THE SANCTUARY CLUB

by L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace

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Das Titelbild zeigt eine der vielen Abbildungen der Zeitschriftenausgabe von Sidney Paget (1860–1908), der hierzulande vor allem durch seine Illustrationen der Sherlock-Holmes-Geschichten bekannt geworden ist.

— gesetzt in XeLaTeX, Bochum 2020 —

L.T. Meade, eigentlich ***Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith*** (1844–1914), war eine irische Schriftstellerin, die im Verlauf ihres Lebens zahlreiche Erzählungen für Kinder sowie Kriminalromane verfasste. Sie gilt als die erste englischsprachige Autorin, in deren Kriminalromanen medizinische Aspekte und/oder Forensik eine wesentliche Rolle spielen. Um medizinische Sachverhalte richtig darzustellen, arbeitete sie unter anderem mit Robert Eustace zusammen (s. u.).

Meade wurde 1844 (nach anderen Angaben 1854) im südwestirischen County Cork als Tochter eines Pfarrers geboren. Sie heiratete im September 1879 Alfred Toulmin Smith und verbrachte den größten Teil ihres Lebens in London.

Meade begann mit 17 Jahren zu schreiben und verfasste insgesamt über 300 Romane. Sie hinterließ ein so großes Werk, dass nach ihrem Tode elf weitere Romane erstmals veröffentlicht wurden. Bekannt ist sie heute noch für ihre Jugendbücher, von denen das bekannteste das 1886 veröffentlichte »*A World of Girls*« war. Daneben verfasste sie aber sowohl Liebesromane als auch Sensationsgeschichten, historische Romane, Abenteuergeschichten und letztlich auch Kriminalromane. Beim Schreiben von Kriminalromanen kooperierte sie mit anderen Autoren oder versicherte sich der Hilfe von Experten. Sie arbeitete ab 1893 zunächst mit einem Dr. Clifford Halifax zusammen. Aus dieser Zusammenarbeit stammen sechs Kriminalromane. Ein Jahr später begann sie die Zusammenarbeit mit Robert Eustace, mit dem sie gemeinsam zahlreiche Kriminalerzählungen verfasste.

Quelle: Deutsche Wikipedia-Seite (weitere Details auf dem englischsprachigen Pendant)

Robert Eustace, eigentlich ***Eustace Robert Barton*** (1854–1943), war ein britischer Arzt und Autor von Kriminalromanen. Er nutzte als Pseudonym außerdem auch Eustace Robert Rawlings.

Eustace legte in seinem schriftstellerischen Werk vor allem Wert auf eine fachlich genaue Darstellung medizinischer Sachverhalte. Aufgrund seines medizinischen Fachwissens arbeitete er außerdem mit mehreren anderen Autoren von Kriminalromanen zusammen. Die heute noch bekannteste Autorin, mit der er zusammenarbeitete, war *Dorothy L. Sayers*, mit der er gemeinsam allerdings nur den 1930 erschienenen Kriminalroman »*The Documents in the Case*« verfasste. Von ihm stammt der Handlungsentwurf und der wissenschaftliche Hintergrund zum Vorfall.

Mit den Autoren *Gertrude Warden* (1859–1925) und *Edgar Jepson* (1863–1938) verfasste Eustace ebenfalls einige Werke. Umfangreicher war seine Zusammenarbeit mit *L.T. Meade*, mit der er bei mehreren Kurzgeschichten und Romanen kooperierte. An der Zusammenarbeit mit Eustace ist nach Ansicht von Martha Hailey Dubose die Einführung von zwei weiblichen Bösewichten bemerkenswert: Madame Koluchy, das Superhirn einer Bande von Gangstern in »*The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings*, und «Madame Sara in »*The Sorceress of the Strand*«. Beide Anthologien finden sich in diesem Band. Aus Sicht von Dubose ist die interessanteste Protagonistin aus der Zusammenarbeit mit L.T. Meade jedoch die Detektivin Florence Cusack: Wohlhabend und unabhängig löst sie komplexe Kriminalfälle und findet Anerkennung sowohl im Gerichtssaal als auch bei Scotland Yard. Angesichts der gesellschaftlichen Rolle, die Frauen zu dieser Zeit zugebilligt wurde, wird dieser Figur in den 1899 und 1900 entstandenen Kurzgeschichten eine ungewöhnliche Rolle zugebilligt. Leider sind deren Texte immer noch nahezu unzugänglich, sollte sich das ändern, werden sie in dieser Reihe wiederveröffentlicht werden.

Quelle: Deutsche Wikipedia-Seite.

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Introduction

I am a man of day-dreams, and a doctor by profession. It was my lot when about forty years of age to inherit a large fortune, and I immediately set to work putting a design which had long occupied my mind into execution. I resolved to leave the thorny and struggling path, where I had often felt myself in my brother practitioners' way, and, buying a large site of ground in the vicinity of Hampstead, proceeded to build upon it a goodly mansion. When the house was completed and the grounds laid out to the best advantage I took possession, and now unfolded my scheme to a brother doctor whom I had long respected and loved. He and I agreed to go into partnership, and, with the aid of some of our younger brothers of the medical profession, to open what we were pleased to call the ›Sanctuary Club.‹

This was in the spring of 1890. The rules of the club were as follows: It was to be opened to men and women of all ages and classes who chose to fulfil the necessary conditions. These were an entrance fee of £50, a yearly subscription of £10, and the still more important fact that the person, man or woman, who intended to become a member, was the victim of disease in one of its many forms. The primary object of the club was to cure maladies that were in any way curable without sending the patients from England.

This great institution, of which I had dreamed so long, was for the treatment of all sorts of disease on a hitherto unattempted scale. Here my friend Chetwynd and I could put into execution the boldest and most recent theories that other medical men, either from lack of means or courage, could not carry out. One of the chief features of the place was to be a special department where the latest and most up-to-date scientific theories could be realized, one in especial being an attempt at the production of artificial climates.

I had often been struck by the pertinacity with which my brother doctors had ordered patients to seek health resorts, either at home or ab-

road, when they were far too weak to travel. Thus some patients were sent to the sea, others to the neighbourhood of pine forests, others to high altitudes in order to enjoy the benefits of mountain air; others again to warm, others to cold or dry, climates. At the ›Sanctuary Club‹ we had, by virtue of our modern scientific knowledge, the means of producing such conditions artificially. Heat, cold, humidity, dryness, even barometric pressure, or any other required constituent of the air, were mere matters of mechanical or chemical detail. Mineral waters of the exact composition of those, at the springs of home or Continental spas could be reproduced in our laboratory. Every appliance that science or art could suggest for the alleviation of suffering humanity would be worked by an efficient and well-qualified staff.

This had been my dream for years, and now, with the aid of my friend Henry Chetwynd, it was about to be realized. From the first our scheme proved attractive to those unfortunate members of the community who, suffering as they were, were only too keen to try a new thing. Our club opened with a hundred members, and before a year had expired we had nearly three hundred resident patients in the house.

Those members of the ›Sanctuary Club‹ who only suffered from slight maladies could come occasionally for consultation, and at any time enjoy the benefit of our large reading and refreshment rooms, and our carefully-laid-out and luxurious grounds. But it was the indoor members, those who lived under our roof, who excited my keenest, strongest, and most life-long interest.

Strange cases came to my knowledge, stories of the most thrilling and absorbing interest fell to my lot to listen to and sympathize with. There were cases, and not a few, when it was my privilege and also my bounden duty to act not only as doctor but as personal friend. From time to time my brother doctor and I had to face adventures the most thrilling and dangers of so hair-breadth a character, that even now my pulse quickens when I think of them.

The following stories relate some of our most vivid experiences.

Paul Cato

Chapter I

The Death Chair

Lady Helen Trevor was one of the earliest members of the club. She was a beautiful and distinguished-looking young woman of about thirty years of age. She herself belonged to the noble house of Hampton, but she had married a cornmonger of apparently colossal wealth. She was the Earl of Hampton's only daughter, but she had several brothers, and also two children of her own. The good things of life seemed to have fallen abundantly to her share—beauty, riches, and the devoted love of an excellent husband—but nevertheless she was a victim. She suffered from an extraordinary kind of nervousness, which, without ever approaching the border-land of the insane, caused her sleepless nights and days of apprehension and misery.

When the first prospectus of the ›Sanctuary Club‹ reached her, she eagerly availed herself of this chance of cure, and was speedily installed in the most comfortable suite of rooms in the house. Lady Helen was too courteous and kind-hearted to inflict her own sufferings on others; she was full of tact and sympathy, and soon became a vast favourite in the bouse. She could sing beautifully, could lead the games, make dull people bright and sad people merry, and in particular attracted the attention of another member of the club, a certain Señor Don Santos, who had also come to the Sanctuary seeking health and cure.

Don Santos lived in a large mansion called Roe House in the neighbourhood of Wimbledon Common, and was said to be not only very rich, but was also known to possess one of the finest private collections of art treasures in England, Don Santos and Lady Helen soon became great friends they had many tastes in common, and used to spend hours talking about those gems of art, those priceless possessions, which, handed down from father to son, are the heirlooms of many families.

Don Santos, however, had not the same power of dissimulating his misery as lady Helen had—Chetwynd believed him to be suffering from incipient insanity, and there were times when his moody eye and fierce and yet abstracted manner seemed abundantly to carry out this suggestion.

"I do not like the man," said Chetwynd; "he is either insane or he is a devil incarnate. I wish Lady Helen were not so friendly with him."

"You have taken a prejudice, Chetwynd," I said, looking at my friend.

Chetwynd gave me one of his quick glances. His was a curious personality, and it is impossible to continue these stories without saying a few words about him. He was a little man, with a slightly deformed body, a plain face, and large head. But he had that sparkle and depth of meaning in his clear, golden brown eyes which often seem to be an accompaniment of physical deformity. It was in his power to express volumes by a single glance, and I often observed that he had more power over his patients than I ever hoped to possess. He was a man of few words, but his devotion to duty was unflinching and his indifference to danger almost stoical. There was little doubt that he was deeply imbued with the principles of some fine philosophy or faith. Also beneath his sphinx-like gravity there lurked a vein of rich humour, which made him, when he chose to exert himself, the best of companions.

Now, as he spoke of Don Santos he rose and paced up and down his room.

"I am sorry that the man has taken a liking to Lady Helen Trevor," he said, "but I am still more disturbed at his friendship for my own special *protégé*, John Ingram."

"Ah! you are devoted to Ingram; you almost spoil the lad," I could not help saying.

"No one could spoil one so simple-minded," answered my brother physician; "he is one of the best fellows I know, and his devotion to his mother is beyond all praise."

"What of his health?" I said.

"He is deriving benefit from our treatment," said Chetwynd, in a cheerful voice. "The paroxysms of neuralgic agony are much less frequent than of old—he will quite recover if he stays here long enough."

"By the way," I said, after a moment's pause, "you paid his entrance fee here, did you not?"

"What if I did?" was the somewhat vague answer.

Just then the step of a patient was heard in the corridor, and I could not pursue the subject further.

That evening Lady Helen Trevor and Señor Don Santos had an eager conversation over an old casket, called the Catalini Casket, which had been for years in the Hampton family, and which Don Santos honestly said he would give the world to possess. Ingram joined in the talk, and I also was interested by the lady's description of the matchless casket, made of an enormous onyx stone, and richly incrusted with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds.

A few days later these three members of the club took their departure, all sounding ts praises and promising to visit it again. Lady Helen returned to her husband and children; Señor Don Santos to resume the control of his magnificent museum; and John Ingram, who was a commission agent in the City, to his usual employment.

The Sanctuary Club has opened in the early spring of 1890, and it was in the late autumn of that same year that I next saw Ingram. One afternoon, between five and six o'clock, he burst unceremoniously into my consulting-room.

"You must forgive me," he cried. "Chetwynd is out, or I would have seen him, but I cannot rest until I confide in someone, and you will tell Chetwynd, I know. The most splendid luck has fallen in my way. I can scarcely believe in my own good fortune."

"Sit down, Ingram," I said. "Why, how excited you look; what can have happened?"

"You know that we are poor, Dr. Cato, and that but for Chetwynd's generosity I could never have afforded to join the club. What don't I owe to the Sanctuary Club—not only my recovery to health, but also the acquaintanceship of"—he hesitated and dropped his voice—"of those who will make my fortune. But there, I am under a promise not to mention names. Chetwynd may have told you how my mother looks to me for support—it is one of my day-dreams to have her to live with me. Well, I am in a fair way to have that day-dream realized. I am just about to receive a commission—5 per cent on £7,000. That means £350, all earned in one day. Think of that for a novice!"

"But how have you done it?" I asked.

"Ah! that I cannot explain—I am bound to secrecy, but what I tell you is true. I will call again to-morrow, and if you like, will show you the cheque. Yes, I am a made man, for other commissions will doubtless follow from the same source. But I cannot stay another instant. Tell Chetwynd, and wish me luck, Dr. Cato."

I did so heartily—I liked the bright-eyed, happy-looking young fellow, and could not but rejoice in his unlooked-for prosperity. When Chet-

wynd returned I mentioned Ingram's visit. To my astonishment the little doctor looked grave and disturbed.

"I wish I had been at home," he said. "I don't like this a bit. Of course, it means ..."

"What?" I interrupted.

"The Spaniard has a finger in this pie—I don't like it, Cato."

"Now, what do you mean?" I asked.

"Señor Don Santos was far too friendly with Ingram when they wore both here. I distrust the man thoroughly. There is no doubt that on some points he is insane—he is also unscrupulous, and to attain his ends would stop at nothing."

"Oh! you are over-suspicious," was my answer, "There is no use in labelling any man scoundrel until he has proved himself one, and what the Spaniard has to do with Ingram beats my comprehension,"

"Why, Paul, are you blind? Who else would give Ingram a commission of that magnitude? Doubtless, when he left here, he was going to Wimbledon, I don't like it at all; what is more, I have a good mind to follow him."

To this remark I made no reply. I knew that in certain moods my friend Chetwynd would brook no interference. If he chose to follow Ingram on a wild-goose chase, it was his own affair. I thought little more of the circumstance during that evening, being much engaged with some anxious cases. Little did I guess the next news which was to reach me. About ten o'clock the following morning Chetwynd burst into my room. His face was white, and his big, queer-looking eyes were shining with a curious expression. He spoke very quietly, however.

"I was right in my conjectures!" he said, and he dropped into a chair.

"What do you mean?" I cried.

"Ingram is dead."

"What?" I answered, springing to my feet,

"Yes—he was found dead this morning on Wimbledon Common,. he following are the details." Chetwynd spoke in an almost monotonous voice, but I knew with what an effort he was keeping himself under control.

"You remember my words of last night? When I went to bed I could not sleep. Each moment I felt more fearful and uncomfortable. Finally I resolved to go to Wimbledon as soon as the day broke. I cycled over, and went in the direction of the Spaniard's place, Roe House, When I got within three hundred yards of the house I saw a crowd collected. I

went up to them. They were clustered round John Ingram's dead body. The poor fellow had been found by one of the rangers. He was lying about three hundred yards from one of the main roads, beside a clump of gorse bushes.

The man gave the alarm, and the police, when they arrived, said that he must have wandered or been decoyed off the road and murdered. But the point which astonishes and horrifies everyone is the merciless and brutal character of the murder. The assailant must have been possessed of superhuman strength, for Ingram had evidently been hurled to the ground with the utmost violence. Indeed, his injuries were so extensive and his fractures so numerous, that it seems almost impossible that the murder was the work of any one human being. Another strange thing is that there are no marks round the spot to give evidence of a struggle. It is all most horrible. I cannot understand it."

"Do you still hold to your queer opinions with regard to Don Santos?" I asked, when I could find my voice.

"I do and I don't. The whole thing is inexplicable: unless he threw the poor fellow from a balloon, I have not the slightest idea how he killed him. Well, Ingram is dead past recall. I pity his poor mother. I wish to God I had gone to Wimbledon last night."

I started up.

"I will go to Wimbledon myself," I said. "I cannot rest until I know more."

Chetwynd said nothing to dissuade me—he looked queer and unlike himself. I took the next train to town, and arrived at the scene of the murder in the course of the morning. Poor Ingram's body had been removed, in preparation for the coroner's inquest, to the nearest inn. I was admitted to see him, and heard the opinions of many experts who had been called in. One and all denied that the murder was the work of a human being, though they frankly admitted that they could offer no suggestion as an alternative argument. I personally could give no information except a report of Ingram's last words to me on the previous day. Suddenly it flashed through my mind that I would call upon Señor Don Santos and tell him the whole story. He had been interested in Ingram. If Chetwynd's surmise was right, he had something to do with the large commission which the poor fellow was to earn. Roe House was situated on the edge of the Common. The house itself was large and built in the modern style. It was surrounded by private grounds, and there were thick trees growing up almost to the front door.

I rang the bell. It was answered immediately by a demure-looking, elderly servant in livery. In reply to my query he told me that his master

was within, and invited me to enter. I was shown into a lofty dining-room sumptuously furnished. I was in no mood, however, to notice the antique oak and rare vases of old Sèvres and Chelsea porcelain which decorated the walls. The Spaniard entered. He held out his hand with a pleasant greeting.

"It is kind of you to call, Dr. Cato," he said. "I'm pleased to see you."

"I have come," I answered, "not only to see you, Señor, but to acquaint you with a painful affair."

"What is that?" he asked.

"You remember Ingram—that nice young fellow who you were so kind to when staying at the Sanctuary in the spring?"

"I remember him perfectly."

"I have just seen his dead body."

Don Santos started, and his swarthy face turned pale.

"Ingram dead?" he cried, after a pause; "that accounts. But I am interrupting you, Dr. Cato; when and how did he die?"

"He was found this morning three hundred yards from your gate, injured almost past recognition, dead, foully murdered."

Don Santos was quite silent for a moment; then he said, slowly: "And you have called here because you thought this news would interest me?"

"I called for a double reason," I replied. "First, because your friendship for the poor fellow entitled you to know of his death, and partly because I hoped that you might be able to throw light on a ghastly occurrence."

"I did not murder him, if that is what you mean," answered Don Santos.

"If I thought that I should scarcely have asked to see you," was my reply.

He laughed.

"My dear fellow, forgive an unseemly joke. The fact is, your news has unnerved me. Unfortunately, I can throw what will be a very lurid light on this affair. But tell me first—have you seen Ingram lately?"

"I saw him last evening. He came to bring Chetwynd and myself an excellent piece of news. A friend, whose name he would not divulge, had given him a magnificent commission—he was nearly beside himself with joy."

"He would not give you the name of his friend?"

"No."

"I can supply it. I am the person. Two days ago I learned, through a mere accident, that the celebrated pearl necklace in the Forsyth collection was to be sold yesterday at Christie's. As I did not wish to appear in the matter, I commissioned Ingram to buy it for me, giving him power

to bid as high as £7,000. I had a telegram from him yesterday, which I can show you, saying that he had secured the necklace for my figure, and would bring it to .me in the course of the evening. I waited up for him until past midnight; he did not appear, and I went to bed."

"Then you never received the necklace?"

"No."

"This is most important. Of course, the poor fellow was robbed and murdered, for there was nothing of value on his person. The coroner is probably now at the ›Sign of the Dragon;‹ will you come with me?"

"Willingly!" answered Don Santos. He put on his hat and accompanied me. His evidence was given quietly. It, of course, supplied a motive for the murder; but how the deed was accomplished, how the murderers got away, and where the celebrated necklace now was, remained wrapped in mystery.

Time went on and nothing transpired to throw light upon the occurrence. Everything conceivable was done, the most unlikely clues followed up, but the police had at last to confess that they were nonplussed.

One afternoon, towards the end of the following May, I was walking in my grounds when I was attracted by the arrival of a cab just outside the principal entrance. A tall lady, in deep mourning, hut rather shabbily dressed, got out and walked up the drive. She paused when she saw me, hesitated, and then raising her eyes, said: "Am I addressing Dr. Paul Cato?"

"That is my name," I answered; "is there anything I can do for you?"

"I am Mrs. Ingram," was her reply. "You knew my son and were kind to him. May I speak to you in private for a few moments?"

"Certainly," I said, much interest coming into my voice. I took the lady immediately into my private study. Closing the door, I asked her to seat herself.

"I knew your son well," I remarked, "and took a deep interest in him. His death has caused me the greatest pain."

She raised her hand to interrupt my words.

"I beg of you to allude as little as possible to personal feelings in this matter," she said. "It is with an effort I can keep my grief under control, and I do not mean—I am determined not—to give way."

Her face changed from red to white as she spoke and her lips trembled. After a moment, however, she spoke very quietly.

