocks recommenced in a sudden vehemence—not slow and deliberate this time, but in a rapid succession which quickened to a fast and furious fusillade from origins that seemed to play, flitting arbitrarily, all over the walls and roof. The charthouse reverberated with them. Their intensity varied at every moment from sharp, hammer-like blows to rapid, nervous taps from what might have been a feverishly agitated pencil. The wild and uncanny tattoo culminated in three crashing blows that seemed to be on the underside of the table itself. There was silence.

“What are you playing at?” cried Horst, glaring at them in fierce suspicion of a hoax.

For answer, they both lifted up their hands, obviously unoccupied, into the air. Even as they did so, the knocks started again, still rapid, but with a certain deliberate rhythm, and much less violent. Again they seemed to be on the underside of the table. Horst looked, with a scowl of distrust, under it to their immobile feet. The two young men glanced at each other, as puzzled and alarmed as Horst himself.

“What in the name of Heaven is it?” cried Jensen.

The knocks swelled suddenly louder as though in answer to his voice.

“Listen!” said Horst, holding up his hand. The colour had gone suddenly out of his face, his eyes fixed themselves in a recognition charged with vague fear. “It’s——!”

“Yes!” cried Jensen, “by all that’s wonderful——!”

“The Morse code!” Lyngstrand completed the sentence.

Once perceived, there was no doubt of it. That succession of irregular taps and pauses coming from the table as from a sounding-board was a plain language to all three of them, unmistakable, not more to be banished from cognition than the reiteration of spoken words.

“But,” cried Lyngstrand, “where does it come from?—We have no wireless—and even wireless could not produce that!”

“Listen!” Jensen reproved him. “It’s a message of some kind!” He glanced across to Horst who sat speechless, his face gray, his eyes terrified. “Not Swedish!—Take it down, Lyngstrand, while I spell it out!”

The young man feverishly produced pencil and paper from his pocket. “Listen!” he cried. “Good God! Do you catch it?”

Three sharp taps—three more widely spaced—three sharp taps again—the series was reiterated insistently—*S—O—S!—S—O—S!—S—O—S!*

“Ready, Lyngstrand?” queried Jensen in the sharp tone of a man concentrating himself for action. His comrade nodded.

Jensen rapped sharply upon the table the wireless operator’s signal of reception. In immediate answer the raps from the invisible source renewed themselves, continued evidently in a message. Lyngstrand jotted down the letters as Jensen spelled them out.

“*‘s-t-e-a-m-s-h-i-p’*—it’s English!” he interjected. “Got it?——” The raps had continued, noted by his brain and coalesced by it into definite words. “*‘Gloucester City’*——”

“*What*——?” ejaculated Lyngstrand, in incredulous amazement, as he rapidly wrote the words.

Jensen continued, his attention fixed upon the unceasing raps.

“*—torpedoed 50-55 north 9-14 west—sinking fast—come quickly—done in*
_____”

He glanced up to see Horst springing at them like a maddened animal.

“Stop that!” cried the captain. “It’s a trick!—it’s a trick!” In another second he had snatched paper and pencil from Lyngstrand’s hand.

A formidable series of violent crashes, emanating from walls, roof, and table, was the instant response to his action. He shrank back, appalled, crouching with eyes that searched the surrounding walls in agonized apprehension. “It’s a trick!—it’s a diabolical trick!” he muttered. “*It must be!*”

“Captain Horst!” said Jensen, with sternly level authority. “Be good enough to sit down and remain quiet. All matters relating to the *Gloucester City* come within my province.”

Horst, his arms up as though to guard himself, went slowly backward to his seat but did not sit. There was madness in his eyes. “How could they know?” he said to himself in a sharp-breathed whisper, “—*the exact words!* _____”

“What do you mean?” queried Lyngstrand, curiously. Horst replied without thinking, more to himself than to his questioner.

“The exact words of her call for help—a year ago! My wireless picked it up after we had left her——” He stopped suddenly, realized that he had betrayed himself.

“Then——!” cried Lyngstrand, jumping up from his seat and taking a step forward. His eyes, full of menace, searched the ex-U-boat commander’s face.

“Be quiet—both of you!” commanded Jensen, holding up his hand. The regular succession of raps had commenced again. Jensen listened to them, nodded. Then he himself rapped a message in English on the table—“*who are you?*”

Horst and Lyngstrand listened in dead silence as the answer spelled itself out upon the table.

“*h-e-n-r-y s-m-i-t-h w-i-r-e-l-e-s-s o-p-e-r-a-t-o-r g-l-o-u-c-e-s-t-e-r c-i-t-y.*”

Jensen turned a glance of wonderment to his comrade. Horst, reading the message as currently as the others, looked as though about to faint.

“Stop it!” he said, hoarsely. “Stop it!”

Jensen ignored him, rapped again upon the table—“*where are you now?*”

The answer came immediately.

“*a-t y-o-u-r s-i-d-e*”

The three of them sprang back simultaneously, as from the presence of a ghost. Their eyes probed empty air.

Jensen spoke aloud, still in English.

“Can you see us—hear us?”

The raps of the invisible hand upon the table replied at once.

“*y-e-s*”

“*Mein Gott!*” muttered Horst. “I shall go mad!” Jensen continued his colloquy.

“Where is the *Gloucester City*?” He smiled to himself as though setting a trap for this unseen intelligence. “Is she still afloat?”

The raps recommenced without hesitation.

“*y-o-u-r a-n-c-h-o-r f-i-x-e-d i-n u-p-p-e-r w-o-r-k-s*”

Lyngstrand uttered an ejaculation of awed astonishment. He looked to see the sweat pearling on Captain Horst’s forehead.

The raps spelled out, spontaneously, an explanatory afterward.

“*w-e l-e-d y-o-u t-o i-t*”

“*We?*” queried Jensen. “Who are ‘*we*’?”

“*t-h-e d-r-o-w-n-e-d*” The raps were decisive.

“Why?” Lyngstrand admired his comrade’s steely self-control. “Why did you lead us to it?”

“h-e c-a-n g-u-e-s-s”

“Who?”

“t-h-e m-u-r-d-e-r-e-r”

Both glanced swiftly at Horst. He was speechless, his face a study in blanched terror.

“h-e k-n-o-w-s” added the raps. There was something indefinably malicious about their sound.

“Stop it!” Horst’s voice was strangled, scarcely audible. “Stop it!”

Jensen was unmoved.

“How many of you?” he asked.

Lyngstrand, fascinated by this conversation with the unseen, was grateful for the question.

“t-h-r-e-e h-u-n-d-r-e-d a-n-d e-i-g-h-t g-l-o-u-c-e-s-t-e-r c-i-t-y h-u-n-d-r-e-d a-n-d f-i-v-e r-e-s-c-u-e-d o-t-h-e-r s-h-i-p-s f-o-u-r h-u-n-d-r-e-d a-n-d t-h-i-r-t-e-e-n i-n a-l-l”

“All men?” queried Jensen.

“t-w-e-n-t-y-f-i-v-e w-o-m-e-n”

“My God!” muttered Lyngstrand, in a sudden vivid remembrance that stabbed him like a pain. He glanced at Horst.

Jensen glanced also, and was merciless.

“Are you all here?” he asked.