"I want to talk business with you—do you understand?"

"Perfectly," I said.

"It is my intention to trace this murder to its source. I have come here for the purpose. I would have seen you before, Dr. Cato, but after the shock of my son's death I was ill. A blank surrounds that dreadful time—I had fever and, luckily for myself, was unconscious. I have now recovered, and have one object left in life. I mean to bring the man who deprived my boy of his young existence to the gallows."

"My hand on it, madame," I could not help saying—"your wish is mine."

"Thank you," she answered. A sudden fire filled her dark eyes, the colour rushed into her cheeks.

"If that object can be effected I shall die happy," she continued. "Now may I ask you one or two questions?"

"As many as you please."

"Will you give me, quietly and impartially, an exact account of the murder the appearance of the body when it was found, where it was found, and everything else?"

I complied—I told the mother of the murdered man the whole sad history. She would not allow me to shirk anything, nor did I try to. When I had done she said: "My son knew Señor Don Santos. The señor lives on Wimbledon Common. His house is called ›Roe House.‹ My sun wrote to me constantly about him: the Spaniard had evidently attracted him to a remarkable degree. How far from the spot where the body was found is the residence of Don Santos?"

"The body was found about three hundred yards from ›Roe House,‹" was my reply.

"Ah," she said, "I thought as much. Has no one seen Don Santos in connection with the murder?"

"I visited him immediately afterwards. He told me that he had commissioned your son to buy him a valuable necklace. He expected your son to visit him on the evening when the murder was committed in order to hand him over the necklace, when your son was to receive his commission, a sum amounting to £350. Ingram never reached ›Roe House,‹ and beyond doubt the murderer absconded with the necklace."

"So that is Don Santos's story," replied Mrs. Ingram, very slowly. "Will you listen to me? I have every reason to believe—nay more, I am certain of the fact—that my son did visit Señor Don Santos on the evening of the day on which he was murdered, and did hand him over the necklace. I have more than one reason for the very firm opinion which I have formed. In the first place, Don Santos is not a man of honour."

"Now, what can you mean?" I said.

"He commissioned my son to purchase a valuable necklace, telling him that he might bid as high as £7,000 for it. My son was to bring him the necklace, and on receipt of it he was to be paid £7,000 and his own commission of 5 per cent. My son, reckless with joy at the thought of securing so large a sum, had borrowed the £7,000 from a dealer in order to go to Christie's to pay for the necklace. On my son's murder, this dealer, Robertson by name, applied to Don Santos to restore the money, declaring that the order was practically his, and that he ought to make good the loss. Don Santos absolutely declined to pay one penny."

"And how has the debt been met?" I asked.

"By me, Dr. Cato. All I possess in the world of ready capital has been raised to clear my son's honour. I have paid Mr. Robertson to the last farthing. I have now nothing in the world to live on but a small annuity which I inherited from my husband of £50 a year."

I felt my heart beat high with indignation. There was nothing to say, however, and the widow proceeded: "My other reason for believing that there has been foul play is on account of a dream, a curious and very vivid dream which I had."

"Indeed," I said, gravely. I naturally did not believe in dreams, but the face of the woman opposite to me, in its intense and tragic earnestness, forbade a smile.

"I can guess something of your thought, Dr. Cato," she continued, "but there are dreams which have elements of truth in them. Let me tell you mine. On the night when my boy was murdered, I dreamt that he visited Don Santos at Roe House, that he gave the Spaniard the pearl necklace, and sat with him for a time on the wide veranda of his house."

"I did not know the house had a veranda!" I exclaimed.

"In my dream I saw a veranda with great distinctness. It was on the second floor. This veranda was inclosed by a stone balustrade, and there were several deck chairs about and some small, round tables. My son and Don Santos sat there together that night and smoked. My dream was so vivid that I could almost hear what they were saying, and I noticed the expression on the Spaniard's face. I tell you, Dr. Cato, it was diabolical. I would have seen you before on the subject of my dream but for my queer illness. That dream was not sent to me for nothing."

"Go on," I said, "what followed? You say you heard Don Santos speak and you saw his face. What came next?"

"Nothing," she replied; "a great blackness fell over me—I no longer saw the figures on the veranda. I awoke struggling for breath and screaming. I do not know any more."

"Then owing to your dream you are under the impression that Don Santos is connected with the murder?"

"He is at the bottom of the whole thing," she replied.

I sat silent for a few moments, Mrs. Ingram facing me. Her eyes, with that look of absolute confidence in them, were uncanny; the firm conviction of her words could not but impress me. Chetwynd would doubtless have shared her suspicions, but I could scarcely give credence to her story. Because a woman dreamt a ghastly dream, was a person, to all appearance innocent, to be accused of crime? Nevertheless, Don Santos must be a scoundrel not to have made some effort to replace the £7,000 which Ingram had borrowed to purchase the necklace.

"What can I do for you?" I said, after a pause.

"This," she replied, instantly—"I want you to go and see the Spaniard. I cannot go myself, for the moment he saw me he would lie on his guard. Pay him a friendly visit, and find out if there is such a veranda to the house as I have just described. Get him to talk about my son: watch him closely. If you will do this for me, it is all I ask. He does not suspect you; will you go, and at once?"

"I have not the slightest objection to visiting Don Santos," I said, after a pause, "and if it will relieve your mind I will call upon him."

"Then, go now, this afternoon—there is no time to lose."

Her wild words impelled me. I had nothing special to do, and started off for Wimbledon within the hour, I was admitted to Don Santos? s presence. He received me quietly and with his usual courtesy.

"I am delighted to see you, Dr. Cato," he said. "I was just writing to you."

"What about?" I asked.

"I want to pay a visit to the Sanctuary next week. I am not well; some of my old painful symptoms have reappeared. Chetwynd had a soothing influence over me—his treatment served me marvellously. Can you take me in next week?"

"With pleasure," I answered, "but I am sorry you are feeling indisposed."

"It has been coming on gradually. Chetwynd will soon restore me to my normal health. By the way, you don't look too well yourself, Dr. Cato. You have quite a haggard look in your eyes. You take poor Ingram's murder to heart. Tli at will never do. By the way, has any fresh light been thrown upon the mysterious affair since I saw you last?"

"None whatever," I answered.

"Ah," he said, looking thoughtful; "it is one of those mysteries which will not be revealed until the Hay of Judgement. Now that you have come, doctor, I shall insist on your dining with me."

I thought for a moment, and then Don Santos rang his bell and gave directions to a servant who appeared. Not long afterwards he and I found ourselves seated at a little oval table in the big dining-room. As we ate my host talked well and brilliantly. Certainly he was an interesting man, and his knowledge of art treasures was extensive.

The meal lasted for over an hour, and during that time I had almost forgotten Mrs. Ingram, her curious dream, and her nameless suspicions. The dream, however, and the suspicions were revived when Don Santos said, in a hearty voice: "The night is fine—let us go up and smoke on the veranda."

"The veranda!" I could not help exclaiming.

"Yes, have I not shown it to you? It is one of the specialities of my house. I had it built according to my own ideas. On the hottest day in summer you get a breeze there, and I generally smoke my last Havana there before retiring to rest, but come."

As he spoke he led the way upstairs, and, opening a door on the second floor, just as the widow had described in her dream, we entered an extensive veranda. As I looked at it I could not help starting. It was inclosed by a stone balustrade, upon which were fixed by uprights iron rails which ran round it. There were several deck chairs, just as the widow had mentioned, and there were also some small, round tables. The night was starlit and warm. As I seated myself in a comfortable deck chair and lit a cigar I noticed that my host was listless and silent.

A sudden impulse came over me.

"Do you know," I said, watching him narrowly as I spoke, "that I had an interview to-day of a somewhat painful nature."

"Indeed," he replied.

"With no less a person than Mrs. Ingram, the mother of the poor fellow who was murdered. She told me of a dream she had. She dreamt that you and her son were seated on this balcony."

"Ah," he said, impatiently, "we never sat here. I often meant to have him to dine with me. On that one eventful night I waited long for him, but he never came. I could not account for his non-appearance." The Spaniard spoke softly and with much sadness in his tone.

"There is one thing, Don Santos," I said, suddenly; "you will forgive me, but perhaps you do not realize that Mrs. Ingram is a poor woman. Her son borrowed £7,000 to buy that necklace for you. Is it fair that she should have to pay it back?"

In a moment he had turned upon me, his whole face distorted with the most livid passion.

"Why do you interfere?" he said; "you had much better not. My God! If you only knew! I will pay that woman the £7,000 in full when I get the necklace, not before. Tell her to move Heaven and earth to get it back for me, and she shall be paid then in full, every farthing, but not before—my God! I have spoken—not before."

His voice quivered, he suddenly left my side and began to stride rapidly up and down the veranda—there was almost the ring of a madman in his tones. I saw I had gone too far, and was about to soothe him when he suddenly came back and spoke in his accustomed voice.

"I told you that my nerves were giving way—there are moments when I can scarcely contain myself. I must come to the Sanctuary as quickly as possible and put myself under Chetwynd's treatment,"

"And I will not keep you longer now," I said. "I have tired you."

"You have upset me," he said, brusquely. "Forgive me for being rough, but there are some things I cannot bear. Well, if you must go—you must."

A few moments later I had taken my leave of him.

As soon as I entered the Sanctuary on my return, I was greeted by Chetwynd.

"I want to speak to you," he said. There was some slight excitement in his manner. I noticed it.

"You will be interested to hear," I remarked, "that I have just been paying a visit to our old patient, Don Santos. You ought to go and see him—›Roe House‹ is worth visiting."

"Ah," replied Chetwynd, "you know my opinion of that man, Cato. Come with me into my private consulting-room, won't you? I have something to say."

I went with him. He turned at once and spoke to me about Mrs. Ingram.

"I have seen her," he said; "she told me that she had asked you to visit Don Santos. She also mentioned her most extraordinary dream."

"I said I would try to verify it for her," was my remark.

"Have you done so?"

"Strange to say, Chetwynd, I have—at least the part in which she describes the veranda. It is there, and just as she spoke of it, but doubtless the thing can be explained. Ingram must have mentioned it to her in one of his many letters."

Chetwynd was silent.

"By the way," I continued, after a pause, "you will have to put up with Don Santos, whether you like him or not. Next week he is coming here again."

"The old symptoms?" asked my brother doctor.

"He complains of them."

"That man will end in an asylum," said Chetwynd, briefly. "I am sorry he is coming back."

"I could not refuse him admission to his own club," I answered.

"Of course not. By the way, we seem to be doomed to have old patients back again. I have just received a letter from Lady Helen Trevor; she arrives to-morrow."

"Indeed," I said, "she was a very pleasant visitor; we ought to be glad to welcome her."

"By the way," said Chetwynd, quietly, "Don Santos may not find things so pleasant as he imagines at the Sanctuary Club. Did I tell you that Mrs. Ingram is coming here also to-morrow?"

"Indeed, but how. She is not a member."

"She comes as my guest. You remember that you and I always have the privilege of asking guests here from time to time."

"Certainly, but are you acting wisely in extending this invitation to a hysterical woman?"

"You are hard on her, Cato, and also unjust. Mrs. Ingram possesses absolute self-control. Her mind is perfectly balanced; and as to her dream—well, think what you like of me, old fellow, but I believe in it"

I could say nothing further. In certain moods it was impossible to control Chetwynd—he was determined to saddle a foul crime upon Don Santos, and what the end would be remained shrouded in mystery.

The next day Lady Helen arrived. She looked older than when I had last seen her, and there was evidently a very serious care weighing upon her mind. On the first evening of her visit she spoke to me.

"I have not forgotten the gentleman who was an inmate of this house when I was last here," she said.

"Do you refer to Señor Don Santos?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"You are likely to meet him again. He is coming back next week."

"Indeed," she answered. She looked pleased and relieved. Looking full at me she said, suddenly, "I want to take you into my confidence—may I?"

"If I can be of use to you, I shall be pleased to listen to anything you have got to say," was my answer.

"Well, it is this. At the present moment I am sorely in want of money—a good sum, too."

"But I thought your husband was a millionaire?"

"He is rich, no doubt, but not quite so rich as people give him credit for. In the present matter, however, it is impossible for me to apply to him. Now, I must get the money—£5,000—as soon as possible, and it has occurred to me that Don Santos can help me. I mean to ask him for his aid."

"I wish you would not," I could not help saying.

She opened her eyes wide in some surprise.

"I must," she said; "my need is very pressing; in fact, I may as well own to you that I have come to the Sanctuary Club more in the hopes of meeting Don Santos than anything else."

I stared at her in some surprise. I did not like to press more fully for her confidence, but what did she mean? She was young and handsome—what could she have in common with a man of the Spaniard's type?

The next week the Señor arrived. He was gentle and courteous, his friendship with Lady Helen was quickly renewed, and, to my astonishment, he also took special pains to be polite to Mrs. Ingram. That strange woman by no means repelled his attentions. On the contrary, she often sought him out, and they had long and interesting conversations together.

The days passed without anything special occurring. At last, on a certain morning, Lady Helen came to see me.

"Will you help me?" she said, impulsively; "if you will, I can get what I require."

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Don Santos has promised to advance me a loan of £5,000 on a condition."

"And what is that?" I asked.

She made a slight pause; her large brown eyes were full of restlessness.

"I must give you my full confidence," she said then. "I want the money for my brother—my favourite youngest brother. He has got into terrible trouble— he is reckless, defiant of the ordinary rules of society. He has always been something of a spoilt darling. When my mother died she left him in my care. He has got into debt. My husband is jealous of my great love for him, and will not help him with so much as a pound. Something must be done immediately, so I am determined to come to the rescue. If I can get £5,000 from Don Santos, my brother's most pressing debts will be paid, and he will be saved."

"What is the condition on which he will lend you the money?" I asked.

She came a little nearer and dropped her voice.

"You know the Señor's passion for curios of all sorts?" she said. "Have you ever heard me speak of a casket which we hold in my father's family? It is called the Catalini Casket—it has belonged to us for four hundred years. When I married, my father gave it to me as my wedding present, but on a condition, a solemn one, that I was never to part with it. I did not intend to break that condition, but my present need is too great. I am going, not to sell the casket, but to borrow money on it. Don Santos will lend me £5,000 if I give him the casket as security. He returns home to-day."

"So soon?" I interrupted,

"Yes, He says the uncomfortable symptoms which brought him here have quite disappeared, and he is anxious to be home again, I am also going back to Yorkshire this afternoon, but will return early to-morrow with the casket. I want you to take the Catalini Casket to Don Santos to-morrow night and to bring me back the money. He will pay me in gold, not by cheque—I have asked him to do this in order to insure my husband never knowing of the transaction."

"But why should I be your messenger?"

"It is by the Señor's special request. He says that he has made a rule never to admit a woman into ›Roe House.‹ Oh, you will not refuse me? If you will help me in this matter I will bless you to the longest day of my life."

She spoke with passion; there were tears in her eyes; her voice trembled. Perhaps Chetwynd might have refused her, but I found it impossible to do so.

"I don't like it," I said, "I will say so frankly, but, of course, I cannot decline to be your messenger."

"Thank you," she answered; "you cannot understand what a relief this is to me. I will go and tell Don Santos immediately—he will be pleased—he is most anxious to secure the casket, and says quite openly and frankly that he does not believe I shall ever be able to redeem it."

"And under such circumstances are you willing to part with such a treasure?" I asked.

"I must," she replied; "I have no choice."

She left the room, and a couple of moments later Don Santos himself knocked at the door of my room.

"Come in," I said.

"So you are going to help Lady Helen?" he remarked, closing the door softly behind him. H I am very much obliged to you, very much obliged indeed. Now listen, I have not been here for the last two or three days for nothing. That poor woman, Mrs. Ingram, has impressed me favourably. I cannot part with £7,000 for a valuable necklace which I never received, but I will letter have half the money, and whenever the necklace is traced and brought to me she shall Jiave the remainder. If you will bring the Catalini Casket to my house to-morrow night, you shall have in gold and notes the money which Lady Helen requires, and also a cheque drawn in Mrs. Ingram's favour."

I thanked him heartily. I did not remark then, although it occurred to me afterwards, that as he spoke he avoided looking at me.

"I am glad you are better," I said.

"Much better- in fact, I am quite well. I am restless away from my treasures, and am going back to them to-day." He walked to the window as he spoke, and I saw him rubbing his hands together as though some thought was pleasing him very much.

"You are in good spirits," I said.

"Who would not be at the thought of securing so matchless and celebrated a casket?"

"Indeed," I answered; "I know nothing about these things."

"If you had ever studied the subject of art treasures, Dr. Cato, you must have heard of this special casket. It is formed out of one enormous onyx, on which are two priceless cameos, and around the lid rubies, diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, all of enormous value, are richly embedded. The casket was fought for, struggled for, and lost again and again as far back as in the time of the Crusades. How it got into the Hampton family remains a mystery. It will be mine now."

"But surely Lady Helen will redeem it?"

"Never," he said, softly. He came up to me almost on tiptoe, held out his hand, said good-bye, and left me.

That evening, before retiring to rest, I had a word or two with Chetwynd.

"I want to ask you a straight question," I said. "Don Santos has been your patient once again: do you still suspect him of foul play in the matter of Ingram?"

He did not answer for a moment; then he said, slowly: "I .would rather not speak of my suspicions. I have just come from a long interview with Mrs. Ingram; she interests me profoundly."

"Well, I ***have*** something to say," I continued. "I am going to visit the Spaniard at ›Roe House‹ to-morrow evening. I have been commissioned to execute some business for him."

"The deuce you have!" he cried, springing to his feet. "Are you mad?"

"I hope not; and, by the way, the man's visit here has not been without fruit. He has promised to refund Mrs. Ingram some of the money which her son paid for the necklace."

Chetwynd looked grave and anxious.

"I wish you would not go to ›Roe House,‹" he said, earnestly.

I laughed.

"Really, Chetwynd," I answered, "I shall begin to think your own nerves are out of order."

He was silent for a moment, then he said, slowly: "Notwithstanding my duties as doctor here, I have toiled over the strange case of the murder of John Ingram almost day and night, and I now hold a theory too fantastic to divulge. This theory is founded on a single point. It is this: As I looked at poor Ingram's dead body that morning last autumn, I saw adhering to his coat a good many pine-needles and twigs. Now, the only fir trees anywhere near stand in the inclosure surrounding Don Santos's house. This looked to me as if Ingram must have climbed a fir tree, for he could not have got the needles on him unless he had been among the small branches."

"Climbed a fir tree? What on earth for?" I asked.

"Ah! that remains to be answered. Now listen, Cato. Have you made up your mind to visit ›Roe House‹?"

"Certainly."

"In spite of my telling you frankly that I consider there is an element of danger in your visit?"

"In spite of your friendly warning."

"Then I will cease to urge you not to go. On the contrary, I consider that your visit may be of the utmost use to me. Go and do exactly what Don Santos asks you. If he requests you to dine to-morrow night, humour him. I shall also go to Wimbledon to-morrow; we will force his hand."

"Do you mean to come with me to his house?"

"Not I. He won't know until the last moment that I am on the premises. My dear fellow, of one thing I am certain: Ingram was never murdered on the common."

"Not murdered on the common? But he was found there. How did he get there?"

"That," replied Chetwynd, "is what you and I have got to discover, and to-morrow night, too. It is a risk—are you prepared to run it?"

"I certainly am. Chetwynd, I am sorry for you; you are bitten by a craze—a craze to discover what never can be discovered on earth."

"We will soon know," was his ambiguous answer.

Lady Helen returned with the casket and put it into my hands, and punctually at eight o'clock on the following evening I arrived at Roe House, carrying the treasure with me. The moment I rang the bell the door was opened by Don Santos himself.

"Well," he cried, eagerly, "have you got it?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Capital. Come into my study. You have done well."

We both entered. I took the precious casket out of its wrappings and gave it to him. He went over to the nearest window and examined it carefully. I noticed a queer smile of avarice on his features.

"You will dine?" he said, looking at me.

"If you wish it," I answered.

"That is right, I have not yet received the necessary notes and gold from the bank. I sent a special messenger for them early to-day. They will come, doubtless, in the course of the evening. Lady Helen specially stipulated to be paid in gold and notes. Of course, in a case of this kind one must submit to the caprices of a woman, and the money will be here by the time we have done dinner."

"My time is yours," I answered; "I have nothing special to hurry me back."

"Good, very good. It is a delightful summer's evening—we shall enjoy ourselves on the veranda afterwards. May I take you to a room now to wash your hands?"

I was somewhat surprised at his acting as his own servant, The house, too, seemed silent and deserted. In a few moments we were seated before a sumptuous cold repast in the dining-room.

"I hate your hot English dinners," said Santos, apologetically; "besides, it means keeping a lot of servants around one. Now, my wants are few, and it is so much more convenient to wait on ourselves than having chattering servants overhearing every word one says."

The Señor spoke in a quick, nervous way, and there was a gleam in his eyes which I had noticed with more or less apprehension when he was suffering from his worst attacks at the Sanctuary. Suddenly, as I sat before that dinner table, some of the fears which had infected Chetvvynd

began to visit me. I lost my appetite. I wished myself anywhere than where I was. Don Santos was a stronger man than I: more muscular, with more physical power. Should occasion demand it, the strength of a madman might be his. Beyond doubt he was the victim of incipient insanity. His conversation as dinner proceeded took a strange turn. He talked of himself in a most confidential way. Suddenly he rose.

"How hot the night is," he said; "shall we finish our dessert on the veranda?"

"With pleasure," I answered. "But I hope your messenger will soon come with the notes, Santos, for I want to return to Hampstead before it is too late."

"He ought to arrive at any moment—we will wait for him on the veranda. Come, let me show you the way."

He led me upstairs, and we entered the large veranda which Mrs. Ingram had so faithfully described in her dream. It was a beautiful starlit night and perfectly warm.

"Take that chair," said the Señor. He pointed to one of the deck chairs as he spoke. I seated myself and lit a cigar. My host also smoked silently. We were both quiet, drinking in the peace and beauty of the night. At last Don Santos stirred restlessly, and said, in an abrupt tone: "It is strange how one's memory reverts to bygone events. Now, I hate even to think of pour Ingram, and yet I never come to this veranda but thoughts of him return to me. By the way, how far away from here did you tell me his body was found?"

"Not three hundred yards," I answered.

"Strange, strange. Have you any special theory with regard to the murder?"

"No," I replied, "but my friend Chetwynd has."

"Ha!" he answered; "and doubtless that most interesting lady, Mrs. Ingram, also holds a theory of her own. I must not forget that I am to send her a cheque by you to-night. I would never wish to be hard on women, although I hate them all. By the way, Cato, do you know that I believe that woman, in some queer, unfathomable, impossible way, suspects me—me—of the murder of Ingram?"

"Nonsense," I answered.

He started to his feet.

"I don't think it nonsense, nor does she. But I believe I heard a ring—that must be the messenger with the notes and gold, I will let him in."

It struck me, as Don Santos said this, that he must have extraordinary ears, for I had certainly heard no bell ring. He left the veranda quickly.

I sat on in my comfortable chair I heard the sound of his retreating footsteps dying away, and then every thing was quiet except for the stirring of a slight breeze in the top of the dark fir trees. I was relieved that Don Santos was no longer by my side. If the man was not mad he was next door to it: his words during my visit had been more than strange, and there was a light in his eyes which I had seen before, but never in those of a sane person. Should I leave the veranda, go downstairs, and make my escape? Was I really in danger? I could have easily gone away, but Lady Helen had trusted me with her commission, and the casket was in the Spaniard's possession. I must not leave the house without the £5,000 which was to be Lady Helen's in exchange for the Catalini Casket. I must also try to get the cheque which the man had promised Mrs. Ingram. I was still lying back in my chair when a moving shadow cast by a lamp in the room behind me suddenly spread across the veranda. I started and turned. Great heavens! it was Chctwynd himself! He rushed towards me, his eyes alight with terror, his voice hoarse with fear.

"For God's sake, Paul, get out of that chair," he cried'; "jump for your life!"

There was no time to be even surprised. I made one bound from the chair—and at the same instant something whirled through the air close behind me. There was a dull clang, Chctwynd, gripping my arm, pointed up. Neither of us could speak.

Fixed at the extremity of a huge steel spring which had been concealed as one of the planks of the veranda, the chair had flown up in a great arc above us, the spring had dashed against the bars of the iron railing, and the chair checked thus suddenly in its flight was still quivering to and fro from the terrific shock of the impact.

CheLwynd was the first to gain his voice.

"Hush! Look!" he whispered. Through the doorway, leering out into the darkness, was the face of the Spaniard. The next instant it vanished, Chetwynd blew loud blasts on a whistle, and we both rushed into the room. The man was gone, but before we had reached the top of the stairs a loud shriek, followed by the sounds of a desperate struggle, fell on our ears, and hurrying down we saw Don Santos struggling like a wild cat in the hands of two powerful detectives. It was' a horrible sight. Chetwynd turned to me.

"I congratulate you, Cato," he said. "Two minutes more and you would have been lying amongst the gorse bushes. It was a little too near to be pleasant."

He looked back at the Señor, who was still filling the great hall with furious imprecations.

"Take him to the station, Mitchell," I heard Chetwynd say; "I will be with you the first thing to-morrow morning."

I shuddered. The shock, the suddenness of the whole thing, had unnerved me. I felt sick and faint.

"Come, old chap, it's over now," said my friend; "let me get you some brandy."

We entered the dining-room. The table was still strewn with the remains of our dinner. Chetwynd lit a candle, and I poured out a stiff glass of brandy and gulped it down.

"But what does it mean?" I cried.

"I suspected it," he answered; "not exactly what has happened, but something very like it. The señor is partly mad, but more wicked. He had a craze for the collection of art treasures, and wanted to secure them without paying his victims the necessary money. Thus he never intended to pay Lady Helen for the Catalini Casket. The old story which was repeated once in the case of Ingram would have again been the talk about you. Your lifeless body would have been found in the morning on Wimbledon Common, and the police would suppose that you had been robbed and murdered. I guessed that this was the Señor's game, but it was impossible for me to tell how he performed his ghastly feats until I could get within the precincts of ›Roe House.‹ When I found that you were really going there, I thought my opportunity had come. I resolved to watch you, and at the same time to let you go into danger. I followed you this evening, bringing two detectives in plain clothes with me. I perceived that there were no servants in the house, which strengthened my suspicions. We three managed to get into the garden, and watched you as you sat at supper. When you went up to the veranda we raised a window and got into the house, and then began our search. We first made our way to the room under the veranda. Come, I will show you."

He took up a candle as he spoke. I followed him.

"We could hear your voices above us," continued Chetwynd. "When we entered the room I struck a light and then saw what I will now show you—something that sent me flying up to you. Thank God, I was just in time. Santos must have gone down the other way, so I missed him."

We had now entered a small, bare room. In the centre stood an enormous cogged wheel and ratchet, which could be wound by a handle. Upon the floor lay a long steel chain.

"Do you see this?" said Chetwynd. "The chain was used to wind down the huge steel spring in the veranda; this cord drew back the catch in order to release it, and then—well, you saw the rest for yourself. One moment more, and it would have flung you over the fir-tops and out on to the Common, three hundred yards away. Your dead body would have been found there in the morning. Just as in Ingram's case, there would have been no clue. Don Santos would have declared that you left the house with the money in your possession, thus giving the motive for your murder. No possible suspicion could have attached to him. Paul, I don't wonder you feel shaken, but think for your comfort that you have avenged Ingram and brought to the gallows one of the most crafty, scientific, and satanic criminals of the day! What a stir it will make!"

The next day ›Roe House‹ underwent a careful examination by some of the ablest detectives in London. In all sorts of unlikely places treasures of immense worth were hidden. Doubtless they were most of them stolen. Amongst others the pearl necklace for which poor Ingram was murdered was found. It was sold again even for a larger figure, and thus Mrs. Ingram got back her money. Lady Helen also received the Catalini Casket uninjured into her trembling hands. She had the courage and good sense, after so frightful a catastrophe, to inform her husband of the truth. He was more lenient than she had painted him, and her young brother was saved from absolute ruin.

As to Don Santos, even the plea of insanity availed nothing—two months later he was hanged for his crimes, and the world was rid of one of the most consummate scoundrels who has ever lived.

Chapter II

A Visible Sound

In the second year of the existence of the Club I received a letter from a gentleman in the county of Kent. He signed himself Walter Royal, and lived in a large place which went by the name of Court Royal. He was anxious to be admitted as one of our members, and further expressed a desire that his niece, a girl of about two-and-twenty, who lived with him, should also become a member of the Sanctuary Club. He inclosed a cheque for the entrance -fees for himself and his niece, and begged to know how soon the ceremony of his election might take place.

I wrote to him immediately, asking a few questions, and finally said that at the next meeting of the committee he and his niece would be duly elected. To this he replied by a somewhat longer letter.

> "*Your news has given me relief, Dr. Cato,*" he wrote; "*I am an old man, and one never knows what may happen. I have heard a great deal of your Club from people who have derived benefit from your peculiar mode of treatment, and it is quite possible that in the future the institution which you have been good enough to inaugurate may be of use to my niece Primrose. In the present case it will undoubtedly be of service to me. I do not think that I shall last much longer, but while I am in the world I wish to keep as well as possible, and as I am suffering from various phases of a nervous disorder, I should like to put myself into your care as soon as possible. I shall probably be with you early next week. Before coming, however, it is as well for you to know that I am the victim of a very extraordinary malady, which is both overpowering and overmastering, and has such a curious effect on my nerves that I am*

obliged to yield to certain inclinations, knowing all the time that mischief will occur from my doing so. I will tell you more about this when I have the pleasure of meeting you."

In reply to this letter I wrote to Mr. Royal to say that the following Wednesday would suit Dr. Chetwynd and myself for his reception, and he replied to the effect that he and his niece would be with us on that date.

It was early in the spring of the year 1892 when he arrived, accompanied by his niece. He was a very tall and thin old man, with white hair hanging down over his shoulders, piercing, deeply-set black eyes, and aquiline features. There was an eagerness in his gaze which I have not often seen in anyone so advanced in life, and which I put down partly to the complaint from which he undoubtedly suffered.

His niece to a certain extent resembled him. She had the same bright, alert look, but her features were small, her figure graceful, and she had the rounded limbs and soft complexion of early youth. She had a gentle, affectionate manner, and I saw at once that she was a particularly amiable girl. I noticed, however, from the first that she was very anxious about the old man. At the first possible opportunity she hastened to tell me the cause of this anxiety.

"My uncle has not the slightest idea, Dr. Cato," she said, "that he is suffering from what almost amounts to mania; but, nevertheless, I who have known him all my life am certain that such is the case."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, in the first place, he will not consult his family physician. He has absolutely refused to see Dr. Winstanley for the last two years, and it is since then that the curious phase of nervous disorder to which I allude has become so manifest. I cannot tell you how relieved I was when he declared his intention of becoming a member of the Sanctuary Club, and of putting himself under your treatment."

"Pray describe the symptoms which give you uneasiness," I interrupted.

She paused for a moment, then said, slowly, "You do not know perhaps that my uncle, Mr. Royal, is one of the greatest authorities on archaeology and Roman relics in England. About three months ago he sent some magnificent Roman pottery to the British Museum. This he had himself excavated in the neighbourhood of Court Royal out of a Roman villa, which he discovered within three miles of his estate. I trace the growth of his disorder almost from the day when he first discovered this villa. Since then he has scarcely lived for anything else, employing

workmen in the task of excavation, and wet or fine, early and late, has spent his time at the villa. During the long winter evenings he has been hunting up the records of the place, and he told me not long ago that he believed the ruins in question had belonged to one of the Quæstors of Customs in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, when Britain was a Roman colony. He has searched through many old county records, and found that an old chronicler made mention of this very place, and said that it contained buried treasure of great value. Since reading this account my uncle's excitement has become greater and greater, and the one object of his life now is to discover the treasure which he believes to be hidden away in the old villa, I bitterly regret for his sake that he ever knew anything of its existence. He has certainly lost both health and sleep since that date."

"What has brought things to a crisis?" I asked.

"I will tell you," she answered. "Two months ago he returned home in a state of breathless and painful excitement It was just about Christmas time, and the weather was bitterly cold, I think he had got a chill in body, but his excitement of mind almost passed all hounds. He brought with him an old bronze disc, which he had found deeply embedded in the clay. There was some Latin writing on it, and night after night he shut himself up with his old disc— trying to make out the inscription round the edge. Whether he has ever done so or not is more than I can tell you; but a few days ago, just after you had consented to admit him here, I found him in a state of unconsciousness in his study. The bronze was lying on a table near, and he had evidently fainted while struggling to possess himself of its secret. I locked the bronze disc up in one of the cupboards in the study, and took immediate steps to bring my uncle here. I am most anxious about him."

"He certainly looks extremely ill," I replied, but I trust the treatment and the great quiet of the place will go far to restore him. Has he shown any other eccentricities, Miss Seafield?"

She hesitated, then said, slowly, "There is one other craze which has manifested itself to an extraordinary degree. For nearly a year he has been hiding things of value in all sorts of unexpected places. Not long ago we could not find the old jewelled hunting watch which he always wore in his waistcoat-pocket. He himself seemed to have forgotten where he put it, and was in a terrible state about it. We eventually recovered it in an unused well in the garden, Some jewels left to me by my mother were also put by him into other as unlikely places, and of

late I have been obliged to have a special attendant to follow him about in order to prevent his hiding things in daily use."

"Well," I answered, "he could not do better than come here. I am glad you have spoken so frankly about him. My friend Chetwynd and I will do our utmost to promote his recovery, and in the meantime I hope you will enjoy yourself. You at least look well and strong."

"I am fairly well," she replied; "but what with one thing and another, I have gone through many anxieties. Perhaps I ought to tell you that my uncle has had a very sad story. He had three children, the elder two being sons. The eldest son died when quite young, and he has quarrelled with the other so effectually that nothing will induce him to see him again. He has not only quarrelled with him, but he has also disinherited him, The son in question, James Royal, is a very bad man, and has led a most reckless and extravagant life. My uncle has paid his debts many times and given him very large sums of money, but within the last five years he has absolutely refused to allow him to come near Court Royal, and has assured me that he will not leave him a farthing. James Royal, who used to terrify me when I was a little child by coming to the house and making fearful disturbances, has taken his father at his word, and we neither of us now know where he is or whether he is in existence at all."

"And who will inherit the property?" I ventured to ask.

"I do not mind telling you," she answered, her eyes growing bright; "my uncle has often told me that he will leave Court Royal to me, I am not particularly anxious to be rich, but I hope, if I do find myself possessed of so fine a property, that I shall know how to do my duty. I am the daughter of his only sister, who was very much younger than himself. My mother died when I was a baby, and my father soon followed her. Since then I have lived at Court Royal, and my uncle has been both father and mother to me."

At that moment my conversation with Miss Seafield was interrupted, and I did not renew it again. I repeated to Chetwynd what the young lady had told me, and we soon came to the conclusion that Walter Royal's malady was hopeless, and that, in all probability, the old man was not long for this world. He was a very gentle and agreeable person, and did not show the slightest sign of oddity when joining in general conversation, but his bodily weakness grew apace, and he was soon confined to his room.

Royal and his niece had been about a fortnight at the Sanctuary Club, when one day a visitor called. It was, I remember, early in the afternoon,

and I was doing something in the hall. Miss Seafield was standing near helping me. Suddenly she almost dropped a valuable china plate which she was assisting me to move into a more prominent position, the colour fled from her face, and her hands trembled. A tall, eager-looking man of about thirty years of age was announced Miss Seafield started forward, holding out both her hands.

"Jack!" she cried, "how did you know we were here?" Then she turned and introduced him to me. "Mr. Kelvin—Dr. Cato." she said.

I bowed to the stranger. He had an uncommon face, and I found myself looking at him with great interest There was a certain untamed fire in his eyes, joined to some indications of weakness round his lips, which seemed at a first glance to point him out as the victim of hereditary nervous weakness, but the breadth of his brow and the rare sweetness of his smile immediately dissipated this first impression. I felt certain that he was a man of remarkable genius, and had not led an ordinary career. It also needed but a glance at the face of the beautiful girl who now stood close to his side to show that the pair loved each other, and were in all probability engaged.

"I must let Uncle Walter know that you have come, Jack, and then I will come back to you," was Primrose's next eager remark.

"Shall I do that for you?" I interrupted; "I am going to visit Mr. Royal in about half an hour, when he awakens after his nap."

"Oh, will you?" she asked, her eyes full of smiles, and her cheeks glowing with happiness; "then in that case we can go into the grounds. I have a good deal to say to Mr. Kelvin, Dr. Cato, and I am very much obliged to you."

I went upstairs to the old man. In the course of conversation I delivered his niece's message.

"Ah!" he said, "so Jack has found us out. Has Primrose told you anything more?"

"No," I answered; "what do you mean?"

"She is engaged to Kelvin, and more or less against my will. He is a clever fellow, very clever, almost a genius; he has written some books of rare distinction, and is also a poet of no mean order; but he is poor and rash and extravagant, and my impression is that he got himself into a serious scrape early in his life."

"In your niece's case you ought to be very careful," I said. "You are a man of large property, and if you mean her to inherit it, she must not be a prey to fortune-hunters."

"Oh, Kelvin is nothing of that sort," he said, somewhat impatiently. "If anything, he is too unworldly; he loves my girl devotedly, and she fairly worships the ground he walks on. I am not surprised, and when you know him better, Cato, you will yourself yield to his many fascinations."

That evening Miss Seafield asked me if her uncle had said anything with regard to Kelvin.

"He told me that you and he are engaged," I said.

She looked steadily at me for a moment, and then her dark-grey eyes filled with tears.

"It is my great privilege to love him, and to be loved back in return," she said. "He is the most wonderful man I have ever met. He is very clever, more than clever; his writings are beautiful. He will make his mark in the world of letters if he goes on, but he has had a sad life, and has had much trouble. Dr. Cato, I don't mind telling you, he put himself some years ago into the power of my cousin, James Royal."

"How so?" I asked.

"I don't quite know myself, but it has cast a shadow over his life. It is in my cousin's power to ruin him, and why he has not done so long ago is a marvel; but Jack's hope now is that he will never push things to extremities. Ah, I have told you too much—pray forget what I have said, but always remember that I regard myself as one of the most fortunate women in the world to have won the love of so good, so great a man."

Within a week from that date old Mr. Royal passed quietly away in his sleep. His illness had been hopeless from the first—but none the less was the shock a severe one to Miss Seafield. The old man was taken back to Court Royal to sleep in the vault of his ancestors, and in the rush of other work I almost forgot Primrose Seafield and her story.

Nearly six months passed, when I received the following letter:—

Court Royal, Wrenhurst, Kent.

Dear Sir,

My name I know will be familiar to you as the son of the late Mr. Walter Royal, who was a member of your Club, and died under your roof. As I am rather anxious about myself in view of my father's malady, and as I hope to be married within a week, and there is no time to spare, I shall be exceedingly glad if you will come down and see me at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,
James Royal.

I read this letter with a good deal of astonishment. Had the reckless and wicked son who had more or less ruined his father's life turned up at Court Royal on hearing of the old man's death? Beyond doubt this had happened. But why was he staying there, when Primrose Seafield was the heiress? And whom was he going to marry immediately, and why had he requested me, of all persons under the sun, to diagnose his special symptome?

Apprehending, I could not tell why, foul play of some sort, I was about to reply to this letter, when by the very next post I received one from Miss Seafield herself.

> "*Dear Dr. Cato,*" it ran,
>
> "*I have just heard that my cousin, James Royal, has written asking you to come down here, and I am writing now to beg of you as a personal friend of my own to grant his request if possible. The fact is, I want to see you myself, and it is impossible for me to visit you at the Club just at present, I am in great and terrible trouble, and I want to ask your advice. I believe you can help me if you will. When you meet my cousin, please do not mention to him that I have written, nor speak about anything special in his presence. In particular, I hope you will not allude to Mr. Kelvin. I will tell you all when we meet.*
>
> *Yours sincerely,*
> *Primrose Seafield.*"

"I will go down by the earliest train to-morrow morning," I reflected, "and find out for myself how matters really stand."

Soon after eleven o'clock on the following day I reached Wrenhurst. A well-appointed carriage had been sent to meet me. I learned from the coachman that Court Royal was about three miles away, but the spirited chestnuts were not long in getting over the ground. I presently found myself in a fine avenue, which contained some magnificent timber, and a sharp corner in the avenue brought the old house into full view, with its quaint gable-ends and Norman turrets.

Just as the carriage drew up before the front entrance, Primrose Seafield hurried to meet me. She was in deep black, and her shady hat was slightly pushed away from her face.

"You have come—I thought you would," she said, "I cannot tell you how thankful I am. My cousin is out, but there is no time to say much to you;

he may be back at any moment. Oh, Dr. Cato, I an, in fearful trouble—I wonder my senses do not give way, I must take an opportunity of speaking to you, and in private. Will you come to my uncle's study after lunch?"