“y-e-s” There was a little pause, *“h-u-n-d-r-e-d-s m-o-r-e I d-o-n-t k-n-o-w d-r-o-w-n-e-d o-t-h-e-r s-u-n-k s-h-i-p-s a-l-l h-e-r-e”*

Lyngstrand shivered, looked around him uneasily. Jensen's voice scarcely betrayed a tremor as he pursued.

"What have you come for?"

"w-e h-a-v-e c-o-m-e f-o-r h-i-m"

"No!—no!" screamed Horst, suddenly. *"No!—Ach, Gott, schütze mich!"*

Both Lyngstrand and Jensen had a sense of inaudible mocking laughter in the air about them. There was an awful silence.

The raps recommenced spontaneously.

"t-e-l-l h-i-m t-h-e-y a-r-e f-i-l-i-n-g p-a-s-t h-i-m i-d-e-n-t-i-f-y-i-n-g h-i-m"

Jensen turned to Horst.

"You hear?" he asked, grimly.

But Horst, with a blood-curdling scream of terror, had flung himself at the charthouse door, thrown it open. They heard the hiss and sough of the dark seas. He plunged out, blindly, head-foremost. Then, just beyond the threshold, he stopped, recoiled, staggered back into the charthouse.

"No!" he gasped, hoarsely. *"No!—I can't face them! I can't face them!—I can't die!—I dare not!"*

He shook in a palsy of the faculties. His eyes agonizedly sought their unsympathetic faces. The German submarine commander is a pariah among seafaring men, whatever their nationality. He realized it, hopelessly, as he met their hard eyes. With a sob of self-pity, he stumbled across to a corner of the charthouse, sank down upon the seat, covered his face with his hands.

Lyngstrand's young features were sternly set as he glanced at him. Then he took a long breath, the preparatory oxygen-renewal of the man who dares an experiment that will tax him. He rapped the wireless "call-up" upon the table.

"Can the others communicate also?" he asked, loudly, in English. He, also, was trembling.

The answer came at once.

“o-n-l-y t-h-r-o-u-g-h m-e” There was a slight pause, then the raps recommenced again, *“l-a-d-y h-e-r-e h-a-s a m-e-s-s-a-g-e f-o-r p-e-t-e-r”* the raps hesitated *“p-e-t-e-r f-u-n-n-y n-a-m-e c-a-n-t c-a-t-c-h i-t——”*

Lyngstrand’s face went deathly white.

“Yes,” he gasped, just only able to speak, “—Peter—yes—go on!” He looked at the table as though expecting to see the hand that was rapping out the message. Tap-tap-tap, it came.

“p-e-t-e-r l-i-n-g-s-t-r-a-n-d”

“Yes—here!” he gasped. “Go on!—who is it?”

“m-a-r-y t-i-l-l-o-t-s-o-n”

He reeled against the table, clutched at it.

“My God!” he murmured to himself, his eyes closing, his teeth grinding upon one another in an agony of emotion. Then, with a supreme effort of self-control, he asked, loudly: “The message? Give it me!”

“s-h-e s-a-y-s s-h-e s-u-r-e l-o-v-e-s y-o-u s-t-i-l-l a-n-d i-s w-a-i-t-i-n-g f-o-r y-o-u”

“Mary!” The cry burst from him, sobbingly, on a note of poignant anguish. Jensen felt the tears start to his eyes. Horst cowered still, face hidden, in his corner.

There was a long moment in which Lyngstrand failed to bring another sound to utterance. He swayed as though about to faint. Then once more he mastered himself.

“What—what happened?” he asked, unsteadily. “How did she die? Was she torpedoed?”

“s-h-e s-a-y-s s-t-e-a-m-e-r t-r-o-n-d-h-j-e-m s-u-n-k g-u-n-f-i-r-e r-e-s-c-u-e-d s-m-a-l-l b-o-a-t b-y g-l-o-u-c-e-s-t-e-r c-i-t-y a-f-t-e-r-w-a-r-d t-o-r-p-e-d-o-e-d”

Lyngstrand reeled with closed eyes. He had a vivid vision of the torn wreck in the depths beneath them, carnivorous fish darting where their anchor grappled its untenanted bridge.

“Did—did they have a chance?” he asked.

“*n-i-g-h-t w-i-t-h-o-u-t w-a-r-n-i-n-g*” came the answer.

Lyngstrand drew another deep breath, glanced at the motionless Horst.

“And—and the man—the man who sank her?”

“*k-a-p-i-t-a-n-l-e-u-t-n-a-n-t h-o-r-s-t*” There was a terrible precision in those raps.

They ceased. There was a deathly stillness. Through long moments, not one of the three men in the charthouse moved. Then Lyngstrand turned slowly. He took three steps toward Captain Horst, stood over him. The only sounds were the creaking of gear as the *Upsal* rose and subsided on the swell, the swish and suck of the long waves that ran past her in the darkness beyond the open charthouse door.

Lyngstrand’s mouth had set in a thin line. His lips, compressed, opened but slightly as he spoke.

“Captain Horst,” he said, with grim distinctness, “you are certainly going to die. I give you the privilege of the warning you did not extend to your victims.”

Horst looked up suddenly. His eyes, blue still, but crazed with terror, fixed themselves upon the gray eyes that met them pitilessly. His mouth moved under the little red moustache, but no sound came from it.

Lyngstrand continued, an edge of fierce contempt upon his hard voice.

“I even give you a choice: You can, if you like, go out there”—he pointed through the open door to the rayless night—“and throw yourself overboard _____”

Horst sprang to his feet, recoiled into the extreme corner of the charthouse.

“No!” he screamed. “No!”

“—or I shall kill you myself,” pursued Lyngstrand, evenly.

Horst’s face contorted suddenly with demoniac passion. Jensen, who had approached and was watching him closely, saw his hand dart to the pocket of his jacket, and he flung himself forward just as the revolver cracked.

With a red-hot thrust through his shoulder, a sickening faintness in which the floor seemed to rise up to his knees, Jensen tottered back to the charthouse wall. Fighting for consciousness, he dimly saw his comrade hurl himself upon Horst—someone’s arm high in the air holding a revolver, another arm high with it, clutching at the wrist below the weapon.

Then commenced a terrible silent struggle where the only sound was the short gasps and sobs for breath of the two men swaying with the motion of the ship. They hugged close, face upon face, in a murderous wrestle where neither dared shift his grip. Both were big-framed, powerful, but Lyngstrand had the advantage of youth. They came, inch by inch, slipping on the floor, past Jensen leaning dizzily against the wall. He saw them through a red mist where the electric lamp glowed vaguely, unmoved like a nebulous star above the tensely locked embrace where life fought for human continuance.

Inch by inch, they moved onward. Jensen, his vision clearing, though impotent to move, saw now that Lyngstrand had the inner berth, that Horst was being gradually, slowly but surely, thrust toward the open door. He saw one of Horst’s hands free itself, grip at the door-post, cling to it. He saw the awful terror in the eyes that glared upon his relentless adversary.

Minute after minute the tense and silent struggle at the door continued. Still clutching at the door-post, Horst was gradually borne backward. His feet still in the charthouse, his body, save for that one gripping hand, was bent back out of sight into the darkness.

Suddenly his fingers relaxed their hold. Their feet tripped by the raised threshold of the door, both disappeared headlong in a heavy thud upon the deck outside.