"Shall I find you there?" I asked.

"Yes; I have no chance of having a word alone with you before. My cousin will prevent it, but Mrs. Hall, my old governess, is staying with me, and she will bring you to the study if you ask her. After lunch my cousin, as a rule, goes away for a nap by himself. Ah, and here he is approaching,"

She turned as she spoke and pointed in the direction of the shrubberies, through which I saw a tall, loosely -made man coming towards us. I scarcely glanced at him at first, however, so dismayed was I by the change in the girl's own bright face, She was now painfully thin, and her dark-grey eyes were almost too large for absolute beauty. There were heavy shadows under them, and her lips—beautiful and proud lips they used to be—were tremulous as though she had often indulged in heavy fits of crying. She looked sadly nervous, too, and as though her mental equilibrium had, in some curious way, got a severe shock.

"Come with me to meet my cousin," she said. She walked forward, and I followed her.

The man who had now almost reached us was above the middle height; he was followed by a bulldog, and wore a Norfolk suit and carried a rook-rifle in his hand. In some particulars his features resembled those of his father, being aquiline and thin; but the colour on his cheeks was fixed, and his mouth was completely hidden by a heavy moustache. His eyes were sunken into his head, and were too bright. They had a watchful gleam in them, too, which I have often connected with nervous disorder. It needed scarcely a glance to tell me that the man indulged in too much alcohol.

"How do you dp, Dr. Cato?" he said, as we came up. "I presume this is Dr. Cato, Primrose?" he added, glancing at his cousin.

She bowed, without speaking.

"Ah! so I guessed. Your train must have been punctual, Doctor. I am sorry I was not on the premises when you drove up. Will you come into the house now?"

He did not take any further notice of Primrose. She left us and went slowly in the direction of the shrubbery. We entered a large hall, and Royal, opening a door on the right, took me into the dining-room.

"Have something before lunch, won't you?" he said, opening a door in a massive oak sideboard, and taking out a bottle of brandy.

"No, thank you," I answered.

"You had better," he said.

I shook my head.

"I never take stimulants except with meals," I said.

"All the worse for you," was his retort. "Well, you don't mind if I help myself?"

He poured out a stiff glass of brandy and drank it off.

"Shall we go to my late father's smoking-room for our talk?" he said.

Without waiting for me to reply he led the way, crossing a large conservatory as he did so. We soon found ourselves in a small, comfortably furnished room; the French windows were open, and the soft summer air was coming gently in. Royal drew a chair forward for me, and sank himself into another nearly opposite.

"Well," he said, "to plunge into the matter without further delay, I am about to be married. You may think it rather soon after my father's death, but the wedding will be a very quiet one, and there are reasons that make it inexpedient to allow any further delay. This day week, I hope to see myself united to as good a girl as ever breathed. You guess, of course, that I allude to my cousin, Primrose Seafield."

"You astonish me very much," I said; "you engaged to Miss Seafield?"

"And why not?" he answered, his brow darkening, and an angry scowl passing across his features.

I was silent. Angry as I felt, I knew that the matter was scarcely my affair. He gazed at me steadily for a moment; then his eyes fell, he shuffled uneasily on his seat, and I saw his large hands tremble.

"It is these beastly nerves," he said. "Certainly, this age has its drawbacks, and the way we poor mortals are troubled by all kinds of out-of-the-way feelings is past a joke. Now, I don't pretend that I have led the most immaculate life in the world, and what with one thing and another, things are telling on me. I have heard much of you and your wonderful cures, Dr. Cato, and it has occurred to me that by-and-by I cannot do better than become a member of your Club, and put myself completely under your treatment."

"I shall be pleased to enter your name on my roll of members," I answered. "I will send you a form to fill up, and– –"

He waved his hand to interrupt me.

"Presently, presently," he said; "those matters are for the future. I have sent for you now to consult you as an ordinary physician. I want to ask you a plain question. Is—in your opinion—my father's insanity (for he doubtless was insane in the latter years of his life) hereditary?"

"Your father was insane for the last six months of his life; certainly not longer," I answered. "My friend Dr. Chetwynd and I studied his case most carefully. He had a peculiar mania, but it was not of long duration, and was itself of quite an innocent character."

"Ah," he said; "well, I don't agree with you. I have known the old man intimately for some time, and can prove that he was very queer for several years; but now for my question. My father died at the age of eighty—I am a man of five-and-fifty: am I likely to be similarly affected?"

"No," I replied, boldly; "if your father was insane, it by no means follows that his insanity was hereditary. But tell me what you complain of."

"I am oppressed at times by an overpowering sense of fear, and since I came into this fine property I have in a most remarkable way lost every interest in life. I have gone through ups and downs in my rough-and-tumble existence, and, I assure you there have been moments in my miserable life when I have scarcely known how to provide for my next meal. You will scarcely credit this, seeing that I am the son of one of the richest men in the county; but he was peculiar, my dear sir, peculiar from the very first, Now, indeed, things have righted themselves, and in an extraordinary and providential manner. You see before you a rich man, Dr. Cato, I have many thousands at my credit in the bank, and, as you see for yourself, am the owner of a large estate and a fine house, lam also about to be married to a very pretty girl, and one I have long been fond of, It seems unaccountable, does it not, that with all these advantages, these showers of blessings, so to speak, I am still thoroughly wretched? I sleep badly, and am troubled by dreams and nightmares of a terrifying description. Knowing what I do about my father, I have been getting quite fidgety of late, and thought I had best consult you at once. Naturally, before marriage, a man thinks of these things. Can you relieve my mind?"

"Your symptoms are not quite pleasant ones," I said, "but at the same time there is nothing to be seriously alarmed about. Granted that your father did suffer from mania, it behoves you to be more careful than ordinary men, and a quiet, open-air life is what will suit you best. Avoid all excitement, and, what is far more important, excess of every kind."

"Well, I do that," he said, with a laugh; "there is devilish little excitement here, and plenty of open air, so that's all right."

"Do you take much alcohol?" I asked,

"Oh, a nip now and then, and wine with meals."

"Have your wine with meals, by all means," I answered, "but I should stop the nips, A man who gets drunk once a month, and takes nothing in the interval, will live longer than a man who is never the worse for liquor but is constantly tippling; but pray remember, the man who does neither will outlive them both."

"I have no doubt that is so," he answered, "but I could not exist without wine, and I never drink to excess, I am much obliged to you for your opinion, Dr. Cato. You can assure me there is no present cause for alarm?"

"None, if you will be moderate," was my reply.

"I will tell Primrose what you say; she will be relieved, poor girl. I think I quite frightened her a couple of evenings ago, I was in a somewhat mirthful state, and she did not think I showed sufficient respect for my late father's memory. After all, Dr. Cato, T have nothing to thank him for. I should not be the owner of this property had he not overreached himself and died intestate. But for that little Tact Primrose would have been the heiress, and I should have been nowhere. Now matters are reversed, and I think I am behaving extremely well to the girl by marrying her."

"But what does she say herself?" I asked.

"Say? What can she say? She is naturally delighted -who would not be? It is not every girl who has the chance of being mistress of a fine property like this. The fact is, the whole thing is a most lucky escape for her. Had my father made a will, she would have inherited Court Royal and thrown herself away upon a fellow in town, of the name of Kelvin, an imbecile sort of chap. He poses as a maker of poetry, and writes a lot of silly stuff; you must know the sort of fellow for yourself. Primrose thought herself in love with him, and would have married him, had I not stepped in to interfere. Our wedding-bells will ring in a week; and, now that you have quite relieved my mind, I can do what is left of my courtship with a light heart."

As he spoke he left the room. I sat, feeling almost stunned, by the open window. I had now got the secret of Primrose's trouble. But what hold had such a man over the poor girl? Why had she, even for a single moment, consented to marry him? Why was there no will? What did all this dark and inexplicable shadow mean?

Miss Seafield was not present at lunch; but the old lady, Mrs. Hall, whom she had already mentioned, took the head of the table. Royal was in

high spirits, both eating and drinking freely. He made loud jokes, and did not seem to miss his cousin in the very least. As soon as the meal was over he rose abruptly.

"What train do you take back to town?" he said, looking at me.

"There is a good train, is there not, at 3.30?" was my reply.

"I should recommend the 4.30—that is an express. I am sure Mrs. Hall and my cousin Primrose will be glad to take you round the grounds. I will join you in an hour or so; I always have a nap after lunch—I acquired the habit when in the East. Good-bye for the present."

He left the room, waving his hand as he did so in the direction of Mrs. Hall.

"Look after him," he said to her.

The moment the door closed behind my host, the good lady turned to me.

"Will you come at once to Primrose Seafield?" she said. "We both knew that this would happen. He takes more wine than he can stand, and always goes away for his nap, as he expresses it. Dr. Cato, I know that you have been good to Primrose, and that she has in part confided her story to you. If you can help her, do, in the name of Heaven; no girl ever wanted someone to guide her more than she does at present. She is very unhappy and, unless matters can be quickly put right, will have a miserable life in the future."

As Mrs. Hall spoke, she led me from the dining-room down a long corridor, and a moment later we found ourselves in the late Mr. Royal's study. It was a beautiful room, lined with books from floor to ceiling, and was situated in the west wing of the building. Primrose Seafield was already there. She was standing in one of the deep windows, her hands clasped loosely behind her back. As soon as I appeared she started forward.

"Ah, thank you," she said. "Mrs. Hall, will you leave us?"

The old lady withdrew, closing the door softly behind her.

"There is not a moment to waste," said Miss Seafield, speaking eagerly. "Take a chair, Dr. Cato, and please do not lose a word of what I am going to tell you."

I sat down in the nearest chair.

"Won't you sit, too?" I said to her.

"No, I cannot; I am too restless to remain still for a moment. Please listen."

"I am all attention," I answered.

"Do you remember my telling you early in the spring about my dear uncle's great passion for Roman relics?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Well, the wretched story which I am about to confide to you has something to do with that fact, but I must start from another point. You know how suddenly my uncle died; his funeral took place from the Sanctuary Club, and I came back here. The lawyers immediately searched for the will, but no will could be found. Knowing my uncle's peculiarity with regard to hiding things of value, the search was most thorough and complete: not a corner of the old house was left without a complete investigation; the gardens and grounds were searched from end to end, but nowhere up to the present has there been the smallest clue to any will. Two months after the death my cousin, James Royal, appeared. He brought a London lawyer with him, said that he had heard that his father had died intestate, and that he was going to take possession of everything. I need not go into particulars, nor tell you all that he said and that the lawyers on my side said, and the amount of angry words that passed between them. All that mattered little or nothing to me. I was stunned. I could not believe that my cousin was to be the owner of the property, and that I myself was penniless. It was not, as I have already told you, that I wanted money for its own sake; but, oh ! Dr. Cato, you do not know him. He will drag this noble property through the very mire—there will be nothing of it left in a year or two."

She paused as she spoke; the light from outside fell all over her figure, and lit up her pale face, bringing out strong bronze lights in her rich hair. She looked almost ethereal, and very beautiful—the suffering on each feature but accentuated her loveliness. As I watched her I trembled for her health. Would she long endure the severe strain to which she was now exposed?

"Oh, money is of so little value," she continued, "and yet what tragedies it causes; but I must go on—please listen. You know, of course, that when I was at the Sanctuary Club I was engaged, with the full sanction of my own heart, and with every prospect of happiness, to the man I love best on earth, Jack Kelvin. You remember my telling you that once, some years ago, he got himself into my cousin's power—he had alluded to this once or twice, but I did not know any particulars. I was to learn them all too soon. Jack, as I have told you, has very strong literary tastes, and is already making a name for himself in London; but in his early days he had serious troubles, and was once in severe money difficulties. At that time he knew my cousin, James Royal, well,

and there was even a sort of friendship between them. Jack, in order to meet his liabilities, had borrowed money at very heavy interest from different money-lenders.

"One evening he confided the state of affairs to my cousin. It was just then that he and I had first met. He had fallen in love with me, and had even mentioned the hope that some day we should be husband and wife. James Royal discovered his feelings with regard to me. I cannot quite tell whether Jack confided in him or not, but James had a strange power in those early days of drawing people out; he could be full of tact when he pleased. Anyhow, he appeared then to be a very angel of sympathy. He had some money at the time, and told Jack that for my sake he would pay off some of his heaviest debts. He did so, taking over the mortgages himself, although the security they represented, if realized, would not have covered half the debts.

"This happened three years ago, but since then James Royal's career has gone from bad to worse, and, as you know, my uncle often said that he would not leave him a penny. The existence of no will, however, completely changed the aspect of affairs, and he inherits all. He arrived at the Court, as I told you, and about two months after his arrival came to me one day and explained the position. He said he had always thought it highly improbable that he would inherit the property. The fact of there being no will was an unforeseen contingency. There was, however, he said, always the possibility of a will being found, in which case he knew well that the estates would be mine.

"'I always guessed you would be the heiress' he said, 'and I meant when the time came to marry you.'

"I laughed in his face when he said the words, but he proceeded, looking me full in the eyes.

"'I have got Kelvin in my power' he cried. 'I can foreclose on those mortgages, and unless he pays up, which he cannot by any possibility do, some of his early speculations will be exposed—by no means to his credit—and he himself dragged through the Bankruptcy Court. Be sure of one thing—I shall have no mercy.'

"Oh, Dr. Cato, I knew his words were true—he looked the fiend he was as he spoke.

"'I have waited years for this moment' he said, and he laughed. 'When you marry me I will destroy the mortgages, but not an hour before. It is for you to choose whether I ruin Kelvin or not.'

"I was nearly wild with misery. That very morning I had heard that Jack expected to be offered the post of editor on a new and important

paper, but his chance of this long-looked-for success would be over if my cousin did his worst.

"I went on my knees to my cousin; I did all I could to implore his mercy, but I might as well have spoken to a stone."

Suddenly she turned and faced me.

"And I have yielded," she said; "under the horrible pressure, I have yielded. I have told Jack the truth. He is nearly mad with misery, but I know it will be best for him in the long run. I cannot be the cause of his utter ruin."

As she spoke she burst into painful sobs. I turned my head aside. After a moment or two she recovered herself.

"Your story is a most painful one," I said, "and what I have already felt with regard to your cousin is abundantly confirmed by your words. Believe me, I think you are doing very wrong in yielding to the entreaties of a man like James Royal. He has lived a wicked and dissolute life, and is, I also fear, a confirmed drunkard."

"I know it, I know it!" she said clasping and unclasping her hands, "But," she added, "Jack owes him £20,000. If he forces Jack to pay now, all his prospects are ruined. Oh, what a terrible power my cousin holds over him! If I could only get £20,000, I should be a free girl!"

"Then there is nothing whatever for it," I said, "but to find the will. When the will is found, and it is proved that you are the heiress, you can defy your cousin, for you can pay Kelvin's debts yourself."

"Ah, yes, yes; and now I am coming to the real point of this interview. Please listen with all your might. Do you remember my telling you about the curious bronze disc which my uncle had discovered?"

"I do," I replied; "but how can it possibly help you now?"

"In a position like mine one clutches even at straws," she said. "I want to show you the disc."

She crossed the room, unlocked the cup-board, and drew out what looked like a large metal plate.

"Have I you ever seen anything like this before?" she asked.

I took the disc in my hand, turning it over with some interest.

"It looks like a very curious piece of old bronze of an early date," I said.

"I see you understand something of these things!" she exclaimed. "That is exactly what my uncle told me. I shall never forget the evening he found it Look at the inscription round the edge, it is very early Latin—can you read it?"

I held the disc obliquely, and deciphered the following words with some difficulty:—

HIC ORBIS CELAT THESAVRVM OBRVITVM
RECQGNOSCE TRIA DIGITOS ARCVM SABVLVM.

"If this is genuine it is interesting," I exclaimed; "do you know the translation?"

"I am not quite sure of some of the words," she said, "and my uncle never would read them to me. Can you translate that inscription, and, if so, will you, Dr, Cato?"

I looked again carefully at the old Latin, and then translated as follows:—

This disc holds the key to buried treasure.
Remember three things: Fingers—Bow—Sand.

"Is that the meaning?" said the girl, with great eagerness, "How wonderful! I knew my uncle had a reason for his excitement. I had partly, but only partly, deciphered this for myself, I had discovered about the buried treasure; but what—what does the latter part mean, Dr. Cato? What have Fingers—Bow—Sand to do with buried treasure?"

"I wish I knew," I replied.

"It seems to me," continued Miss Seafield, "that here may he the key to get me out of my difficulty. I dream of this disc day and night, and the words 'buried treasure' are ever ringing in my ears. Now, I have studied the laws of treasure-trove and discovered that the finder must hand over the treasure to the Crown, who pays him or her its intrinsic value. If this disc really contains the key to hidden treasure, and we can discover its meaning and get the treasure, I may be able to pay the debt which Jack Kelvin owes my cousin, and so save him and release myself."

I never saw anything brighter than her eyes as she spoke—the colour had come into her cheeks and courage into her voice. She was leaning against the table and her fingers rested lightly on the disc. She looked down at it now with a glance of such hope, mingled with such despair, that all the enthusiasm within me rose up to try and help her.

"You are to be married in a week?" I said.

"Yes, this day week, unless—unless this can save me." Again she touched the disc. "Is there any hope, Dr. Cato?" she asked

"Of a visionary character," I could not help saying, "In the first place, we must find out the meaning of this inscription. In the next, if there is treasure hidden anywhere in the old villa it may not be of large amount; but I tell you what I'll do—I'll go and see the Roman villa myself on my way back to the station. Does your cousin know about this disc?"

"He examined it, as he did everything else in the house, but evidently placed no value on it, and I took care not to acquaint him with its history."

"Then I will take possession of the disc—may I?" I said.

"Why?" she asked, reluctance in her tone.

"I should like Mr. Chetwynd to see it. He has all kinds of curious knowledge, and is, I fancy, an authority on this sort of thing."

"You will not keep me long in suspense?" she asked.

"No, you shall hear from me at the first possible moment, but do not build your hopes too much on this old thing. Continue to search for the will. If it is found, believe me you are saved."

Soon afterwards Royal joined us both in the grounds.

"By the way," I said to him, "I have just heard from Miss Seafield of a curious old Roman villa which has been excavated near here. I should like much to see it. Can I do so on my way back to town?"

He gave me a careless glance.

"If you really wish to see the old villa, there is no objection" he said; "but there is nothing for you to look at except a lot of ruins and the holes my father dug. I will tell the coachman to point it out to you on your way to the station."

"Thank you," I answered. The carriage came up at that moment. I bade Royal good-bye, wrung Primrose's hand, and started back to London.

After about twenty minutes' drive the coachman drew up at a gate on the left-hand side of the road, from which a path led up a steep embankment covered with short grass.

"That is the place where the old master got his death, it seems to me, sir," said the man. "He was always poking round there, and I never could see that he gained much by it The Roman villa is at the other side of the embankment."

Telling him to wait for me, I began to scramble up the mound. When I reached the top I saw at once the site of the Roman villa by the extensive excavations all round it, and hurried up to view it more closely. A rusty pick-axe and some other tools were left on the grass, and I was surprised to find that there was far more to see than I had anticipated. Of course, nothing approaching to a structure existed, but the extent of the ground-plan was well defined, and the tiled pavement of the atrium, laid in curious mosaic patterns, was still in a state of preservation. I walked all round it, trying to rebuild it in my imagination from the scanty remains that the ravages of seventeen centuries had left Time, however, was passing, and I was obliged to hurry back to catch the train.

As soon as I reached home I went in search of Chetwynd. I found him in his private laboratory. He looked up as I approached.

"I have nearly discovered what has puzzled me for some time," he said; "but what is the matter, Cato, you look worried?"

"So would you be if you had gone through the sort of day I have," was my answer. "I have something very important to tell you, Chetwynd. I have just come back from Court Royal."

"Well?" he asked.

I gave him a rapid outline of my experiences. He listened quietly.

"You must discover this cipher, Chetwynd," I said.

"Do you mean this moment?" he asked.

"Yes, now; can you not see for yourself there is not an hour to lose?"

"I will do my best," he answered; "leave the disc there."

I left him, and after a restless night I got up early, determined to see if Chetwynd were awake and to discover the result of his investigations. I went to his room and knocked several times, but as there was no reply I opened the door and went in. The room was empty—the bed had not been slept in. What could this mean? I hurried down to his study—it was likewise empty.

"I think Mr. Chetwynd is in his laboratory, sir," said one of the servants as I passed him.