Jensen heard a sharp exclamation, the gasp of bodies that are rolled upon—then the quick scuffling of feet. Agonized for his comrade, he dragged himself painfully toward the door. Just as he reached it one ghastly piercing scream rang through the night.

He gazed out to see two closely locked bodies disappear over the bulwark.
The dark seas lifted a foaming crest as the *Upsal* rolled.

YELLOW MAGIC

The talk of the half-dozen men on the veranda of the Singapore club—a couple of merchants, a planter in town on business, an officer of an Indian regiment, a globe-trotting professor from an American university, and a sea-captain—had drifted desultorily from the specific instance of the famous Indian rope-trick, resuscitated by a British magazine that lay upon the club-tables and contested sceptically by the Anglo-Indian officer, to the general topic of the alleged ability of the Asiatic to make people “see what isn’t there.” The American professor, whose specialty, as he confessed, was psychology, manifested a pertinacious interest in the subject. But his direct questions to these habitual dwellers in the Middle and Far East elicited only contemptuous negatives or vague second- and third-hand stories without evidential value. Merchants, planter, and officer alike had quite obviously none of them seen any tricks upon which the professor could safely base his rather rashly enunciated theory of special hypnotic powers possessed by the inscrutable races, whose surface energies are so profitably exploited by the white man. He turned at last to the sea-captain who had sat puffing at his cheroot in silence.

“And you, Captain Williamson? You have voyaged about these seas for the best part of a generation—have you never been confronted by one of these inexplicable phenomena of which the travellers tell us?”

There was just a little of Oliver Wendell Holmes pedantry about the professor—a touch of that Boston of the ’eighties in which he had been educated.

Captain Williamson changed the duck-clad leg which crossed the other and smiled a little with his keen gray eyes. Caressing the neat pointed beard which accentuated the oval of his intelligent face, he replied thoughtfully:

“Well, Professor—I have. Once. Personally, though I saw the affair with my own eyes, I don’t even now know what to make of it. Perhaps your hypnotic theory might explain it.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“Will you not tell us the story?” entreated the professor. “It is so rare to receive trustworthy first-hand evidence of anything abnormal.”

Captain Williamson glanced rather diffidently around upon his companions.

“Fire away, cap’en!” exclaimed one of the merchants, slapping him amicably on the knee. “You’ve always got a good yarn!”

“This happens to be a true one,” said the captain, with a smile of tolerance, “but, of course, you are under no compulsion to believe it!”

“Drinks all round on the one who doesn’t!” decreed the planter. “Go ahead! Don’t ask us to believe rubber is going to boom again, that’s all. Short of that, we’ll believe anything.”

“Well,” began Captain Williamson, his eyes following reflectively the long, deliberate puff of smoke he blew into the air, “perhaps some of you may remember Captain Strong—‘lucky Jim Strong’? Twenty-five years or so ago he was one of the best known skippers in the Pacific, celebrated almost. Men talked of him with a certain awe as of a man who had a good fortune that was nothing short of uncanny. He had been engaged in all sorts of desperate enterprises, frequently illicit, such as seal-poaching in the Russian preserves, gun-running under the nose of British cruisers, gold or opium smuggling despite the patrol-boats of the Chinese Customs Board, and always he emerged unharmed and gorged with profits. Only all the San Francisco banks put together, for he dealt with all of them, could tell you what he was worth, but it was certainly a very large sum. However wealthy he was, he apparently derived very little enjoyment from his money. He was always at sea in his ship, the *Mary Gleeson*, of which he was both owner and skipper, and stayed in port only just long enough to discharge one cargo and pick up another. His personal habits were almost unknown, but of course a legend of eccentricity grew up around them as a companion to the legend of his supernatural luck.

“It happened, as the finale to sundry personal adventures with which I will not weary you, that about a quarter of a century ago I found myself sailing out of the port of San Francisco as first officer to the *Mary Gleeson*. I was quite a young man and it was my first job as mate. We were bound to Saigon, in Cochin China, with a cargo of American arms and ammunition

consigned to the French Government. At that time the French were still fighting to preserve and extend their conquests in that part of the world.

“The voyage across the Pacific was uneventful enough. We were a contented ship. The men were cheerful. The old uncertificated Scandinavian we had shipped as second mate was a conscientious officer. I was rather proud of my new dignity and anxious to justify it.

“As for Captain Strong, I unaffectedly liked him. Decisive but even-tempered, his quietly firm handling of the ship’s company won my respect, and there was no doubt of his first-class seamanship. He was utterly without that petty punctilious pride by which some masters try to conceal their lack of native dignity, and he would talk to me for hours during my watch. His conversation revealed a wide and intimate knowledge of men and affairs, and in particular of those intrigues by which the Great Powers were in those days—I speak of the ’nineties—pushing their fortunes at the expense of the Chinese races. Upon his own personal adventures and career, however, he was completely silent, and no stratagems of mine could lure him into speaking of them. Reserved as he was upon this point, nevertheless, I felt that he regarded me with a distinctly friendly sentiment, and I cordially reciprocated it.

“At last we made the tall promontory of Cape St. Jacques, with its lighthouse and cable-station, and took on board the half-caste pilot who was to navigate us the sixty miles up the river to Saigon. I remember the trip upstream with that clearness of the memory for all that immediately precedes a drama, no matter how long ago. It was early morning when he crossed the bar and, relieved from the direct responsibilities of navigation, Captain Strong and I sat in deck-chairs under the awning of the bridge and all day watched the dense, mist-hung, fever-infested forests of mangrove and pandanus slip past us on both banks of the river. The damp, close heat was suffocating and neither of us had much desire to talk, but I fancied that a more than usually heavy moodiness lay over the skipper. He was certainly not quite normal. He frowned to himself, bit his lip, and his eyes roved in an uneasy sort of recognition from side to side of the stream as we rounded reach after interminable reach. I felt that some secret anxiety possessed him, but of course I could not ask him straight out what it was. Rather diffidently, I did venture on one question.

“‘Ever been here before, sir?’ I asked.

“He shot a suspicious look at me, directly into my eyes, before he answered.

“‘Once.’

“The tone of the reply effectually checked any further exhibition of the curiosity it heightened.

“The worst heat of the day was over when we dropped anchor in the broad stream opposite the European-looking city of Saigon. The usual swarm of junks and sampans thronged around the quay, but the black Messageries Maritimes packet moored in the river was the only other steamship.

“To my pleasure, Captain Strong invited me to go ashore with him, and in a few minutes the gig was pulling us toward the rows of fine-looking Government buildings which stretch back from the quays. I don’t know whether any of you have ever been to Saigon and I don’t know what it looks like now, but in those days it looked like the disastrous enterprise of a bankrupt speculative builder when you got to close quarters. The town of Saigon had been burnt by the French in the fighting by which they had obtained possession of the place, and they had rebuilt it on European lines, shops, cafés, Government buildings, all complete. But a paralysis was on everything, the paralysis of the excessive administration with which the French ruin their colonies. The streets were nearly deserted, a majority of the shops empty. The only Europeans were slovenly, haggard military and the white-faced, dreary Government employees who sat at the cafés and longed for France. I was more depressed and disappointed at every step.

“We went up to the Government House and filled up a few dozens of those useless papers without which the French functionary dare do nothing, and received vague assurances that in a few days we should be allowed to unload the arms of which the French troops were in urgent need. Our business completed as far as possible, Captain Strong hesitated for a moment or two, biting his lip in that odd way I had noticed coming up the river. Irresolution of any kind was a most common phenomenon in him. Then suddenly, evidently giving way to a powerful impulse, I heard him murmur to himself: ‘Give ’em a chance anyway!’

“Throwing a curt ‘Come along!’ to me, he set off at a tremendous pace through the streets with the assurance of a man who can find his way about any town where he has been once previously. I followed him, puzzled by the words I had overheard, wondering whither he was going, and noting the native population with curious eyes. The Annamite men are a stunted, degenerate race, in abject terror of their white masters, but the women are many of them surprisingly attractive. I had plenty of opportunity for comparison, for very soon we found ourselves among a swarm of both sexes at the station of the steam-tram which runs to Cho-lon, the Chinese town a few miles up the river.

“During the ride on the tram, Captain Strong did not open his lips. He stared steadily in front of him in a curious kind of way, like a man inexorably pursuing some allotted line of action.

“Arrived at Cho-lon, he struck quickly through the squalid streets of the Chinese town, looking neither to right nor left, and saying not a word. We had passed right through the town before he gave me a hint of our objective. Then he made a gesture upward as if to reassure me that we were near our journey’s end.

“Beyond the last houses, on an eminence backed by the primeval jungle, a Buddhist temple of pagoda fashion rose above us, the terminus of the rough track up which we were stumbling. As we drew near I saw that it was dilapidated, its courtyard overgrown, deserted evidently by both priests and worshippers.

“Was this what Captain Strong had come to see? Somewhat puzzled, I glanced at his face under the pith helmet. His lips were compressed, his eyes stern as though defying some secret danger. At the entrance gateway, festooned and almost smothered in parasitic vegetation, he stopped and stared into the desolate courtyard. Then, after a moment of the curious hesitation which I had already remarked that day, he entered.

“A deathlike stillness brooded over the place. The great doorless portal of the temple, flanked by huge and staring figures, confronted us, opening on to a black unilluminated interior like the entrance to a tomb. Weeds grew between the flags of the threshold. An atmosphere of indefinable evil, as though the very stones held the memory of some awful calamity, pervaded

the silence. I shuddered in a sudden sense of the sinister in this abandonment, and glanced involuntarily at my companion as if from his face I might divine the cause. It was impossible to guess his thoughts. His jaw was locked hard, his face expressionless.

“Then I perceived that we were not alone. Slinking round the outer wall came a wretched-looking native. His long robe was torn and dirty. His yellow face, lit by two slanting beady eyes, was emaciated and sunken. His shaven crown was wrinkled to the top. The limbs which protruded from his gown were as thin as sticks. In his hand he held a beggar’s bowl. Remarking us, he stopped dead, watching us with his horribly bright, fever-like eyes. Instinctively, I don’t know why, I put him down as the last of the priests still haunting this once prosperous and now deserted temple.

“Captain Strong took no notice of him and advanced toward the portal. Somewhat apprehensively, I followed him and peered in, but the darkness, by comparison with the intense light outside, was so complete that I could see nothing. My curiosity getting the better of my nervousness, I stepped inside though, I confess, rather gingerly. After a minute or two, my eyes accustoming themselves to the gloom, I could see the great bronze figure of the Buddha towering above me, facing the door. Its placid face, uplifted far above the passions of men, looked as though it were patiently awaiting the day when this abandonment should cease and its worshippers return to adoration of its serenity. No precious stone now reflected the light from the door and the huge candlesticks on either side of it were empty, the days of their scintillating illumination long past.

“Captain Strong, I noticed, remained on the threshold, silhouetted black against the sunshine, but, emboldened by my impunity, I took another step forward or two. I recoiled quickly. Something stirred in the lap of the Buddha and a snake erected its head in a sudden movement. Its eyes gleamed at me from the shadow like two green precious stones.

“I swung round to shout a warning to Captain Strong. If there was one there were probably others of these deadly guardians of the divine image. There were. To my horror, I saw another snake uncoil itself from a crevice in the doorway, on a level with his neck, and draw its head back in the poise for the fatal dart. I don’t know whether he heard my inarticulate cry. His

perception of the danger was simultaneous with mine. But he made no blundering movement of confusion. Swift as lightning his hand shot out and grasped the snake firmly close under the head, where its fangs could not touch him. Then with a quick jerk he flung it into the courtyard. The snake writhed away in a flash.

“Such a display of cool, swift courage I have never seen before or since. I ran out to him where he stood in the courtyard gazing after the vanished snake, and excitedly expressed my admiration. He turned round on me with a grim smile and shrugged his shoulders. The wretched priest, if priest he was, had approached and he smiled also, a foolish, exasperating, inscrutable smile, like an idiot enjoying an imbecile esoteric meaning which is a meaning for him alone. Yet at the same time I thought there was a suggestion of sly menace in that cringing grin.

“‘Come back into Saigon,’ said Captain Strong, ignoring him. ‘We’ll have a drink before we go on board.’ There was nothing in his manner to remind you that he had just escaped death by a fraction.

“I was not at all sorry to quit this unpleasant place, and I descended that rough path with considerably more alacrity than I had mounted it. Captain Strong was as coolly self-possessed as though walking down the main street of San Francisco.

“‘I must congratulate you on your luck, sir,’ I ventured, when we had gone a little distance. ‘Had that snake struck a second before——’

“‘Bah!’ he replied, shrugging his shoulders. ‘One can get tired of luck!’

“There was a violence, a sombre bitterness, in his tone which impressed me. I thought of all the miraculous good-fortune which men attributed to him—a specimen of which I had just seen—and wondered whether he were really wearied of it. I could conceive it possible that a man of his type would find life very dull if assured beforehand of success and safety. It would be the struggle, the peril, which would appeal to him.

“He relapsed into a gloomy silence which I did not dare to break.

“We returned to Saigon on the steam-tram and shortly afterward we found ourselves seated on the deserted terrace of a café, trickling water through

the sugar into our absinthe, for all the world as though we were in some bankrupt quarter of Marseilles. Natives thronged around us pestering us to buy all sorts of worthless trifles in their horrible pidgin-French—*petit nègre* they call it. Their ‘*Mossieu acheter—mossieu acheter*’ at every moment thoroughly exasperated me. But Captain Strong sat lost in a brooding reverie where he did not even hear them. His eyes looked, unseeing, down the wide street.

“Suddenly an insinuating voice whined into my ear some native words I could not understand, and repeated them with a wheedling insistence which compelled my attention. I looked round into an ugly yellow face whose malicious narrow-slitted eyes glittered unprepossessingly above his fawning smile. There was something in the face that seemed familiar to me and yet I could not place it. Under the conical bamboo hat all these Annamites looked alike to me. I waved him away, but he was not to be shaken off, reiterating over and over again his incomprehensible phrase.

“I glanced enquiringly at Captain Strong, whom I knew to understand many Chinese dialects.

“‘He’s a conjurer and wants to show you a trick,’ he explained, contemptuously, adding a curt word and nod of assent to the native.

“The Annamite beamed idiotically and stretched out his skinny hands over the little table.