"In his laboratory at this hour!" I exclaimed, in some wonder. In a moment I had reached the door and quietly opened it. Chetwynd was seated at the bench. Though it was broad daylight, the blinds were still down and the electric light burning. Upon the bench, fastened in an iron vice, was the disc; beside it lay Chetwynd's open violin-case and several books.

"My dear fellow," I cried, "what are you up to?"

"You must not do this again, Cato," he said, in a quiet voice, a twinkle coming into his bright eyes.

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Bring me your abominable enigmas to solve. You know I cannot leave a thing when I have once started it, but I have solved this, at any rate. Whether it will lead to buried treasure or not is quite another question."

"You have?" I cried. "How? Tell me!"

"Did you not say that the pavement of the old Roman villa was in a state of preservation and in mosaic patterns?"

"Yes, certainly; but why do you ask?"

"Fingers—Bow—Sand," he replied. "If what I have discovered here is the key to the cipher, it will be something that will show the scientists of the present day that?. The old Romans knew more about the laws of acoustics than they give them credit for."

"But what do you mean?" I cried, impatiently.

"Why, Chladni's sand figures, of course—you know them, surely?"

"Chladni's sand figures ! "I echoed, "of course, I have heard of them; but explain yourself, for God's sake."

"Well, see here. I struck the idea at about four o'clock this morning. You know when you sprinkle sand on a metal disc, and draw a violin bow down the edge of the disc, the sand forms itself into beautiful and symmetrical patterns, and when you place your fingers on the edge at places called Nodes, the pattern is of constant form. Well, here are the three things—Fingers, Bow, Sand."

"But whatever have they to do with treasure in a Roman villa?" I asked.

"Ah! that we have to find out. All I know is that I get this as a constant figure"—here he showed me a sheet of paper with a strange pattern drawn on it—"and if we find one of the mosaics corresponding to this," he continued, "I should say there might be a chance for us."

I gazed at him for a moment without speaking, as his extraordinary solution dawned upon me.

"By Jove ! "I cried, at last, "you have discovered the key. It would be a triumph if we found something of real value, and so saved poor Primrose Seafield."

"We will start off immediately after breakfast," he cried; "I am as keen about the affair as you are yourself. Now, look here, Cato, this is what the bow does."

Some fine sand lay sprinkled on the disc; he placed his fingers at certain points on its edge, marked by indications that I had overlooked; he then drew the bow smartly along the edge. The musical note rang out, and the sand, from being a shapeless heap, fell into a perfect symmetrical figure, traced as if by the pencil of some skilled but invisible draughtsman, and corresponding exactly to the copy he had made on paper.

"It is marvellous," I said. "Yes, we will take this down with us. I will go and look up the trains; there is not a moment to lose."

I went into the hall, where the servant handed me my morning's post: there was a letter from Miss Seafield, I tore it open at once.

> *"Dear Dr. Cato,"* it ran, *"Immediately after you left this afternoon my cousin questioned me about your desire to visit the old Roman villa—and an hour or so later discovered that the bronze disc was gone, he flew into a frightful rage, and said that you and I were plotting something against his interests, and that only sinister motives took you to the ruins. He finally declared that he would go to you to get back the disc by the earliest train in the morning. He is almost like a madman to-night—what is to be done?*
>
> *Yours sincerely,*
> *Primrose Seafield*

"The brute," I could not help exclaiming. "Well, he won't find me here. I am glad he will be out of the way while we are overhauling the ruins."

Chetwynd and I reached Wrenhurst in good time. We had already decided to go first to Court Royal and bring Primrose with us to the scene of the excavations. When we got there she hurried to meet us.

"Have you discovered anything?" she cried.

The colour left her face and then returned to it in a crimson flood

"We have news for you, and want you to come with us immediately," I said.

"Have you met my cousin?" she asked. "He left by the eight o'clock train for London meaning to go straight out to Hampstead."

"Then in that case he will soon be back," I answered; "and we have not a moment to lose. Dr. Chetwynd has discovered the key to the secret of the disc. Will you come with us at once to the old Roman villa?"

"We ought to take tools with us," said Chetwynd.

"I noticed some there yesterday," I replied, "left behind doubtless by the workmen. Come, Miss Seafield."

On our way to the ruins I told the excited of what Chetwynd had explained to me. From the depths of despair she seemed suddenly to reach the very pinnacle of hope.

"Oh, I am certain now I shall be saved, I am certain of it!" she said. She could scarcely sit still owing to the feverish excitement which was consuming her.

At last we reached the mount! a nil hurried to the site of the old Roman villa. Without a word Chetwynd went forward, gazing eagerly to and fro with his eyes bent upon the mosaic of the pavement. Suddenly he stopped.

"Look at this, Cato," he said He knelt down and pointed from the paper he held in his hand to one of the patterns on the pavement.

"Line for line the same!" he said; "this is it beyond doubt. Now for one of those pick-axes—there is something more than mere coincidence here."

I quickly fetched one of the picks, and inserting the point beneath the edge of the tile levied it up, at once discovering a deep cavity. My heart sank at the ease with which it came up. It had evidently been quite recently disturbed.

"We have been forestalled," cried Chetwynd; "your uncle. Miss Seafield, must have found the pottery here."

He lay down as he spoke, and thrust his arm into the hole.

"Yes, it is quite empty," he said; "but, no, there is something. It is no Roman treasure, however, nothing but a modern tin case."

He drew out a long, symmetrical case, and tearing off the top, exposed a roll of parchment He had scarcely done so before the sound of horse's hoofs at full gallop were heard to our right, and the next moment James Royal had drawn up and sprung from his saddle.

"What are you doing here, you scoundrels?" he cried, "You have found something; hand it over to me—it is my property."

His face was literally aflame with passion and drink.

"Pardon me," replied Chetwynd, as he glanced through the parchment "This belongs to your father's executors. It is a holograph will dated three years ago, and made before his illness. From its contents I see that he disinherits you, and bequeaths Court Royal and his whole real and personal estate to his niece, Primrose Sea field."

These words fell upon us all like a thunderbolt The scene of the next few moments baffles description, and I need not mention the disgraceful exhibition of frenzied rage and bad language that Royal gave way to. Had I not been there, it is almost certain he would have overpowered Chetwynd and destroyed the will. We returned, however, with it to Court Royal in triumph, and later in the day I explained my theory with regard to it to Primrose Seafield.

"Your uncle's craze for hiding things led him to put the will here," I said; "beyond doubt, his mind was not right when he did so. You had a narrow shave, Miss Seafield, of being the most unhappy woman in the world, but things are all right now."

"They are, they are," she cried, "and I owe it all to you. I shall never, as long as I live, be able to thank you enough, I have already wired to Mr. Kelvin, and he is coming evening."

"And your cousin?" I said.

"He left Court Royal half an hour ago. Whether he will come back or not remains to be proved."

"His game is up," I answered. "I do not think you will be troubled with him any more."

In this conjecture I was partly right. James Royal died within the year, a hopeless victim to the worst form of the drink mania.

Primrose, however, long before that event took place became the happy wife of the man she loved best in the world.

Chapter III

The Diana Sapphire

Anyone Who Looks Upon Diana Unveiled is Blind.

The month of October, 1893, will always stand out in my memory as the time when those grave and terrible troubles, which in the end had such serious consequences, began. Hitherto Chetwynd and I had gone on prosperously, the Club was doing well, the cures resulting from our special treatment were numerous, the members were pleased with us and with each other; but from the day when Dr. Horace Kort paid us his heavy premium to be our third partner, these things gradually but surely changed. From the first I had disliked the man, and from the first I think I suspected him; but Chetwynd was taken with his undoubted attainments, and, as we wished to extend our premises, further funds were necessary for the purpose.

At any rate, the deeds of partnership were signed and Kort took up his residence with us. He was of a good half-English, half-German family, and had spent at least ten years in the great Continental schools of research, having taken his degree at Vienna. He was himself a man with considerable outward charm. He had a sympathetic manner, and a fund of vivacious and amusing stories. He was reserved, without having a trace of hardness or apparent coldness about him, and the members quickly assured us that they thought our new partner an undoubted acquisition. Little did they guess as they looked at him that Kort was one of the keenest vivisectors of the day, the valued collaborator of Parker in some of his latest advances, and that those white, tapering fingers, which could bring music of the finest order out of more than one instrument, could also wrestle effectively with science at the dissecting-table and laboratory bench.

In appearance, Kort was about thirty years of age, and was rather below than above the middle height. His face was dark and thin; he had straight features and keen, somewhat deeply-set, eyes. He invariably dressed with extreme care, and was in every sense of the word a polished man of the world. He came to us in the August of '93, and a couple of months later, early in October, the following trifling incident occurred.

One morning soon after breakfast a lady drove up in a closed carriage. She inquired for Dr. Kort, who happened to be out at the time. The servant informed her that either Chetwynd or myself would be glad to see her. She answered that Dr. Kort was the only member of the firm she wished to see. She was just about to drive away when the doctor himself came hurriedly up. I happened to be standing near, and I was startled at the change in his face. For the first time heart and soul seemed to breathe out of it. He gave an involuntary start and quickly suppressed an exclamation, whether of joy, grief, or anger I could not determine, then his face turned to an ashy pallor, and going up to the carriage he spoke emphatically and in a very low voice to its inmate. Finally I heard him say, "I will drive a short way back with you, Isobel; you must not come in now." He entered the carriage, the coachman turned and drove back in the direction of town.

Kort returned in the course of the morning, looking very much as usual. He entered Chetwynd's consulting-room, where I happened to be, and throwing himself on a sofa began to talk. Watching him narrowly, however, I observed that his hand trembled as he took up the morning paper to substantiate some news which he was relating to us. I had caught a glimpse of the occupant of the carriage, and I could not help wondering somewhat about her. She was young, so dark as to look almost foreign, with delicate features, a pale complexion, and wonderful blue eyes. The colour of her eyes reminded me more of sapphires than anything else, and they were sufficiently big and out of the common to arrest the attention of anyone. They gave great distinction to a face which in itself bore claims to beauty, and as Kort approached the carriage I saw them change and darken, but with what emotion I could not guess.

That very evening, as I was busily engaged writing letters, Kort came into my room.

"I want to speak to you," he said. "I am anxious about a case which has just been brought to my notice. It is that of a man about my own age whom I happened to know some years ago. He is in very poor feeling circumstances and also very ill—consumptive, of course, I should like

him to try our Davos treatment, and as he is much too poor to pay the club subscription and entrance fee, I propose to do this for him, if you and Chetwynd have no objection to his coming here."

"Why, certainly not," I replied. "And it is kind of you to help him," I could not help adding. I looked at the man in some little astonishment. He returned my gaze, and smiling very gravely said, in a low voice:

"Benevolence when judiciously exercised has its special charms; why should not I enjoy those pure pleasure as well as another man?"

"Why not?" I answered, ashamed for the moment suspicions I entertained towards him. "Well, tell me more about your intended patient."

"I was going to propose," he answered, "that you and I should go to visit Philip Sherwin, at Pinner, to-morrow. We can drive over in half an hour. Can you manage this?"

I looked up my engagements, and said that it would be possible for me to do so.

"Very well, we will go over immediately after breakfast. He is a queer chap, but I have taken a fancy to him. I met him first at the School of Mines in Jermyn Street."

Kort went away a moment later, and on the following morning he and I found ourselves at Pinner. We were standing outside a neglected-looking door in the midst of an untidy garden. The paint was blistered off the wood and the knocker was rusty from long disuse. Of bells there were none. Dr. Kort raised the knocker, and after a moment or two we heard steps in the passage, the chain was unhooked, and the door opened by a thin, hectic-looking man, in an old velvet coat. He might have been from thirty to thirty-five years of age, and had the sunken and yet bright eyes, and the painfully clear complexion, of the consumptive.

To my astonishment, the very moment the young man made his appearance Dr. Kort stepped forward, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, in a low, emphatic voice: "Now, Philip, be reasonable, forget old prejudices, and receive me as the friend which I truly am. Let me introduce you to Dr. Cato, the head of the celebrated Sanctuary Club at Hampstead, I have heard of your illness, and believe that if there is a place in the world which offers you a chance of cure it is that Club. May we both come in?"

The young man's face grew whiter than ever, he looked full at Kort, and then said, slowly, and with a most hitter emphasis: "I should like to take you by the throat, but you know I cannot."

"Yes, I know that," answered Kort, suppressing a smile, and glancing at me with a significant shrug of his shoulders. His gesture seemed to say,

"We must humour him; he is not responsible for his actions."

I watched the pair with keen interest.

Sherwin did not speak at all for a moment; he looked from Kort to me, breathed quickly as though his emotions were almost strangling him, and then said, in a low voice, quite destitute of his former spirit: "Yes, come in if you want to. I suppose this is good of you, Kort, and there is nothing for it but– –"

"Submission," said Kort, in a low voice.

The man did not answer at all. We had now entered the house. He walked on before us leading the way down a dark hall, and opening a door on the right, led us into a lofty room which looked out upon a large, neglected back garden. Glancing round I saw that I was in a lapidary's workshop. A wooden bench ran along one complete side, littered with many tools and instruments for polishing and cutting gems, In one corner stood a stone-cutter's lathe, and beside it a large safe. There was also a huge furnace, upon which lay several pairs of tongs and clay pots for melting glass.

"This is my workshop," he said, turning to me; "I spend most of my time here."

"I see that you are still as mad as ever, Sherwin," said Kort. "Does the great discovery approach nearer the light?"

Sherwin laughed—there was both bitterness and pathos in his laugh.

"I am nearer to it—much nearer," he said, emphatically; "all I ask is that I may live long enough to perfect it." Then he added, turning to me, "I get this old house for a very low rent; it suits my purpose admirably, and I am happy here. May I ask what you two gentlemen have really come for to-day?"

"I heard you were ill, no matter how, no matter when," said KorL "Dr. Cato and I are anxious to relieve you. We wish you to come to the Sanctuary Club."

"I have heard of your place," said Sherwin, looking at me, "but it is only meant for the rich; am a poor man."

"We can manage that," said Kort, emphatically. "The treatment is the one treatment in the world for you, and we have both come here to-day in order to implore of you to accept our hospitality and become our guest at the Sanctuary Club."

"But how? I do not understand," he said.

Kort went up to him and drew him aside. He said some words in a low voice which I could not catch; the other man started back, and looked at him with indescribable aversion and dislike, Kort continued to speak

very quietly, and presently I heard Sherwin say, in a low voice: "It is distasteful, more than distasteful, but if what you say is true, I must submit."

He then returned to the window where I was standing.

"Do you mind examining my lungs?" he said "I should be very glad to get your verdict"

I had brought my stethoscope, and immediately did what he required. I found mischief to a considerable extent in both lungs. Even with the treatment we proposed to adopt the poor fellow's days were numbered,.

"Well," he said, just glancing at me as he buttoned up his shirt, "what is your verdict?"

"You are very ill," I replied.

"Hopelessly ill?"

"I fear so."

"Then what is the use of my going to your Club?"

"That depends altogether on how you look at it," I answered. "I can at least promise you great relief, and your life will certainly be much prolonged."

He stood quite still, evidently thinking deeply.

"Very well, I will accept," he said, after a moment's pause. "It is all - important for me that my life should be preserved. I will be your guest, Dr. Cato, on a condition."

"What is that?" I asked.

"I possess a treasure of great value; you must allow me to bring it with me to the Club, and you must insure its being put in a place of safety."

I was about to ask for further information, when Kort said, abruptly: "You would like to give your confidence to Cato, Sherwin. While you do so I will walk in the garden."

As Dr. Kort spoke, he opened one of the French windows and went out. The moment he did so Sherwin uttered a sigh of relief.

"This is all very strange and overwhelming," he said; "I have not seen Kort for years."

"But he is an old friend," I said.

"He is an acquaintance of some years' sending," replied Sherwin, in a reserved voice. "His visit to-day has startled me very much, and if it were not for the sake of Isobel."

"Isobel!" I could not help exclaiming, startled by the coincidence of names.

"Why, do you know her?" he said; "but you cannot."

"A lady of that name called to see Dr. Kort yesterday at the Sanctuary Club, that is all," I answered.

"Ah," he said, "I thought as much. I would humble myself even more than I am about to do, for her sake. But let us change the conversation. I want to give you my confidence, not with regard to Isobel, but in connection with another matter."

"I am quite willing to listen," I replied.

"May I ask first," he began, "if you know anything about precious stones?"

"Not much," I answered.

"Perhaps you are not then aware that the majority are allotropic forms of either elements or chemical compounds crystallized in the earth at some period of the world's history. These crystallizations take place under conditions of great pressure and heat. Now, scientists, following out this idea, have recently succeeded in making diamonds by the crystallization of carbon."

"I did not know how the artificial diamond was made," I replied, "but I have heard of it, of course."

"Up to the present," he continued, a flush of excitement coming into his cheeks, "the only gem which has been made artificially is the diamond. Now, please listen—the sapphire, ruby, topaz, emerald, and amethyst are all of the same chemical composition, the colouring ingredients alone differentiating them—corundum, it is called—sesquioxide of aluminium, you know. If that could be crystallized, priceless gems could be made—real ones, mark you, not imitations. To do this has been my work for the last ten years, and I am at last close to the right solution. I want to perfect it before I die. That is why I accept your invitation, Dr. Cato, and why I– –" He stopped abruptly, clenched his hands, and made a significant gesture in the direction of the window.

"I hate Kort," he said, dropping his voice to a whisper; "you and he do not belong to the same world."

"Have you reasons for making such a grave statement?" I asked.

"Yes, but I dare not and will not divulge them; forget what I have said. The man is antipathetic to me, that is all. Now to return to my own story. If I succeed in crystallizing the sesquioxide of aluminium, I shall have effected a revolution in the precious stone trade and secured a fortune for myself. You will say, what does a dying man want with a fortune? But I have my secret reasons for wishing to acquire it. Without money I 3m powerless; with it I can institute a law-suit against one

of the greatest scoundrels of modern times. You see, therefore, how essential it is that my life should be prolonged."

Looking at him as he spoke, I began to think that Kort was right, and that he really was not quite responsible for his actions. He was intensely restless, clasping and unclasping his painfully thin hands, and darting queer glances at me out of his sunken eyes.

"Do you think you are near your great discovery?" I asked.

"Yes, I am close to it, and yet it baffles me; but I have at least one consolation, it has been made already by another."

"You cannot be serious," I could not help saying.

"I am, another has been before me in this discovery. The sapphire, for instance, has already been made by artificial means. Come, you don't believe me—you shall see for yourself."

He went across to the safe, unlocked it, and pulled open the heavy doors, then he lifted out with an apparent effort an enormous mass of solid glass, the shape of an immense pear; it was twice the size of a man's head, and must have weighed about 30lb. He laid this glass globe down very gently on the table- I gazed at it with the most intense curiosity, for in the centre of the mass, towards the tapering end, was embedded the most enormous sapphire I had ever seen. It was of circular shape, and of the deepest blue, with six white lines radiating from the centre—these formed a sort of star. I uttered an exclamation.

"What a marvellous thing," I cried "That stone must be priceless; but how did it get in there?"

"Have you ever heard of the great Diana Sapphire?" asked Sherwin, not replying immediately to my question.

"Never," I said.

"Well, it exists, and is well known to all gem collectors. You see it before you now. As to how it got in there, that is a mere matter of theory. This glass globe with the wonderful gem inside is so old that even the historical records which go back seven centuries are at a loss to know its origin, Masudy, the well-known Arabic writer and traveller, first makes mention of it. See what he says."

Sherwin as he spoke took an old volume from a dusty shelf.

"This is his work," he said, "translated by Athelard and printed about 1470, These words refer to the gem you see before you. The legend is translated from the Arabic."

He read aloud slowly, pausing to give emphasis to his words.

> *I came not from mines, my master created me from earth. Feast your eyes upon my rays. Here I lie safe in my bed of crystal. Seek not to possess yourself of me, for though I am priceless beyond all gems, he who holds me shall never see me again. However poor you are, you will he poorer if you try to hold me. Coveted by a thousand kings, no gold can buy me. Try to discover the secret of my birth, to look upon me unveiled, and I shall vanish from your sight.*

"That is the old legend," he continued, "and I believe it to be as true as that you and I both stand here. My impression is that, by some lost art, the sesquioxide of aluminium was made to crystallize by being put into molten glass. On these lines I am working, and have been working for years."

"But does the legend prevent you from breaking the glass?" I continued, "It must be a great temptation to hold that gem."

"It is a temptation to which I am never going to yield" he answered. "To tell the truth, I am afraid of that legend. It is not a meaningless jargon of words. It has been observed and reverenced by the possessors of this crystal globe for centuries. I believe that the sapphire inside that glass globe was made artificially, and that if you were to break the glass, the stone itself would vanish from sight. I believe that its crystalline structure is in such an extremely unstable condition that it depends for its existence on the surrounding pressure and support of the glass in which it was embedded. That is my interpretation of the legend, and it is my life's work to effect a reproduction."

"An ingenious theory, certainly," I said. "Would it be an unfair question to ask you how this interesting gem got into your possession?"

"The stone has been in our family for over two hundred years," he replied. "My great-great-grandfather, who was British Consul at Cadiz, in Spain, married a Moorish woman of great beauty. The Moors, as you know, came originally from Arabia. An uncle of hers had the crystal containing the stone in his possession, and gave it to her on his death-bed, on the sole condition that she and her descendants would always keep the sapphire unbroken in its crystal bed. It was brought over to England when my grandfather settled here, and was given to me by my father on his death-bed as the most precious thing he could bestow upon me. Many times I have been tempted to break the glass globe and release the gem, but I shall never do so. Experts before now have gazed at this wonderful stone, and they tell me that it is of priceless value. As such is the case I have had this safe specially constructed for it, and I

do not think there is a man in London who could break it open. Now, Dr. Cato, I will come to your Club, I will accept a favour from a man like Kort, I will put myself under your treatment, for the sole and only reason that I want to perfect my discovery, I want to handle riches, I want to be known to futurity as the man who re-discovered the crystallization of sesqui-oxide of aluminium, and I want to revenge myself on my enemy. Knowing my story, I dare therefore to ask of you conditions. I cannot part with the gem. May I bring it to the Sanctuary?"

"You may," I replied "We have a safe in our laboratory which I think will also defy the burglars' art; you may place it there in perfect safety."

"Thank you. Condition number two is this. May I pursue my experiments in one of your laboratories?"

"We have a small one adjoining the larger laboratory, which I will place at your service," I replied.

He bowed gravely in acknowledgement of this kindness, and then said: "My final and last condition is, that you will keep what I have now told you an absolute and complete secret."

"From the world, certainly," I answered; "but it will be difficult to keep the fact of the crystal's existence from my brother doctor."

"Kort?" he interrupted. "Kort knows nearly as much about the Diana Sapphire as I do myself."

"I allude to our other partner," I said, "Dr. Chetwynd."

"Well," he replied, somewhat impatiently, "tell him just what is necessary, but no more."

"I will do so," I said.

Soon afterwards Kort and I took our leave.

"Sherwin is a curious specimen of humanity," said my partner to me on our way back.

"He interests me immensely," I replied.

"He has a crank, poor fellow," replied the doctor. "I sympathize with him sincerely. Once we were the greatest friends, although he now imagines that I am his worst enemy, a common case enough where the mind is affected."

I did not say any more. I fully believed myself that Sherwin was on the borderland between the sane and insane, but I had a queer impression, which was destined soon to be strengthened, that as far as Kort was concerned there was method in his madness.

The next day the poor fellow arrived at the Club. Everything had been done for his comfort, and he was immediately placed in the artificial

Davos suite of rooms. He was allowed, however, to go downstairs at intervals, and soon struck up a friendship with a member of the Club of the name of Edward Banpfylde. This man had been a resident for two or three months. He was supposed to have great wealth, and was a gem merchant of Hatton Garden. Banpfylde was suffering from intense nervous irritability, and the regular hours, good food, and a system of rest and refreshment which were prescribed for him were having to a certain extent beneficial results. But the anxiety on the man's face whenever he thought himself unwatched was very marked, and Kort once said to me: "I do not believe in Banpfylde's wealth."

"But he is a millionaire," I replied.

"So he says, but what are words, time will prove. He is consumed by anxiety; men of his calibre have only one great subject of anxiety, the loss or the making of money. He has become great friends with Sherwin, however, which seems natural enough, as they are both so much interested in gems."

Banpfylde was about sixty years of age, stoutly built, with a red face, small keen eyes, and an irritable manner.

There were times, however, when he could be both good-natured and agreeable—beyond doubt he pitied Sherwin, and took pains to add to the interest of his fast-fleeting life. Notwithstanding our treatment, his disease made rapid progress, and we all knew that he could not last many weeks; he was cheerful, however, and enjoyed his chats with Banpfylde. The two men spent much time in the small laboratory which we had given over for Sherwin's use. What they did there remains a mystery, but I have little doubt that Sherwin confided at least part of his secret to Banpfylde.

They had been together the whole of one day, and Sherwin had gone up to his room thoroughly worn out, when Chetwynd, who watched his languid progress upstairs, turned to me and said, in a low voice: "Poor fellow, he may go off at any moment. It needs but a bad fit of hemorrhage to settle him—he is not following out our directions, either, as he ought. He spends too much time with Banpfylde."

"Oh, I have no doubt they have a great deal in common," I replied; "they are both professional gem fanciers."

"It is my opinion," said Chetwynd, "that Banpfylde is picking his brains. He absolutely dogs his footsteps. I don't like it—I hope there is no mischief brewing."

"Mischief brewing?" I cried. "What can you mean?"

"Well, I heard some news about our millionaire to-day."

"What?" I asked.

"Simply this. To put it plainly, he is smashed."

"What, Banpfylde? It cannot be true."

"I fear it is. I happened to meet Balfour, of the Old Jewry City Police, this afternoon, and there is a queer business in the air. I cannot tell you exactly what he told me, but this country is too hot for our guest, that's about it. Balfour thought it right to warn me, knowing that Banpfylde was a member of our Club."

I looked my astonishment at Chetwynd's news, but did not make any remark. After a pause he continued: "You have told me some of the story of the marvellous gem which Sherwin has brought here, and which is locked up for security in our safe. Now, putting two and two together, I don't believe in Banpfylde's disinterested friendship for our dying guest, but I do think it possible that he may be after the gem. The fact is, I dislike and distrust Banpfylde as much as you dislike and distrust our brother doctor."

"Oh, the cases are by no means parallel," I exclaimed, with some impatience, and I had scarcely said the words before Banpfylde and Sherwin came downstairs together. Sherwin came straight up to me.

"I thought you were in bed," I cried.

"No, I am restless, I could not sleep," he said. "I want you to give me the key of the safe. Banpfylde has begged of me to show him the Diana. If you will come downstairs we will get it out and he can see it. He is awfully keen about it," he added, in a whisper.

"Show him the crystal to-morrow," I said, laying my hand on his wrist "Look here, you are feverish: do be rational and go to bed."

"I tell you I could not sleep, and I am most anxious to get Banpfylde's opinion with regard to the Diana; he is a great authority. He has heard of the gem, of course, but has never seen it."

"Very well, it is your property," I said; "we will go down. By the way, have you any objection to Chetwynd accompanying us?"

"None whatever," replied Sherwin; "I should like you to see the Diana Sapphire, Dr. Chetwynd." He bowed courteously to Chetwynd as he spoke, and just at that moment Kort made his appearance.

"What," he cried, "not in bed yet, Sherwin? This is very bad."

"I am not going at present," said Sherwin. He half turned his back on Kort, and glancing at Banpfylde, Chetwynd, and myself, said: "Well, gentlemen, shall we proceed?"

As we crossed the hall to descend to the basements I watched Kort. He was fond of shrugging his shoulders; he shrugged them now with a

peculiar gesture and quietly followed us. We all entered the laboratory and I switched on the electric light.

When Sherwin saw that Kort was also in the room, he said in a low voice to the latter: "You have seen the gem before, but if you do not find it irksome to look at it again, pray remain."

"I shall not find it irksome," answered Kort; his eyes shone with a queer light, he came and stood near Sherwin. We all clustered round the safe; I unlocked it, and lifting out the great glass globe, laid it on the bench.

"There you are," said Sherwin, snatching off the wash leather cloth that covered it, and stepping back. "What do you think of the Diana Sapphire, Mr. Banpfylde?"

Banpfylde stepped forward. I heard him utter a sudden exclamation, and then he stared at the gem without speaking; his eyes were widely dilated, the magnificent sapphire was gleaming and scintillating beneath the glare of the incandescents. Chetwynd, too, uttered a sharp exclamation, and also stepped forward to examine the gem. Banpfylde was now peering into the crystal—he turned round.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "you are quite right, Sherwin; there is no other stone in the world to equal it."

His face, which had been deeply flushed, was now pale.

"I have heard of it, of course," he continued. "By the way, you say it has a curious legend attached to it. May I ask what it is?"

"Certainly," answered Sherwin, and somewhat to my astonishment, he repeated the old Arabic legend word for word—he evidently knew it by heart.

Banpfylde listened attentively, his eyes still riveted upon the stone. Chetwynd took out a note-book, and jotted down the words as Sherwin uttered them.

"Now, what do you suppose this all means?" asked Chetwynd "Have you heard any interpretation of that queer jargon?"

"Never," answered Sherwin; "but I have made an interpretation for myself. Of that, however, I am not disposed to speak. What do you think of the legend, Mr. Banpfylde?"

"I think," replied the dealer, "that the words are mere nonsense, invented to keep thieves from touching the gem. In its present state it would be difficult to steal it."

"But how do you suppose it got inside the crystal?" I asked.

"It was never put there by the hand of man," ho replied, instantly. "This external crystalline covering is, I believe, not glass or crystal; I believe

it to be a kind of exceedingly pure quartz—gneiss, you know. Sapphires are frequently found embedded in this mineral. I believe that it has been cut and polished to resemble this pear shape. If the crystal were mine I should break it open and chance it," continued Banpfylde.

I happened at that moment to glance at Chetwynd, who was still bending over the gem, peering into the crystal, and examining it with the deepest interest. His face looked full of queer excitement.

"What do you suppose the value of that sapphire would be if it were extracted?" asked Kort, suddenly, of Banpfylde. Up to the present he had not uttered a word.

Banpfylde turned and stared at him.

"Nearer forty than thirty thousand pounds," he exclaimed. "By the way, Mr. Sherwin," he continued, "do you feel inclined to part with it? It will make you a rich man."

"Certainly not," he answered, flushing.

"But why?"

"I decline to tell my reasons. I thank you for your opinion. We will put the crystal away now, Dr. Cato."

The next day Sherwin was much worse. He was now obliged to keep to his bed, as the slightest movement brought on sharp attacks of hemorrhage.

There came a night about a fortnight later when he lay looking like a mere shadow. His hollow eyes fixed themselves on my face. He said, after a pause: "I shall die, Dr. Cato, without fulfilling my life-work, I have no property to leave behind me, and no friends to leave it to."

"But what about the Diana Sapphire?" I asked.

"My solicitors will take charge of it until the heir, whose property it is, comes to claim it. My solicitors understand," he added.

His voice was so faint I could scarcely catch the words. I forbore to question him further and went downstairs. In the hall I met Chetwynd.

Chetwynd laid his hand on my arm.

"By the way," he said, "I have been making some interesting experiments with regard to the sapphire."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, "Of what nature?"

"This has been a day of strange things altogether," he continued. "Come to my room, will you? I have something I want to say."

I followed him.

"To begin with," he commenced, the moment we found ourselves alone, "have you noticed Banpfylde to-day?"

"Not specially," I answered; "is anything fresh the matter?"

"I should say the expression on his face was matter enough," was his answer. "He has been drinking heavily, and I met him not half an hour ago in the grounds pacing up and down as though he were bereft of his senses. He was muttering to himself in the queerest way. He has beyond doubt got into a tight corner, and does not know how to extricate himself. To tell the truth, I wish he were not here; such a man's influence in the Club does no good."

"If your suspicions are founded on fact, he cannot slay here much longer," I answered; "but now, what about the sapphire?"

"Ah, I am coming to that. I do believe I have struck something very curious: no less than the key to the legend."

"Now, what do you mean?" I cried.

"Well, you know, it says that if anyone shall seek to hold the Diana Sapphire it shall vanish from his eyes. I believe it would, for in rescuing that sapphire from its bed of crystal the man would assuredly lose his sight."

"What in the name of Heaven do you mean?" I cried.

"You can see for yourself," he answered. As he spoke he produced a tiny glass bead; it was pear-shaped, and was an exact facsimile on a very small scale of the crystal encasing the Diana Sapphire.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked.

"No," I replied, "except that it is like the crystal on a small scale. Did you make it?"

He did not answer, but, seizing a heavy paper-weight, struck it a smart blow on the tail end. There was a loud and sharp report—the bead had disappeared into fine powder.

"A Prince Rupert's Drop[1]," he said, quietly. "You have heard of it, of course?"

I nodded.

"Well, you know what these drops are. When glass is dropped into water and suddenly cooled a crust is formed while the internal mass is still liquid. This tends to contract on cooling, but is prevented by the

[1] Ein Prince Rupert's Drop oder auf deutsch „Bologneser Träne" oder „Batavischer Tropfen" ist ein kleiner Glastropfen, der durch die Art seiner Herstellung derart unter Spannung steht, dass er beim Abbrechen seiner Spitze zu Glasstaub zerspringt. Die Zerfallsfront breitet sich dabei etwa mit 1.600 m/s aus, was über der Abbrandgeschwindigkeit von Schwarzpulver liegt. Die physikalische Ursache für diese Erscheinung und Herstellung solcher Glastropfen werden im folgenden korrekt dargestellt.

molecular forces which attach it to the crust. In this state, unless it is struck, or its tail broken off, it will last as such for centuries, and look like an ordinary bit of glass; but when struck and broken it flies into powder with an explosion. Now, my impression is that the sapphire is inside a Prince Rupert's Drop of enormous size."

"Good God!" I exclaimed.

"I am pretty certain of it from its peculiar shape. Now, you have heard what sort of a report «that little thing made when it was broken, but if the crystal which is in our safe downstairs were smashed, the explosion would be terrific. It would certainly blind the man who broke it, and, in all probability, kill him, or, at any rate, disfigure and injure him as much as a charge of dynamite. Thus the sapphire would vanish from his sight for ever."

For a moment I could scarcely speak; then I inquired: "What made you think of this?"

"In the first instance, the peculiar shape," he answered. "I made many Prince Rupert's Drops as a boy. Well, I thought I would tell you—it is a pretty theory, but I cannot, unfortunately, put it to the test."

I left Chetwynd and crossed the hall preparatory to going upstairs, when I suddenly came face to face with Kort.

"What," I said, "up still?"

"Yes," he answered. "I have many things to keep me awake, as doubtless you have, Dr. Cato." He passed me coldly, walked as far as the end of the hall, and then came swiftly back.

" By the way," he said, "I have seen Sherwin; I do not think he will last until the morning."

"Indeed," I answered. "I am sorry you went to him. He was put specially under my care, and I did not wish to have him disturbed."

"He is here as my guest, don't forget," said Kort; "but, never mind, he has all but done with this troublesome world. So much the better for him."

I did not say anything further, but went upstairs. Kort stood holding a candle in his hand and watched me as I did so. I looked back at him and saw a queer smile slightly parting his lips. I was turning aside into my own corridor, when it occurred to me that I would go to see Sherwin. If he were as ill as Kort had indicated, he ought not to be left alone. I paused a moment outside the door of his room. Even through the heavy oak I could hear his laboured breathing; and believing that after all he was sound asleep, and that it would be a pity to disturb him, I was

just going away, when I heard his voice ask, very faintly, "Is that you, doctor?"

I opened the door; he was half sitting up in bed.

"I knew it was you, doctor," he continued; "I knew your step. I have just had a most horrible dream. It has upset me terribly. I believe it was sent to me as a warning."

I went up to him and laid my hand on his forehead. It was wet with perspiration; his eyes had a startled expression. He clutched tight hold of my hand as if he would not let me go.

"Lie down, Sherwin, lie down," I said. "A dream is but a dream, remember. It need not trouble you."

"But it does," he whispered, "and I think Kort must have caused it. He was in my room this evening, he spoke of—of—"

"Whom?" I asked.

The poor fellow began to struggle for breath.

"Of her—Isobel—she is his wife. Did he ever tell you that he had a wife?"

"Never," I answered.

"He has. Ask him about her after—after I am gone." He gave a horrible laugh.

"I could say nothing bad enough to describe him," he said, faintly, "but, oh, Dr. Cato, I can only think of the sapphire now. My dream was about it. Is it—is it all right?"

"Of course it is, my dear boy," I answered. "It is in our safe, secure as possible; you know that, Sherwin. Now try to sleep."

"I cannot," he answered; "my dream was much too vivid to be false, I know it is true, and it was sent to me as a warning. They are taking the sapphire away; I can see them doing it. Go at once and stop them, doctor. My God! can't you see for yourself?" He grasped my arm more tightly than ever, and stared wildly out across the room.

"You have had a nightmare," I answered; "there is nothing to see. The sapphire is perfectly safe."

"It is not. I tell you I see them taking it now. Quick! Go and stop them. That dream was sent to me—was sent to me. Kort would stop at nothing—nothing—and Banpfylde is his tool. I feel it—I am certain of it. Oh, Dr. Cato, won't you have pity on me? Will you not go downstairs and find out for yourself if the safe is untampered with?"

"Very well," I answered; "if you will only lie down and remain quiet I will go and see and bring you word."

"You will? You promise?" he cried. "You would not break your word to a dying man?"

"I would break my word to no man," I answered. "Trust me, Sherwin. I will go down as quickly as possible and come back to you."

I left the room, I resolving to visit the laboratory, ascertain for myself that Sherwin's wild words were the mere hallucination of his brain, and then spend the rest of the night by the dying man's side. Crossing the hall I opened a door leading to the laboratory steps and went quickly down. Half-way down I paused, stopped, and listened. Late as the hour was, someone was moving about below. I was not seriously alarmed at this, for Chetwynd often worked in the laboratory until morning. I hurried on, therefore—a light streamed from under the door. I flung it open and entered.

I was just about to utter my friend's name when the words were arrested on my lips. Chetwynd was nowhere to be seen, but fully dressed and standing at the bench was Banpfylde. I could not at first ascertain what he was doing, but at the sound of my voice he swung sharply round.

"May I ask, sir, what your business is here at this hour?" I inquired. "Are you not aware that it is against the rules for members to come to the laboratory?"

"I am perfectly well aware of that fact, Dr. Cato," he replied, in the suavest tones, and with wonderful self-control; "but the emergency which brought me here to-night was so exceptional that I felt justified in breaking a well-known rule. For days past I have been suffering from spasmodic asthma, the only thing that relieves me is oxygen— I have a cylinder of my own which I always have in my room. It was empty; I came here to fetch a fresh one."

It was true that his position corroborated his words, for he had in his hand a small forty cubic feet cylinder[2], which he had taken from the cupboard.

"Whatever the emergency, you had no right to do it," I replied; "the doctors in this establishment expect to be summoned in case of need, and you did distinctly wrong when you broke the rules, I must now ask you to go to your room. Kindly do so without delay."

He did not answer me for a moment, but stood looking full at me. He was a powerfully built man, some inches taller than myself. His lips were compressed, and he began to breathe heavily, I knew well that he

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[2] Auch heute noch ein Standardmaß für Gasflaschen. Sie messen etwa 18.3 inch (46,5 cm) in der Höhe und 6.7 inch (17 cm) im Durchmesser.

was not really suffering from asthma – he had lied to me. What his motive was I could not tell. Suddenly his eyes dropped, and I saw that he was looking intently at my waistcoat pocket, where I generally kept the key of the safe in which the Diana Sapphire had been placed. He had seen me produce it from that receptacle on the night when Sherwin had shown us the sapphire. It was not there now. I always locked it at night in my own small safe upstairs, but as he glanced in the direction of my coat I guessed what he was about to do in a flash. Before I could even cry out or utter a word the man had sprung upon me, and brought me by the suddenness and violence of the attack to the floor. His great hand was upon my throat, and I saw his bloodshot eyes within an inch of mine, I tried to shout for help, but with one of his hands crushing my throat I could not utter a word. The next instant, with the other hand, he slipped from his coat-pocket a short jemmy and brought it down upon my head with all his force, I remembered nothing more.

When I came to myself I was lying upon the stone floor, sick and faint. I wondered dimly where I was, then memory returned in a flash and I struggled to rise j but I was firmly bound hand and foot, and a duster soaked in chloroform was tightly fastened across my mouth. A light, hissing sound fell on my ears, and I feebly turned my head. Never shall I forget the sight that met my eyes, dull and dim though they were, Banpfylde was kneeling beside the safe at the further end of the laboratory. In one hand he held a lighted Bunsen burner, from which glowed a dazzling white flame, and with the other he was wrenching and tearing at the lock of the safe with some tool which I could not distinctly see.