“‘*Vous—regarder,*’ he said, evidently making the most of his French, and grinned insinuatingly at me.

“With a slow, snaky motion of his skeleton-like hands he commenced to make passes in the air about six inches above my glass. I watched him, at first idly, but gradually more and more fascinated as my eyes followed the sinuous movements of his hands. Presently, to my astonishment, I saw the glass, tall and fairly heavy—a typical absinthe glass, commence to rock slightly on its base. The direction of the passes altered to a vertical, up and down, as though his hands were encouraging the glass to rise. And sure enough, it detached itself from the table and, swaying a little unsteadily, rose into the air under the hands still some distance above it. It ascended slowly, as though he were drawing it up by a magnetic attraction, to an

appreciable height from the table, say three or four inches. Then, as he changed the character of the passes again so that they seemed to press it down, it sank slowly once more to the table. The native, childishly pleased with this successful exhibition of his powers, grinned ingratiatingly at us both.

“Captain Strong threw a coin upon the marble top of the table. The fawning smile still upon his ugly face, the conjurer looked straight into the skipper’s eyes as he gabbled some native words of thanks. Then, instead of picking up the coin, he suddenly seized his benefactor’s hand in his skinny grasp and, using the captain’s forefinger like a pen, traced upon the table-top a large ellipse which commenced and finished at the coin. The action was performed so unexpectedly, and with such swift strength, that Captain Strong had no time to resist. The ellipse completed, he flung aside the captain’s finger and held both his hands outstretched above the invisible tracing. If I was astonished before, I was amazed now. Where the finger had passed over that marble glowed a flexible reddish-gold snake holding in its mouth, like a pendant on a chain, not the coin—but a brilliantly flashing jewel of precious stones fashioned into a curious pattern. I heard a startled exclamation break from my companion, but before either of us could utter an articulate word, the conjurer’s hand had descended swiftly upon the table. A second later both jewel—or coin—and the conjurer had disappeared into the throng of watching Annamites.

“I glanced at Captain Strong. He was deathly pale and one hand was feeling nervously over the breast of his silk shirt. Then, after a long breath, he turned and smiled at me.

““Clever trick that!’ he said.

“The assumption of personal unconcern was so marked that I felt any remark of mine would have been an impertinence. But I could not help wondering what Captain Strong wore underneath his shirt.

“He paid the native waiter for our drinks and rose from the table without another word. We turned our steps toward the quay. The skipper was absorbed in thoughts I could not penetrate, but I noticed that the muscles of his jaw stood out upon his face and the heavy brows frowned over his eyes. Evidently the tone of his meditations was combative.

“Whatever they were, there was no hint of their purport in his voice as he turned to me.

“‘Come and have supper aft with me to-night, Mr. Williamson,’ he said, carelessly. ‘I meant to have invited you to dinner in town but that restaurant was really too depressing.’

“I thanked him, secretly astonished at the invitation. Captain Strong never compromised his dignity by sitting at table with his officers. He ate alone, in the beautifully fitted saloon under the poop. At the time, I wondered whether he had some reason for preferring my company to his customary solitude. But his manner expressed merely the courtesy of a superior wishing to give pleasure to a young officer.

“We had arrived on the quay and I was looking over the crowd of vociferating boatmen with a view to selecting a sampan for our return to the ship, when a sudden cry from the captain startled me.

“‘Look! Good heavens! look!—Don’t you see?’ With one hand he gripped me tightly by the shoulder, with the other he pointed to the *Mary Gleeson* anchored in mid-stream. ‘Look! *The yellow jack!*’

“I gazed with him across to the ship and to my horrified astonishment saw that dreaded yellow flag which denotes the presence of yellow fever fluttering in the evening breeze. Shocked and alarmed, I asked myself who was the victim. There was no sickness among the ship’s company when we went ashore. But I knew well enough the swiftness of death in these latitudes.

“‘Quick! Get a sampan!’ ordered the captain.

“Privately, I doubted whether any boatman would venture into the tainted neighbourhood of a ship with yellow fever on board, and I was agreeably surprised to find that my only difficulty was to choose among the swarm that offered themselves. I could only conclude that they did not understand the meaning of the emblem. A moment or two later we were being propelled swiftly across the stream, our eyes fixed upon that fatal flag. The second officer stood at the top of the ladder to greet us as we climbed on board.

“‘All well, sir,’ I heard him report in a perfectly normal voice.

“‘What?’ ejaculated the captain in astonishment above me.

“‘All well, sir,’ he repeated.

“By that time I had joined the captain on the deck and we exchanged a puzzled glance. Then we looked around us. To our utter bewilderment, of the yellow jack there was no sign at all. There was not a rag of bunting about the ship.

“The captain bit his lip and wrinkled his brow. I could comprehend his perplexity. He turned sharply to the second officer.

“‘Svendson! Has any one been monkeying with the signal-flags?’

“‘No, sir!’ The prompt denial was both surprised and emphatic. ‘I have been on deck myself ever since you went ashore, sir.’

“‘H’m! All right!’ The captain shrugged his shoulders and turned to me. ‘You saw it, didn’t you?’ he asked.

“‘Yes, sir,’ I replied, confidently.

“‘A most extraordinary hallucination!’ he said. ‘But don’t let it worry you. Come and have supper with me at six bells.’

“I could see plainly that he was much perturbed, and I myself felt very uneasy as I went below. Following upon the shock of the captain’s narrow escape from the snake in the deserted temple, the strange trick of the conjurer at the café and this hallucination, shared by both of us, of the most dreaded flag a sailor knows, combined to awake a primitive superstitious fear in me. My nerves were in a state of acute tension, and I found myself starting at the most ordinary sounds.

“The captain was normal and cheerful enough, however, when at seven o’clock I joined him in the beautiful saloon which he had had fitted regardless of expense with everything that could minister to his comfort. It was his one luxury. Despite the damp, stifling heat which makes Saigon one of the most uncomfortable places in the East, the cabin was pleasantly cool. Electric fans whirled at the open ports and underneath the large skylight

hanging plants provided a refreshing mass of greenery. The Chinese steward stood by the side of the elegantly laid table, ready to serve his master. It was, as I said, the first time I had eaten with Captain Strong and I was rather impressed with the refinement of his private tastes.

“The meal, an excellent one, passed without incident. My host was agreeably conversational, but his talk was confined to those impersonal subjects which he preferred. Not once did he refer to the happenings of the day, and I felt that it would be discretion on my part equally to refrain from mention of them. The silent-footed Chang-Fu cleared the table, pulled the awnings across the open, mosquito-netted skylight, switched on the electric lamps, and left us to our coffee and cigars.

“The centre table folded down so as to leave a clear space which made the saloon appear larger than it really was, and we sat upon a comfortable leather-upholstered settee at one end, with our coffee on a little Chinese table between us.

“A tap on the door interrupted our talk, and Chang-Fu, the steward, glided into the saloon and made a respectful obeisance to the captain.

“‘Master—Chinese conjulor in sampan ’long-side—want speak master. Him number-one top-hole conjulor makee plenty-heap big tlick—me talkee with him—him velly gleet conjulor.’ The steward’s wheedling voice had a note of genuine, awed admiration in it. ‘Master see him?’ he finished, insinuatingly, rubbing his hands together under his cringing, wrath-disarming smile.

“I glanced at the captain.

“‘I wonder if it is the fellow we saw at the café, sir?’ I ventured, and then immediately regretted my words. Like the young fellow that I was, I was eager to see more of the skill of these Oriental magicians, but doubtless the captain would not wish again to come into contact with the man whose strange trick of converting the coin into a jewel had so perturbed him.

“‘Possibly he read my thoughts and resented the suspicion of moral cowardice. His tone was curt as he replied.

“‘Very likely.—Bring him down, Chang-Fu.’

“Once more the muscle stood out along his jaw and his face set doggedly. It was as though he prepared to confront an adversary. Fascinated by the mystery which I felt underlay all this, I thrilled with a sense of high

adventure as I saw the captain go to a drawer in a locker and get out a heavy revolver which he slipped into his coat-pocket. He returned to his seat by my side.

“A moment later, Chang-Fu ushered in the conjurer, and discreetly vanished. It was indeed the man we had seen at the café—more than that, I recognized him suddenly, being now without his hat, as the man hanging round that deserted temple. The ingratiating leer which twisted up his emaciated face did not render it less ugly. With a profound bow he advanced fawningly toward us, bowed again and then withdrew, after a word or two in dialect which I did not understand but to which the captain replied in a monosyllable, to a little distance across the saloon floor.

“He performed one or two clever but not particularly remarkable tricks, all of them harmless enough, and my vague suspicions of mischief were lulled gradually in the interest with which I watched him. Captain Strong remained silent, expressionless. I noticed that it was toward him that the conjurer directed his smiles, and his attention that he endeavoured more especially to hold. His complete immobility made it impossible to guess the effect of the conjurer’s manoeuvres; certainly he did not take his eyes from him for a single moment and his right hand remained in the pocket where I knew the revolver to be.

“Presently the conjurer produced a large bronze bowl—apparently from nowhere—and made the usual mystic passes in the air above it. Smoke began to issue from the bowl, a thick dark smoke which filled the saloon with a pervasive and subtly pleasant aromatic scent. The smoke rose from the bowl in ever denser volumes, curling into the air under the saloon roof in such masses as to obscure our vision of the farther walls. The electric lamps glowed redly as through a fog. The sweet, cloying smell of incense permeated the atmosphere, made it oppressive, dulled the brain as I drew it with every breath into my lungs. An insidious paralysis stole over me. I felt that I had no power over my limbs, could not move a muscle. I could only stare fascinated at that grotesquely ugly Oriental half-seen in the dim light amid the wreathing fumes, his skeleton-like hands still sweeping in slow and regular passes over the bowl. I heard the deep breathing of Captain Strong at my side as of a person whose individuality was remote from mine,

hardly to be identified. My drugged brain registered only that he was as motionless as I.

“Suddenly the electric lights were extinguished—I did not see how, in that fog of smoke, but the magician must have had the switch explained to him by the steward. The darkness was only momentary. On the instant almost, a dull red glow kindled itself in the depths of the bowl, illumined luridly the dense masses of smoke which still welled up from it. Behind them I caught a glimpse of the conjurer’s face smiling evilly, inscrutably, his eyes glittering in the red glow, his finger-tips sweeping round and round in the fumes. Then—I missed the exact moment—he disappeared. A melancholy, sing-song chant commenced from somewhere, haunting the brain with its barbaric reiteration of meaningless words in a minor key. It was like the dreary lament of savage worshippers before an idol that remains obstinately mute, I remember thinking vaguely as I listened and watched with fascinated eyes that curling, red-tinted smoke rising from the hidden flame of the bowl, expecting I knew not what of marvellous appearance.

“Suddenly the smoke rolled away on either hand. I found myself looking down a vista—not at the darkened cabin walls—but into the bright sunshine of the tropics—at a pagoda-like temple where two huge, carved, staring figures guarded the entrance to an interior where lights glimmered. I recognized it with a peculiar thrill—the temple above Cho-lon!

“Not now was the courtyard deserted and overgrown with weeds. A throng of natives, gesticulating and chattering, though I could not hear them, filled it—pressed back on either side as though to make way for a procession. In that throng was a European in a white suit. He stood out conspicuous in the front rank of the Oriental crowd. What was there so familiar about that figure? My drugged brain puzzled vaguely for a moment or two—and then he turned his face toward me. *Captain Strong!*—a younger, slighter Captain Strong—but undoubtedly he. I saw the flash of his eyes under the heavy brows, the living man! My consciousness checked for a moment at this phenomenon of duplication, and then accepted it. It seemed another part of me that was listening to the deep breathing of the man at my side—I felt myself mingling with what I saw almost as with actual reality—let myself drift as in a dream where the fantastic ceases to be strange.

“The procession filled the open space between the pressed-back ranks of the throng, a procession of priests with shaven heads, and gorgeous robes, filing into the great doorway of the temple. After them came a group of young girls, singing evidently, dancing as they went, and flinging flowers on either hand—the young Annamite girls who are so strikingly more attractive than their male relatives. I saw one of them throw a flower at the foot of the white-clad European—saw her provocative smile—saw him pick up the flower and fling it playfully back into her face—saw him follow the throng and press into the temple with the crowd. What was that peculiar gasp which came from the darkness at my side? A part of me groped with numbed faculties for its connection with the bright scene at which I gazed fascinated.

“The picture changed with the suddenness of a cinematograph film. I found myself staring at the great image of the Buddha, looming up above its prostrate worshippers from amid a blaze of torches. On its breast glowed and sparkled the sacred jewel—the *jewel into which the conjurer had transmuted Captain Strong’s coin upon the marble-topped table of the café!*—the jewel suspended on a snake of gold.

“There, conspicuously erect, stood the white-clad figure among the worshippers, staring up fixedly at the serene immensity of the image. The jewel upon its breast glowed with a throbbing light like a living thing. There was a sudden commotion among the crowd. A group of priests came up to the white-clad man and pushed him gently but firmly out of the temple.

“Again the scene changed. It was night. The moon shone down upon a garden on a hillside. Far below, obliterated and revealed from instant to instant by the foliage moving in the breeze, glittered the clustered points of yellow light of a large town. In the shadow of the trees lurked a vague white figure. Toward it, across the moonlit open space, came another—a native girl. I could see her clearly. She was so daintily beautiful that I could not but suspect foreign blood in her. The best-looking Annamite girl I had seen was gross compared with her delicate charm. For all that, she was genuinely Oriental in type. Her lithe little figure, clad in a simple twisted robe, approached swiftly, her head turning from side to side in bird-like enquiry, peeping behind each bush she passed. It was not difficult to guess for whom

she was looking. The white-clad figure stepped from its shadow, and in another moment she was in his arms.

“Then, with a sudden movement, she wriggled out of the impulsive embrace and prostrated herself quaintly in a humble little obeisance. The white-clad figure stooped to lift her up, folded her again in his arms. Their lips met in a long, passionate kiss. From the darkness at my side, but as it were from immeasurable distance, came again the peculiar little gasp, a sound as of teeth clenching upon each other in the enormous silence which seemed not to be of this world.