To my astonishment and horror I perceived that the metal round the lock was glowing with a white heat. I heard it spit and crack, and saw the white sparks flying as the man gouged and tore away at the molten metal. What he was really doing I could not at first comprehend. All I knew was that he was breaking into the safe in some marvellous manner, and that I, within a stone's throw, was powerless to prevent him. I tried to shout out, but my voice only came in a dull, hoarse whisper. For one moment he turned his face towards me. It was red with excitement, and distorted with the most feverish anxiety—the next instant the safe door swung back. I saw Banpfylde reach in his hand and draw out the great Diana Sapphire. He laid it on the stone flags and picked up the short steel jemmy he had just been using. Dazed and sick as I felt, I knew in a flash what he was about to do. He was going to smash the surrounding glass in which the sapphire lay, and so liberate the gem. If Chetwynd's theory were true, and that glass was, in reality, an enorm-

ous Prince Rupert's Drop, the man was rushing to his fate, and I, in my present position, was powerless to save him.

"Stop, for God's sake stop!" I cried, but my voice was choked down to a hoarse growl.

Steadying the great mass of glass with one hand, and gathering all his strength, he brought the jemmy down with one terrific blow upon the tail of the crystal globe. There was a deafening explosion as of a thousand cannon. Every light was instantly extinguished, and with a shriek of pain I heard the miserable man plunge heavily forward upon the stone flags. We were in total darkness, but at that awful instant I could have sworn that something or someone brushed quickly past me and out of the room. I felt the draught made by a hurried movement. In sick despair I made another frantic effort to rise, but all in vain—I was tied down too tightly. The next instant, to my intense relief, I heard the clamour of approaching voices, quick footsteps hurried down the corridor, and Chetwynd and Kort, holding lights, rushed in. To release me from my bonds was the work of a moment, and then Kort ran up to Banpfylde and turned the light full on his face. Chetwynd and I gazed in horrified silence at what a moment before had been a man—living, breathing, in the full possession of every faculty. The terrific explosion had done its deadly work—the Diana Sapphire had avenged itself—a large portion of the man's skull had absolutely been blown away. He must have died as he fell.

"I was right," muttered Chetwynd.

As for me, I grasped the edge of the nearest bench to support myself. I felt faint and sick. Kort laid the dead man quietly back on the floor, then he turned and faced us.

"What has happened?" he asked. "What caused the explosion?"

I pointed to the safe.

"The Diana Sapphire," I exclaimed; "the legend was true."

Kort was about to say something further when a sound behind caused us all to turn our heads. Sherwin, partly dressed, his face ghastly white, his eyes almost starting from his head, was standing in the doorway. The noise of the terrific explosion had doubtless drawn him to the place. I rushed up to him and laid detaining hands on his shoulders.

"Back, back, Sherwin," I cried; "this is no place for you. I will take you to your room and explain."

"Explain?" he cried. "I see for myself. My dream was true. Don't touch me, Cato, don't touch me. Oh, my God! the Sapphire, where is it?"

He did not take the least notice of poor Banpfylde's dead body, but began frantically to peer about, going down on his hands and knees to examine for the lost treasure.

"Gone," he said; "the legend was true." He looked full up at Kort, then staggered forward and lay insensible, not far from the dead body of the would-be burglar.

"We must take him away before he recovers," said Chetwynd; "this will finish him, poor chap."

Between us we lifted the dying man from the floor, took him upstairs, and laid him on his bed. He lay insensible for over an hour, and then feebly opened his eyes. He looked at me, but without recognition; indeed, he never recognised anyone again. It was a relief to feel that he had lost all memory of the terrible scene which he had witnessed. He murmured faintly, and I thought he said the word "Isobel," but I am not sure. He died at nine o'clock on the following morning.

Early on the ensuing day we three doctors met in the laboratory. Banpfylde's body had been removed, and the debris caused by the terrific explosion had been partly cleared away.

"But what does it mean?" said Kort. "You two seem to know something—I want an explanation—for God's sake tell me what really happened!"

"It is about the strangest thing I ever heard of," answered Chetwynd. "That glass crystal was in reality an enormous Prince Rupert's Drop."

I gazed at Kort as my brother doctor spoke. My impression was that he knew of this already. If he did, however, he did not turn a hair; his dark eyes were fixed with intense interest on Chetwynd's face.

"You have heard of a Prince Rupert's Drop, of course?" continued Chetwynd.

"Yes, but I have never seen one."

"The sapphire was embedded in one. I had thought out the whole idea no later than yesterday, and told Cato about it I little knew how soon my theory was to be verified. The terrific explosion which occurred last night proves that the sapphire was imprisoned in one."

Kort took up a fragment of glass which still remained on the floor, examined it carefully, and laid it down.

"But there is something still stranger to be explained," continued Chetwynd, "and with regard to that I have formed no theory at present."

"To what do you allude?" asked Kort.

"I allude to the strange way in which Banpfylde opened the safe. That was no work of an ordinary jewel dealer. It was something beyond all

burglars' resources. See for yourselves: the lock has been melted out with this Runsen burner—look, the blowpipe junction runs to that oxygen cylinder—a cut above drills. It was nothing less than a masterpiece. See, the man literally melted out the iron like butter with the oxyhydrogen flame. There was someone behind this job—a chemist, and no ordinary one at that I shall never believe that that was Banpfylde's work, and, what is more," continued Chetwynd, "l shall not rest until I find out who instigated him to do the job."

"You are never likely to know," said Kort. "I happened to hear that the man was in desperate circumstances, and desperate men find desperate means to recover themselves. But, by the way, what has become of the sapphire? Did it disappear when the glass was shattered?"

"It looks like it," answered Chetwynd; "I have searched for it, but have seen it nowhere."

"Then poor Sherwin's theory was right," I could not help saying; but as I uttered the words I glanced at Kort. For one quarter of an instant he had given himself away. The look of relief on his face was too marked. I thought once again of that footfall which had hurried past me in the dark, of the slight draught made by a person moving quickly. Had Kort stolen the priceless sapphire? Was Sherwin right in his suspicions of the man whom I also deeply distrusted? What was the story of Isobel? Why had Sherwin died with his secret unrevealed?

"At least one thing is true," said Chetwynd, turning suddenly to me in that moment of stillness in which it almost seemed as if Kort and I were challenging each other. "At least one thing is obvious: the Diana Sapphire has proved the truth of its own legend. It has vanished from our sight."

Chapter IV

East of North

About a fortnight after the terrible affair of the Diana Sapphire, and when the excitement in connection with it had partially subsided, Chetwynd and I were alone in his consulting-room. Lunch was over, and we were having a quiet smoke by ourselves. Banpfylde's horrible death had done the Club no good, and more than one wealthy and distinguished member had sent in his resignation. My suspicions of Kort were on the increase, but, watch him as I would, he remained as impassive and unemotional as ever, never betraying by look or word anything to lead me to suppose that he was possessed of a special knowledge with regard to the disappearance of the sapphire. Chetwynd and I were discussing him now.

"I don't like the man," I said, with vehemence.

My brother partner's usually imperturbable face wore an expression of annoyance.

"My dear fellow," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "what a restless imagination you have! Now, I am a profound admirer of Kort, his ability is undoubted, and I consider him a gentleman in every sense of the word."

He had scarcely spoken before the door was opened, and Kort himself appeared. He came forward and dropped into the nearest chair.

"I want to talk to you both," he said; "I have something to tell you. I thought of taking you separately into my confidence, but as you are here I may as well speak to you together." He paused, and looked first at Chetwynd and then at me. "I am in a dilemma of a painful nature," he continued.

"Indeed, and what is that?" I asked. My tone was the reverse of cordial. Kort gave me a quick glance, then he turned to Chetwynd.

"I crave your sympathy," he continued. "I am a married man—I have bad news of my wife."

"You married!" cried Chetwynd, springing to his feet; "and why did you not tell us so when we entered into partnership?"

"Because the fact of my being married or single was a personal matter," he replied, quietly. "I did not wish to worry either of you with my private affairs, but circumstances have lately arisen which make it important for me to have Isobel here."

I started and glanced at him eagerly.

"You have already seen my wife," he said, returning my gaze. "Yes, she was the lady who called here one day several weeks ago. We have been married for some years. She does not enjoy good health, poor girl, and I have kept her with a maid in town and gone to see her whenever possible, but she has been so much worse lately that it is necessary for me to have her under my own roof. She will, of course, come here as an ordinary member, and I shall pay the customary fee for her."

"In your case that can scarcely be expected," said Chetwynd. "I will own," he continued, "to a feeling of disappointment that you should have kept your marriage a secret from Cato and myself; but as you have a wife we ought to welcome her. Doubtless she will be extremely useful to us all. We have long wanted a lady at the head of this establishment."

"I grieve to say," continued Kort—his voice was very restrained, and also full of sorrow—"that Isobel cannot take the position you are kind enough to suggest. The slightest excitement is bad for her. She suffers from a curious affection of the brain, which came on shortly after our marriage. She is very sweet and gentle, and sympathetic, and I am sure you will like hef, but there are times when she cannot appear in public. Nothing gives her such relief as living in high altitudes, and I am anxious that she should have her own private suite of rooms in our Davos wing. As you know, the altitude there is 7,000ft, equal to half-way up Mont Blanc—there is no one in the Davos wing at present. Can we manage to give my wife two or three rooms there? It would be a great relief to me."

"Certainly," said Chetwynd, "we shall be very glad to welcome your wife, and I think I can answer both for Cato and myself that we will do all in our power to restore her to health."

"Oh, I must be her doctor," said Kort; "I have studied her symptoms for years and thoroughly understand them." As he spoke, an uneasy sparkle came into his dark eyes, vanishing the next moment "I am much

obliged to you both, and I only regret that I did not take you into my full confidence before," he added.

Two days later Mrs. Kort arrived. Her husband brought her himself to the Sanctuary in one of our private carriages. She was a slender, very young-looking woman. Her complexion and hair were so dark as to give her quite a foreign appearance, but those ever wonderful deep-blue eyes, to which I have already alluded, made the whole expression of her gentle face one of wonderful distinction. There was a quiet dignity, too, about her manner and the tones of her sweet voice; but in repose that highly bred and lovely face was full of unutterable sadness. It was only when she spoke and smiled, which she did, alas! very rarely, that it woke up into its full beauty. Her husband led her into the hall, bending over her assiduously, and watching her with apparently the most devoted affection. They were both followed by a brusque-looking, red haired young woman, whom I concluded was Mrs. Kort's maid.

Sherwm's dying words about Isobel, the Isobel who had doubtless broken bis heart, came back to me as I looked full at Mrs. Kort. I then went forward and held out my hand.

"I have seen you already," I said; "welcome to the Sanctuary Club. Do you not remember the day when you called to see your husband here a short time ago?"

"No," she replied; "I don't think I have been here before." She glanced anxiously at Kort as she spoke—"Have I, Horace? Have I come here already?"

"Yes, my love, certainly." he replied, "She has a very bad memory," he added, glancing at me, and giving me at the same time a warning look which seemed to say, "Don't worry her."

She sat on the nearest chair and looked around her.

"What a pretty place," she said; "I am glad I have come. I am sure I shall like to be here, and to make your acquaintance, Dr. ...?"

"Cato is my name," I said.

"Dr. Cato," she replied, smiling faintly as she spoke.

"Had you not better come at once to your apartments, Mrs. Kort?" said the maid at this juncture, coming forward and speaking in a brisk voice.

"Oh, yes, Susan, yes," answered her mistress. She got up; Kort gave her his arm and took her upstairs.

The next day Mrs. Kort came downstairs and joined the rest of the guests. Wherever she went she made friends, and everyone present was more or less interested in her; but wherever she went, too, she carried that look of indescribable sadness about with her. What worry had she

lived through? What mystery surrounded her past? She talked little, and at intervals complained of that curious and quite abnormal want of memory. But up in her apartments, where Chetwynd and I constantly visited her, she was as bright and even cheerful as any young woman I had ever met.

Kort himself insisted on being her physician. He was quite assiduous in his attentions, and seldom left her long alone with either Chetwynd or myself.

"She is better," he said one day, a week after her arrival; "the Davos air is doing her a world of good. I must take a chateau for her in the Swiss mountains; she is so happy when she is up in her Davos suite."

"But surely," I answered "she ought to be happy elsewhere. That queer brain affection from which she suffers ought to be looked into very carefully, Kort. It is hard on a pretty girl like your wife to be banished to one suite of rooms."

"She has had already the best advice," he answered, in a tone which evidently resented any further interference on my part. "But the day is a fine one—bracing, yet not too bracing—I will run upstairs now and ask her if she would like to have a drive."

He had scarcely left the room before Chetwynd came in.

"I had a letter this morning from a Mr. Charles Ridley," he said, "a new prospective member of the Club. I asked him to call this afternoon, He is just home from the usual round of Bads, and I should think is full of *maladies imaginaires*."

"What time do you expect him?" I asked.

"Oh, any time now. He said he would be here about three o'clock. I will show him over the place; you had better come with us."

Almost immediately afterwards there was a ring at the front door, and the next moment the butler announced Mr. Charles Ridley. A tall, thin, fair-haired man was shown in. He might have been about forty years of age. He was dressed with the greatest care T wearing a frock-coat, in the lapel of which was a pink carnation. Holding his hat in his hand he came daintily across the room as Chetwynd rose to greet him.

"Mr. Ridley, I believe?" said Chetwynd.

"That is my name," he replied. "You have heard of me from our mutual friends, the Jacksons. I am tired of wandering in Continental spas, and hearing neat things of your Club am anxious to inspect it."

Chetwynd introduced him to me.

"We shall have pleasure in conducting you over the place," he said. "Will you come with us now?"

Chetwynd led the way, and Ridley and I followed. We showed him over the main part of the establishment, took him to the wing specially set aside for our various hydropathic treatments, and showed him that part of the Davos suite not occupied by Mrs. Kort.

He expressed himself delighted with everything, and made one or two pertinent remarks, showing that he was a well-informed man.

"This is just the thing for me," he said; "you have, I see, one of the Exchange Telegraph instruments in the smoking-room. It is most convenient having racing results out here as soon as one would get them in one's own club in Pall Mall."

"Then you are interested in the turf?" I asked.

"Oh, I dabble a little for amusement," he replied, with a laugh. "I am an idle man, and must do something, '*pour passer le temps.*' I shall enjoy this place—it seems quite an ideal place for repose after the eternal irritation of foreign hotels."

As we were descending the staircase after going all over the great house I saw that Kort was standing in the hall. He was smoking, with his back to the fireplace.

As we approached him I noticed that he was regarding us rather curiously, and I fancied that I saw him give a start—his cheroot certainly dropped on the rug. He picked it up and turned to us.

Chetwynd immediately introduced Ridley. Ridley did not even bow or take the slightest notice of Kort's outstretched hand. He stepped back, and a deep, red-brick colour suffused his face. It was all too evident that the men had met before. Before Ridley could utter a word, however, Kort stepped briskly forward.

"Mr. Ridley!" he exclaimed, "I remember you now perfectly." Again he held out his hand, his mouth smiled, but not his eyes. There was no answering smile on Ridley's face. He returned Kort's glance steadily, and said, in a quiet tone:—

"How do you do, Mr. Kort? This is a strange meeting—strange, and unlooked for."

The little scene scarcely occupied a minute, and we were all chatting easily again almost directly; but I could not help watching Kort's manner, for I had never seen his face wear quite such an expression before. Usually so quiet and self-possessed, there was now a look of unrest, if not fear, in his eyes. He sat down and crossed one leg over the other, and the rapid but regular movement of the foot told me that his heart

was beating fast—a secret sign I learned years ago, and often used, unsuspected by patients themselves. It told me he was restraining himself for all he was worth.

Ridley stayed a few moments longer, promised to come to the Club in a couple of days, and left us.

I did not say a word of my suspicions to Chetwynd, but I continued to watch Kort. I saw that he was not himself: he had lost some of his self-control, and evidently did not wish to find himself alone in my presence.

Ridley arrived towards the end of the week, and now, somewhat to my surprise, I saw that he and Kort were on friendly terms. Our new member was a good-humoured but uninteresting individual, the one great interest in his life being to read the sporting papers and send telegrams to his bookmaker. He had, however, one other hobby: he spent a great deal of time over photography—he possessed several excellent and expensive cameras, and in the afternoons would make excursions alone or accompanied by Kort for the purpose of getting good subjects for photography. When not so engaged he would spend most of his time in the smoking-room, anxiously watching the results of his racing ventures as they were recorded on the green baize board where the tape was pinned. As I got to know him better I saw that he was cursed with nerves in a state of high irritation, and judging by this sign manual I perceived that many of his speculations were the reverse of successful.

Since the arrival of Ridley I also noticed that Mrs. Kort never came downstairs. Late one evening we were in the hall; most of the members had already gone to bed, but Kort, Ridley, Chetwynd, and myself still sat up, chatting idly over our pipes. Suddenly I bent towards Kort

"Is your wife worse?" I asked; "I have not seen her for a week."

The moment I uttered the words Ridley bent forward in his chair; he stared at Kort, then he said, in a low tone of intense astonishment: "Is your wife here?"

"Yes," answered Kort. His manner was nonchalant, and yet at the same time had a decided note of suppressed resentment in its tone.

"Yes," .he said again, in an emphatic manner, "my wife is here."

"I should like to meet Mrs. Kort again," was Ridley's reply.

"My wife is ill at present," answered Kort; "I have been obliged to keep her upstairs for a week. When she is fit to receive you I am sure it will be a pleasure to her to renew your acquaintance." As he spoke, he rose and looked steadily into Ridley's eyes. There was a sort of challenge in his expression.

Ridley tapped his foot impatiently.

"When you say your wife is ill I believe you," he said, emphatically; "the miracle is that she should be alive."

Kort made no answer to this, but his sallow face seemed to me to become paler than its wont.

"I am going up to my wife now," he said, after a moment of almost oppressive silence. "Good-night, gentlemen."

When he had gone, Ridley turned with a laugh to me.

"A little put out, eh?" he said. "I had him there. May I ask you two gentlemen where you came across your amiable third partner?"

His question evidently annoyed Chetwynd.

"As Mr. Kort happens to be our partner, we decline to discuss him," he said. Then he glanced at me: "I am going to follow Kort's example, and am off to bed," he said.

Ridley lay back in his chair.

"So you are both under that man's fascination," he remarked. "Well, it's no affair of mine."

I turned the conversation, but during the night that followed I often thought of Ridley's words and the look of ill-concealed apprehension on Kort's face.

The next day I happened to be in a distant part of the grounds with our new patient. I noticed that he was in a state of high irritability, and, guessing the cause, asked him how his speculations were going on.

"I hope everything is all right," I said, in conclusion.

"Things are far from all right," was his answer. "I am a born gambler, Dr Cato; I own it to my discredit. I have been heavily hit the last few weeks."

"Is the pleasure worth the loss?" I asked. "Backing horses always seems to me not only a dull but an expensive amusement."

"Perhaps so," he answered, "but at present I must go on—I don't mind telling you that I have lost a large sum, but I am quite certain to get it back next week at Kempton Park, After next week I intend to give up the pleasures of the turf—that is, when I have recouped my losses. I have obtained certain information which I can depend on as reliable, and I am making a heavy plunge*"

"I hope you will be successful," I answered.

"Thanks," he replied. He took his cigar from his mouth, remained silent for a moment, then turned to me.

"Dr. Cato," he said, suddenly, "I saw that I annoyed you and Dr. Chetwynd last night when I spoke as I did to your partner, Kort. I wish

to assure you now, however, that I did so with intention. The fact is I have been a good deal exercised in my mind lately as to whether or not I am justified in making a communication to you of a serious nature. It relates to your partner. I was considerably amazed to find him here, and still more astonished to hear that his wife is an inmate of this house."

"Well, and what of that?" I asked.

"If you knew as much as I do, you would well say 'What of that?' Ought I to enlighten you or ought I not?"

"Do you know anything against Mrs. Kort?" was my next question.

"Against her?—good heavens, no! except indeed that she is a victim. May I tell you more, or would you rather be left in the dark?"

"I am afraid I cannot listen to you," I said, after a pause, "Mr. Kort being our partner we are bound to hear nothing against him; or at least, if we do, he must know of what you accuse him, and you must be prepared to prove your words."

"Better leave things alone for the present," he said, after a pause. "I met him five years ago in Vienna. He is a man of undoubted ability and fascination," he made the last remark slowly, and with a peculiar smile hovering round the comers of his mouth. The next instant we both turned our heads; there was a light step on the grass behind us. Kort came up.

"I just came out to tell you, Ridley," he said, "that the Dolphin's price has come through on the tape. Twenty to one."