“My attention was fixed upon the mysterious scene before me, so real that I forgot the ship’s cabin and the conjurer with his volumes of smoke. The vision at which I gazed was to me actuality. What was happening? The man was speaking, gesticulating, pointing away with one hand—the girl was shrinking from him in horror, gesturing a desperate negative, and then letting herself be drawn tightly to his breast again to lavish her caresses upon him—and finally, as he still spoke with the same gesticulation, withdrawing herself once more, her hands up in agonized protest. What was being demanded of her? I held my breath as I watched the little drama. What was the request which was thus convulsing her to the bottom of her soul? Whatever it was, it was despairfully refused. In savage exasperation, the man flung her from him to the ground, turned his back upon her and strode away.

“She raised herself, stared after him crouchingly, agony in her face. She stretched out her arms to him, but he did not turn his head. Then, ceding evidently to an overwhelming impulse, she sprang to her feet, darted after him with the speed of a young deer, and flung both her arms passionately about his neck. Once more I saw him ask her the mysterious question, menace in his face. And now she surrendered, clinging to him desperately, tears coursing down her cheeks, her eyes wild, but every fibre of her obviously ready to do his bidding rather than lose him as she nodded her head in frantic assent.

“Once more he spoke, pointing mysteriously across the garden. She drew away from him, her eyes fixed upon his face, her bosom filling as with the long, deep breath of some tragic resolve. He was inexorable. Hopelessly,

she prepared to obey, in her attitude the touching dignity of fate accepted since love imposes it, eternal womanhood fulfilling itself in immolation. I felt the tears start to my eyes, although I could not imagine what was the evidently tremendous sacrifice demanded of her. The white-clad man stepped once more into the shadow of the bushes. With one last passionate, yearning look toward him, she moved away. She went crouched, huddled in to herself like a woman who creeps forth to commit a crime.

“Again the scene changed. I was staring at the exterior of the temple in the moonlight. The two great figures by the portal gazed now over an empty courtyard. Only the moon-cast shadows of the trees moved upon its untenanted space. There was a moment of waiting—for I knew not what, but the air was filled with expectation. Then, slinking along the wall, scarcely visible, with halting, furtive step, I saw the girl emerge from the shadows. Warily she came, close against the wall, stopping occasionally in the awful terror of the silence which brooded over everything, moving on again with evidently a fresh effort of highly strung will. Like a ghost she seemed in the moonlight, as she crept up to the giant figure by the portal, peered cautiously into the interior darkness where two yellow flames glimmered. She slipped into the gloom like a pale shadow that flits across the wall.

“And then, I know not how, I found myself looking as from the doorway into the interior. Between two guttering torches the great image lifted itself up into a smoky obscurity, the glinting jewel still upon its breast—the jewel that was suspended by a flexible snake of reddish gold. With an impressive serenity the great calm face looked straight before it, its hands stretched out from the elbow above the legs crossed for its squatting, ‘earth-touching’ position. Below it, on the steps of the altar, a priest squatted also, his shaven head nodding forward in the sleep of a vigil excessively prolonged. By the portal stood the shrinking figure of the girl, staring in terror at the jewel winking in the uncertain light of the expiring torches.

“For a long, long moment she stood there, unable to move, her face looking as carven in its fixed immobility as the image itself. With a sympathetic thrill, I realized the awful superstitious dread which had her in its grip. Then her human love triumphed. I saw her glide stealthily toward the giant figure, so stealthily that the nodding head of the somnolent priest altered not

in the regularity of its drowsy rise and fall, so stealthily that she seemed but a part of the shifting shadows cast by the candelabra of the torches. Nimble and cautiously she clambered from the altar-steps to the knee of the mighty image, drew herself up to the arm outstretched in benediction. She balanced herself precariously, rose suddenly upright upon it, and snatched at the jewel.

“The clasp of the flexible gold snake broke with the violence of her pull. I saw it slide like a little stream of ruddy fire into her hands, saw the last flash of the jewel as she stuffed it into her bosom. And then, with a start, the priest looked up.

“Ere he could do more than spring to his feet, she had leaped down with the sure-footed agility of a mountain girl. In a quick movement she evaded his clutch, was gone.

“Once more I found myself looking at the garden where the white-clad figure lurked in the shadows. A moment of waiting, then down the moonlit open space came the flitting figure of the girl. Swiftly she approached, panic in her wild flight, in the beautiful features now close enough for distinct view. She was sobbing as she ran. The man stepped out to her. She stopped, stood for a second regarding him with a look of inexpressible reproach, and then, averting her head, thrust into his eager grasp the sacred jewel. He slipped it into his pocket and caught her in his arms. She gazed at him in yearning doubt, her head drawn back, her soul seeming to question him through her eyes, and then suddenly she flung herself toward him, her bare arms round his neck, her mouth on his, kissing him in a passionate paroxysm of caresses. Desperately she yielded herself to him, frenziedly claiming the reward for her crime—his love. I saw the tears rolling down her cheeks as she kissed him eagerly again and again, all else forgotten but absorption in his presence. In a thrill of apprehension, I remembered the priest. Surely the alarm was given—a horde of fanatics searching for her while she lingered so recklessly! Despite the utter silence in which all this passed, I almost fancied I could hear the sonorous booming of a gong.

“My apprehension quickened to a stab of acute alarm. There, slinking toward them in the shadows, as stealthily as a cat, came a crouching figure, nearer and nearer from behind. The steel blade he clutched flashed in the

moonlight. His face looked up, illumined in the soft radiance which suffused the garden. I recognized it—the priest who had slumbered at his post!—and then, with a curious little internal shock, but vaguely, as if these later incidents belonged to another existence, the full recognition dawned upon me—the wretched native who had loitered about the deserted pagoda of Cho-lon, the conjurer of the café, the conjurer who—ages since—had filled the saloon of the *Mary Gleeson* with smoke and incense from the red fire of a bronze bowl! His ugly face contorted with vindictive cunning, he crept now upon the oblivious lovers locked in their passionate embrace. I saw him gather himself for the spring, the long, murderous knife openly in his hand. In a spasm of horror all of me tried frantically to shriek a warning, but I could not utter a sound. I seemed to be only a watching brain, divorced from all the other organs of the body. He leaped.

“There was a glimmer of cold light as the knife descended. I waited, my heart stopping, in doubt as to the victim. The uncertainty lasted but an instant. The girl, struck in the back, turned her face up to the sky and crumpled to her knees like a marionette whose string is cut. For one long moment the grinning evil face of the priest, tugging to release his knife, and the horrified eyes of the white man looked into each other in a silence which was appalling in its complete soundlessness. Then the white man struck savagely downward upon the shaven head—and sprang away into the darkness.

“Again I heard a gasp, a choked-back cry, from the obscurity at the side of me. But now it seemed to be startlingly nearer and, as my bewildered faculties tried to apprehend it, to identify the source which I knew vaguely must be familiar to me and yet could not bring to consciousness, my attention wandered for a moment. When I looked again the vision had disappeared. There was no longer garden or temple. There was only redly illumined smoke rolling upward from a dull red glow and an atmosphere of sweet sickly fumes that held my body in a drugged paralysis.

“Still I gazed, fascinated. Those thick, wreathing masses of smoke were shaping themselves—shaping themselves into something—something columnar. I watched like one in a dream, and as I watched a part of me attained to consciousness of Captain Strong sitting in frozen immobility by the side of me. The wreathing smoke coalesced, formed itself into

something whose outlines were not yet clear. A brighter, yellower light emanated from below it, lit it up. A body—a vague female body—collected itself, and then a girl's head, strangely beautiful for all its almond eyes and scanty brows, smiled upon us, suddenly vivid and real. I recognized it with a shock—the girl of the garden! She and her body were now one complete living organism that moved sinuously from the hips. I held my breath in awe. Whereas the visions I had been watching were like pictures at a distance, this was an actual living woman a few feet from us. The smoke disappeared. I was staring at a beautiful native woman, as real as you or I, mysteriously illumined in yellow light against a background of obscurity, who stood where the fumes had writhed upward from the bowl.

“Conscious as I now was of Captain Strong's close neighbourhood, I craved to turn to him for astonished comment. But still my body was deprived of function; I could not move a muscle. He made neither move nor sound. Then I almost forgot him in the fascinated interest which this apparition compelled.

“Swaying slightly, with a free, graceful motion of the hips, she moved from her place. Her mouth parted in a pathetic little smile of melancholy, her dark eyes gazing not at me but at something at my side, in soulful yearning appeal, she glided toward us through a hushed silence where I could hear my own heart beat. Slowly she detached her arms from the simple robe which swathed her, stretched them out imploringly, with a wistful smile that seemed to beseech a difficult confidence, to the companion at my side, to Captain Strong. Once more I heard the gasp of his laboured breathing.

“She approached, and it seemed to me that she and I and the panting figure at my side whom I could not turn my head to see were the only things existing in a world that was otherwise dark. She was illumined from head to foot, clearly and definitely detached from her surroundings. I marked the soft, lithe roundness of her form. Did she speak? Her lips moved, but I heard nothing, although it seemed to me that a gently uttered name echoed far away in illimitable space, echoed endlessly as though ringing through the vast, incommensurable soul of things past, present, and to be.

“A name was breathed distinctly, as in awed answer, from the obscurity at my side. *Héa-Nan!*—*Héa-Nan!* The wistful smile on the beautiful face

sweetened as in grateful recognition. The eyes softened in a tender fondness that had nevertheless a strange, remote dignity. Not now did she give herself up to the passionate abandonment of that moonlit garden. Love still yearned from her, but it was the eternal love of the soul that looks to the unimaginable realities beyond the body.

“Slowly, slowly, she approached until it seemed that the hands of her outstretched arms would brush my sleeve as they reached toward the man I felt recoil back into the darkness at my side. I looked up into the face of a living, breathing woman—saw the faint flush upon her Asiatic complexion—saw the dark eyes glowing, swimming in a bath of tears. Once more the lips moved silently—once more the answering name—*Héa-Nan!*—came in an emotionally exhaled whisper from the man who could draw back no farther.

“She smiled, a smile of radiant forgiveness, of understanding and—so it seemed—of pity, and then I saw her arms make a quick movement. From the shadow at my side she plucked something, held it aloft. The sacred jewel of the Buddha blazed in the mouth of the reddish-gold snake that seemed to curl alive about her arm. For one long moment, I looked up at her, her face glowing strangely in the glory of the recovered jewel, yet still a living, human woman with lips that parted as I watched—and then I found myself staring into a smother of smoke from which issued a ghastly mocking laughter.

“The red glow near the floor expired in one last flicker. There was a stab of flame, the simultaneous deafeningly violent detonation of a revolver fired close to my ear, a savage cry of furious menace, another gloating chuckle of laughter—and then darkness and silence.

“Brought suddenly to myself, I struggled to my feet in the choking fumes, and groped feverishly for the switch of the electric light. I found it and the lamp sprang into dull illumination of the smoke-filled cabin. The door was open. The conjurer had disappeared—I heard a splash in the river under the open ports and was left in no doubt that he was beyond our reach. Then, in sudden alarm at his silence, I turned to look for Captain Strong.

“He was stretched back unconscious upon the settee where we had sat together, his hand grasping the revolver which he had vainly fired with his

last strength. He looked livid, pale as death, and for a moment I thought the native had murdered him. But I could find no mark on him, and presently he opened his eyes, began to murmur delirious phrases. I saw at a glance that he was very ill, with the illness that frightens you when you see it in a place like Saigon. With some difficulty, for he was a heavy man, I lifted him to his bunk and put him to bed. As I loosened the shirt from about his throat, I noticed, with a thrill of the uncanny which made me shudder, that round his neck was a circling line of blanched skin, and on his chest a similar, broader patch. But the amulet, whose long wearing had evidently caused these marks, had disappeared completely.

“Half an hour later I was being rowed in all haste to the black Messageries Maritimes boat and claiming the services of her doctor.

“It was hopeless from the first, and we both knew it. Captain Strong died before morning, raving native words in his delirium, and calling incessantly a native name—*Héa-Nan! Héa-Nan!*

“At dawn I looked up to see the yellow jack fluttering from the masthead precisely as, not twelve hours before, I had seen the vision of it from the quay.”

Captain Williamson stopped, glanced at his burnt-out cheroot, threw it away, and selected another one carefully from his case.

“Well, Professor, what do you make of that?” he asked, as he struck a match.

The professor assumed an air of wisdom superior to any mystery.

“Of course,” he said, “there is no doubt what happened. Captain Strong was probably infected with yellow fever coming up the river. Years before, he had instigated a native girl to rob that Buddhist temple on his behalf, and finding himself back at the place he was impelled—it is a common psychological phenomenon in criminals—to revisit the scene of his crime. The ex-priest saw him and recognized him, and, wishing to make quite sure whether he still possessed the sacred jewel, he hypnotized him by chaining his conscious attention on his little conjuring trick at the café, and then suggested to him the vision of the jewel by outlining it with his subject’s

finger on the table. Captain Strong's exclamation and his gesture would be sufficient that he still wore it.

"As for the scene in the saloon, it was hypnotism on a large scale, induced by the use of the drugs with which the atmosphere was filled. Captain Strong's subconscious mind came to the top and lived once again through the episodes of the robbery and the death of his agent, seeing them, as is the habit of the subjective mind when released from the control of the objective surface consciousness, like actual present facts. The hallucination of the girl as a living presence in the cabin is, of course, explained by the silent suggestion of the priest acting on the already highly excited subconsciousness of the guilty man. Just as I can make a hypnotic patient believe that you are someone else and see you as someone else, so the conjurer himself, under cover of the vision he had suggested, approached the wearer of the sacred jewel and snatched it from his neck. The emotional crisis undergone by Captain Strong would, of course, hasten the onset of the yellow fever already in his body."

"H'm," objected Captain Williamson, "but that doesn't explain why I should share these visions."

The professor was nothing daunted.

"Of course," he said, "you were in close propinquity to Captain Strong and were doubtless what is known as *en rapport* with him. The vision of the yellow flag—the not uncommon hallucination of a death-symbol produced by the subconsciousness of a doomed person—was communicated to you when the captain gripped your shoulder——"

"Have a whisky-and-soda, Professor," interrupted the planter, coarsely, "and don't spoil a good story."

Transcriber's Note:

Obvious typographic errors have been
corrected.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ON THE
BORDERLAND ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS
WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are

located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the

work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

- • You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- • You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- • You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- • You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription

errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable

to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax

deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit

www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works
Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with

anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility:

www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.