"Twenty to one!" cried Ridley, his whole face undergoing a magical change. "By Jove! that's splendid; they're a smart clique in Russell's stables. Now's my chance I'll drive down to Gregson, my bookmaker, at once and get on all I can. The price will be back to ten to one to-morrow night. I am much obliged to you, Kort."

He hurried off, and Kort seated himself by my side.

"Plunges pretty heavily, eh?" he said.

"Yes, but I suppose he is a rich man," I answered.

"Is he? I happen to know to the contrary. From a source that must be nameless I hear that he is on his last legs. He means to try and recoup himself by a big plunge on the Dolphin, Captain Harrison's horse. He has lost close on £40,000 this last fortnight, and I know he is in a desperate condition."

"By the way," I said, "he tells me he knew you in Vienna live years ago."

Kort laughed.

"Yes, 1 knew him, poor chap. In my opinion he is not all there, the inevitable result of a lazy and self-indulgent life. I should not be surprised to see him go in for G.P.I."

"General paralysis of the insane!" I cried; "I don't see much sign of that."

"Well, I may be wrong, I only know this, that if the Dolphin should lose the Simbury Handicap at Kempton next week, I should not like to be responsible for what Ridley might do, I only hope he will win, for his own sake. He has asked me to go down with him, and I intend to do so. You had better come, too. The patients seem to be all in pretty good health, just now, and you can surely be spared."

"I will see," I answered; "if Chetwynd stays here I can go with you." I rose as I spoke and went indoors. I felt considerably disturbed, and the more so as I could not confide my suspicions to anyone. It was evident that Ridley did know something to Kort's discredit—something upon which the man's position, perhaps even his liberty, depended. The whole thing was mysterious and unsatisfactory, and the most trying part of it was that, beyond doubt, Kort's young wife was involved In the affair. There was something queer about Mrs. Kort, something enigmatical, impossible to define. Her illness was unlike any which I had ever come across. She was ill and she was not ill. In the Davos suite of rooms she looked like a person in bounding health; and yet out of that suite she was nervous, depressed, uncertain in her words, and troubled with the strangest, most fleeting memory. In fact, she hardly possessed a memory at all.

On the day before the race Kort was mani-festly very uneasy about his wife. He said she was in a strange state of excitement, and that if matters did not soon improve, he would take her abroad without delay.

"I can do nothing, of course," he continued, "until after Kempton Park Races, for I have promised to stand by Ridley on that occasion; but afterwards, unless she is better, I shall have to ask you and Chetwynd to give me a holiday."

I replied that that could easily be managed, but his words and restlessness impressed me a good deal, and towards evening I resolved to go up and see Mrs. Kort on my own account. I found her in the sitting-room which was attached to her bedroom, and in a state of extreme agitation. She knew me quite well, and a look of momentary pleasure filled her eyes when I appeared, but then she said, in a distressed and yet restrained voice:—

"You ought not to visit me, Dr. Cato. My husband is prescribing for me and does not wish any other doctor to interfere, and," she added, "my

head aches too frightfully for me to bear any ordinary conversation just now. Go away, please, leave me."

The maid Susan bustled into the room.

"I must ask you, sir, to leave my mistress at once," she said; "these attacks of strong excitement come on now and then; the one thing to bring Mrs. Kort round again is absolute quiet."

I left the room, determined to go downstairs stairs, find Kort, tell him I did not like his wife's state, and ask him to see her with me, as I believed in the old adage that two heads are better than one.

Mrs. Kort's sitting-room opened into a large anteroom, which was also kept at a high altitude. I was just going through this room into the outer corridor, when the sound of voices in the passage without fell on my ears.

"You had better be civil to me," said Ridley, "for I hold your reputation, and worse, in my hands."

"You can prove nothing," I heard Kort reply, and then the two men went down the corridor.

The next morning, at ten o'clock, Kort, Ridley, and I started in the wagonette for Kempton. I noticed that Kort, with a foresight for our comfort unusual with him, had provided a large hamper, containing, he told me, enough luncheon for four, as he had invited Dot Fisher, the jockey, to lunch with us.

We arrived at the course before the first race, and drew up outside the railings. Leaving the wagonette in charge of the groom, we strolled into the ring and heard the Dolphin's name mentioned pretty frequently between punter and bookmaker. He was now a strong second favourite at 5 to 1, and Ridley whispered to me that the thing was a certainty. The horse had already won a trial that must put all the other horses out of court. Although the man was full of hope, he was also in a state of most pitiable excitement, and I could not help feeling sorry for him, and hoping that he would succeed in his wild venture. At present his hopes were roseate, for the Dolphin was certainly the most admired horse in the paddock, and was in the highest possible favour. He was a beautifully built chestnut of six years, and in the pink of condition.

As Fisher had not a mount in the second race it was agreed that we should lunch then. The jockey, a small man with a wizened face, wearing Captain Harrison's colours, a yellow and green jacket and cerise cap, came to our trap, accompanied by Ridley. He took his seat on the box beside Kort, Ridley and I being behind.

Kort had provided an excellent bill of fare, and we fell to, for we were hungry. Fisher, however, refused to eat or drink anything, and only smoked a cigarette.

"What are you going to drink, Cato?" said Kort, turning to me,

"A whisky and soda," I replied; "I cannot drink champagne at this time in the morning."

"All right, hold your glass," he said, leaning down for a soda-water bottle. He unfastened the wire, and the next moment the cork flew out with a pop, the contents flying about and deluging the jockey beside him.

"Steady, Mr. Kort," cried Fisher, taking out his handkerchief, mopping his face and wiping his eyes; "I don't want a bath."

The soda-water had gone chiefly into his face and over his cap and coat. We all laughed as Kort with an angry exclamation flung the bottle down on the grass and opened another. At that moment the saddling bell for the Sunbury Handicap sounded, and Fisher sprang from the box.

"Good luck go with you," cried Ridley; "remember, it's a monkey if you win."

The jockey turned and waved his hand as he disappeared into the weighing-room.

"It will soon be over now," said Ridley, his face paling as he spoke.

Five minutes later the fifteen runners came cantering down the course—a pretty sight—Fisher upon the Dolphin, who carried himself as if his victory were already prejudged. After one or two breaks away, the flag fell to a good start, and we stood up watching the horses through our glasses as they streamed out into view.

Suddenly, I heard Ridley utter a cry. His hand gripped my arm with trembling violence.

"Good heavens! Look! he has bolted—he is mad—I am ruined!" he cried, flinging himself back on the seat in an access of despair.

It was perfectly true. A babel of shouts came from the ring, for the Dolphin had left the course and was galloping wildly across the ground. In a few moments he was pulled up and Fisher had dismounted, as half-a-dozen men rushed up to him. What were they doing? One of them had caught the Dolphin and another, for some inexplicable reason, was leading the jockey by the arm towards the paddock.

Ridley remained dazed by the fearful catastrophe, while Kort and I leapt down and hurried across the in closure. We had not even seen what horse had won. In a few moments Kort, who knew some of the stewards, led me to the room where Fisher was seated. We quickly learned

what had happened. Just after the start the jockey had been seized with some strange affection of his sight, and could no longer steer his horse.

"What can it be?" I cried, as Kort raised Fisher's head and looked into his eyes. There was a queer look in them: the pupils were enormously dilated, and did not re-act to light.

"Some obscure cerebral lesion," said Kort. "He must remain quiet; it may pass off."

"Cerebral lesion!" I cried; "impossible; there is no paralysis."

It was certainly the most extraordinary case I had ever seen, and I failed to account for it in any way; but as we left the jockey in the care of his friends, and went back to Ridley, a wild thought flashed through my brain. Just before the race Fisher had been drenched with soda-water, a large portion of the contents having gone into his face and eyes. Kort had brought the soda-water with the other provisions to the racecourse. Was this bottle specially prepared? Did it contain——? I did not allow myself even to whisper the thought which came to me, but hurrying to the wagonette I looked for the bottle. Of course it was gone. Without it, whatever suspicion I might entertain, nothing could be done. What did it all mean? Into what dreadful maze of crime had we entered?

In a few words I told Ridley what had happened. He scarcely seemed to hear or care. After a pause he suggested that we had better return home at once.

The journey back was dismal, and a gloom hung over Ridley and myself. My suspicions were stronger than ever, but I had no clue to guide me, and failed to see the slightest loophole by which I could bring Kort to book. Of our party he alone was cheerful, and offered many clever suggestions to account for Fisher's sudden and mysterious attack.

The next morning, though evidently still much shaken, Ridley seemed more himself. I met him about eleven o'clock going out with his camera to take some stereoscopic views of the grounds. I applauded him for his intention, and told him I was glad he was pulling himself together. I then went to my own private sitting-room, I happened to be rather busy that morning, and was soon absorbed in accounts, forgetting everything else in this employment. I had not been long busy before Kort knocked and entered, He looked peculiarly grave.

"Have you seen Ridley anywhere about?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered; "I met him going out with his camera some time ago."

"How was he? How did he look?"

"I thought more cheerful; why do you ask?"

"Because I do not feel easy about him. He came to me early this morning, and there was a nasty look on his face, I disliked his manner and the way he spoke."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I have already mentioned my fears with regard to him. The shock of yesterday has thoroughly unhinged him, and I do not know what may happen. I have tried to cheer him up, and recommended him to do some photography. If he broods over his loss he may lose his reason, By the way, I see you are doing accounts. There are several things I want to talk to you about with reference to them. Let me see, what is the time?" He glanced at the clock. "Five minutes to twelve—shall we go into them now?"

"Very well," I answered, and we plunged into a quantity of miscellaneous matters. We had been engaged about half an hour when Chetwynd quickly entered,.

"The most awful thing has happened," he cried. "Ridley has shot himself through the head with a revolver—his body has just been found in the grounds. It could not have been more than half an hour ago."

Kort and I sprang to our feet.

"What?" I exclaimed, "is he dead?"

"Quite dead. He was found by one of the gardeners, who came running to tell me."

"Poor fellow," said Kort, "that accursed racing. Fool that I was to let him go alone! I feared it, Cato, and told you so. It is too dreadful."

"I have sent for the police," said Chetwynd; "you had both better come down with me, the inspector will want to see us all."

We left the room, and Chetwynd leading the way we soon reached the spot Yes, there lay the poor fellow among the low bushes in the plantation about a quarter of a mile from the house. His camera was beside him, and a revolver lay beneath his right hand. As we looked at the body an indescribable feeling of the utmost horror assailed me. The vague events of the last few weeks seemed to have culminated in this awful tragedy. Of course there would he an inquest, and at that inquest I should have to give evidence. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on my oath—the evidence I should be bound to give in the interests of justice would include what I had overheard pass between Kort and the man whose dead body now lay before me.

As these thoughts passed through my brain I took a step forward.

"Don't touch him," cried Kort. "Leave him exactly as he is for the police to see. Ah, here is the inspector coming now." He spoke quietly, not like a man who had anything to fear.

The inspector of police made his examination carefully and quickly, asked a few questions, and then, taking possession of the camera and the revolver, had the body placed on thy ambulance, which was led away to the mortuary. We then returned to the house.

That night I slept badly. The next day the inquest was held, The court was crowded, all the available .seats provided for the public being full. Chetwynd and I were provided with seats beneath the coroners desk, and just before the coroner entered Kort sauntered in and took a place by my side. With all his apparent nonchalance I could see that he was agitated, though scarcely more so than myself.

The jury were quickly sworn, and, having viewed the body, returned to their seats. The first witness called was the gardener who had found the dead man at 12.20; then a Mr. Henry Sharpies, who had come from town, and who was a personal friend of the deceased. He gave evidence of identification, but could assign no cause for suicide beyond the fact that Ridley had lately sustained heavy losses.

The constable now called for Mr. Kort, who stepped into the witness-box and took the oath. The coroner began immediately to question him.

"You have, I believe, Mr. Kort, some knowledge of the very heavy speculation in which the deceased was engaged?

"Yes," answered Kort, "it was a large bet, or series of bets. He lost a bet that would have brought him in £50,000 oil the Dolphin at Kempton Park the day before yesterday."

"The horse lost, I understand, by some accident occurring to the jockey?" continued the coroner; "with this, however, we have nothing to do, Did the deceased say anything to you, Mr. Kort, which would lead you to suspect that in the event of his losing he might take his life?"

"He told me," answered Kort, "that he was in a desperate condition, and that if he lost he was ruined. His manner certainly did lead me to suspect that such an action was possible, and I mentioned my fears to Dr. Cato."

"How long have you known the deceased?" asked the coroner.

I was watching Kort sharply, and saw that at this moment he gave an uneasy gesture. His words, however, were perfectly quiet.

"I met Mr. Ridley five years ago in Vienna, but had not seen him since till he been me a member of the Sanctuary Club."

"You think," said the coroner, "that the wound on the head was self-inflicted?"

"Certainly," answered Kort, "and," he added, "of such a nature that death would be quite instantaneous."

This ended Kort's evidence, and I was then called. In the first few answers to the questions put to me I merely corroborated Kort's evidence as to Ridley's heavy loss, and then I added that in all probability the wound was self-inflicted.

"Why do you say 'probability', Dr. Cato? Do you mean that there is a possibility of such a wound being given by someone else?"

"A possibility, certainly," I replied.

"Have you any reason to suppose that the deceased had an enemy?"

"I am not aware that he had one," I answered.

"Do you know of anyone to whom his death would be an advantage?"

At this question I hesitated—a wild tumult of thoughts was racing through my brain. The coroner quietly repeated his remark.

"From something he mentioned to me, and also from subsequent remarks which I happened to overhear, I have such a suspicion," I replied, slowly. Then I added, "Do you demand this as evidence from me?"

"Certainly; you must tell us everything you know."

I glanced at Kort, and saw that his eyes were fixed on my face. I then quietly repeated the remarks I had overheard pass between him and Ridley. The sensation that followed my words was profound—a hush fell all over the room. Then the coroner turned to me again.

"When did you first hear the news of the deceased's death?" he asked.

"At half-past twelve, when Dr. Chetwynd came in and told us."

"You say 'us'?"

"Yes, for Mr. Kort was with me at the time."

"How long had he been with you?"

"He came into my room at ten minutes to twelve."

"How is it that you remember the time so accurately?"

"I remember looking at the clock and also at my own watch."

"And Mr. Kort had not left the room until Dr. Chetwynd came in?"

"No."

"When was the deceased last seen alive?"

"I saw Ridley about eleven o'clock."

The coroner noted my answers carefully, and then, rising in his seat, said: "Gentlemen, I adjourn this inquest until ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The next instant Kort rose from his seat.

"May I ask you one question, sir?"

"Certainly," replied the coroner.

"The police, I believe, took charge of Mr. Ridley's camera—may I ask whether the photographs have been developed, and, if so, may I see them?"

"The plate has been developed, and I believe a print has been taken from it," replied the coroner; "there is no objection to your seeing it at the police-station."

Why Kort made this request I could not imagine. I only knew that, as a result of my evidence, the inquest had been adjourned for the police to institute further inquiries. I saw Kort go up to the inspector, speak a few words to him, and they went out together.

Chetwynd and I now returned to the Club, which we reached about half-past eleven.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour had passed before Kort, accompanied by the inspector, entered. He came up to me in the friendliest manner, and, without the slightest reference to my startling evidence against him, said: "Dr. Cato, will you and Mr. Chetwynd kindly accompany the inspector and myself? I shall value your advice on a certain important point."

Without a word we all went into the garden, and made our way to the spot where we had found Ridley's body. Here the inspector produced a print of the photograph Ridley had last taken, and he and Kort examined it minutely. Then Kort began to move about as if to get certain trees in a line.

"This," he said, "is the exact spot from where that photograph was taken. Do you agree with me?" he added, turning to me.

I examined the print closely, and then assented.

"What is the exact time now?" was his next question.

"Five minutes past twelve," I replied.

"Then we will wait exactly where we are for a few moments. Do you see that little window in the summer-house across there?"

"Yes," I answered.

"May I ask you to stand quite still in this spot and watch it closely?"

"Why?" I asked.

"You will see presently," he replied, and the inspector nodded and smiled.

I did as I was desired, still unable to grasp what they both meant. At the end of some minutes Kort said, quietly: "Do you see any change in the window?"

"None," I replied, "except that I can scarcely look at it now because it is reflecting the sun into my eyes."

"Ah, exactly. This was not the case when you first saw it?"

"No."

"Well, look at this print again," he continued "That bright white spot on the photograph corresponding to the pane of glass over there is quite perceptible, is it not?"

"Quite," I answered; "it makes a feature in the picture."

"Well, when Ridley took that photograph the sun was reflected from that window just as you see it now, It is therefore self-evident that the photograph could not have been taken before the sun shone on that window. It occurred to me just now that by referring to the print we could approximately deduce the time that Ridley shot himself, as it must, since death was instantaneous from the nature of the wound, have been at some period after the exposure of the plate. You can see for yourself that this photograph was taken after midday, for the shadows on the print fall slightly to the *East of Norths* showing plainly that it was taken after the sun was at its meridian or midday. The body was found at 12.20: Ridley must, therefore, have shot himself between 12.10 and 12.20, Is that not clear, inspector?"

"Perfectly clear," replied the man; "it is an extremely clever and convincing piece of detection."

I gazed at Kort for a moment in utter and absolute amazement, for I saw in an instant that if he was in my room at 11.50, and did not leave it until we both went with Chetwynd to view the body, he could not have possibly committed the murder

The rare ingenuity, the very concisive reasoning that admitted of no deception, unless indeed the sun himself could lie, rendered me speechless.

"Mr. Kort," I said, "my evidence this morning was in the interests of justice. There was no other course open to me but to tell the truth of what I knew, I am still very much puzzled by a great deal that has occurred, but your innocence at least is proved beyond dispute."

"You were perfectly right in what you did, Dr. Cato," he answered, in a magnanimous tone, "but the fact is, poor Ridley was labouring under a gross misunderstanding with regard to some conduct of mine which

happened many years ago. I will explain, later on, the unworthy suspicion which he harboured against me—but seeing that what you said just now might cast a slur on my innocence, it occurred to me to clinch the matter in the way I have done. The result has exceeded my most sanguine expectations. Pray do not think any more about it."

The coroner's verdict next day was what might have been expected, "Suicide during temporary insanity."

"Well," I said to Chetwynd later on that same day, "my lips are silenced for the present, and poor Ridley's have been silenced for ever."

"And yet you still suspect?" said Chetwynd, looking keenly into my face.

"I still suspect," I replied, with emphasis. Little did I guess as I said the words what extraordinary events were soon to occur—events which would make the Sanctuary Club itself a by-word. For when a man is desperate, and has the ingenuity of a devil—to what will he not stoop!

Chapter V

A Handful of Ashes

Kort having been honourably acquitted of any share in the murder of poor Charles Ridley, the course of events at the Club resumed its normal routine. Kort himself was full of energy and devotion to the profession which he had adopted In spite of my strong prejudice against him I could not but admit that he was more or less both Chetwynd's and my own right hand. Being a younger man he had been educated in a newer school of medical thought, and was more daring in his experiments for the cure of patients than either of us. Nevertheless, the late events had been the reverse of beneficial to the welfare of the Club. More than one member sent in his resignation—new members appeared at long intervals upon the scene, and there were occasions when I felt both grave and depressed with regard to our future.

"When once there is the slightest element of distrust started about a Club like ours its deathnote is sounded," remarked Chetwynd to me one morning, "It is, however, a fine property, and if we cared to sell we could easily get a purchaser. By the way, has Kort said anything to you yet with regard to our new member?"

"Our new member?" I said. "It is good news in these gloomy times to hear of a new member. What of him?"

Chetwynd went to his table, pulled open a drawer, and handed me a letter.

"That came this morning," he said; "it happened to be addressed to me, so I opened it."

I took the letter from its envelope and read the following words:—

Tower House,
Inchampton,
Surrey.

Dear Sir,

I am anxious to avail myself of the advantages offered by your Club, and shall be glad if you will kindly send me particulars with prospectus. I make my application to you at the instance of Mr. Kort.

Yours faithfully,
Harold Beauchamp.

"Why didn't Kort mention the matter to me?" I asked.

"I cannot say. He spoke to me about it yesterday; he is anxious that Beauchamp should be admitted as soon as possible. The poor fellow seems to be very ill—a bad form of ataxic paraplegia. Ah! there is Kort just passing the window." Chetwynd hurried to the open window. "Come in, Kort, won't you?" he said, "and satisfy Cato with regard to the advisability of receiving Beauchamp as a member."

Kort dropped the cigarette which he was smoking, and entered through the open French window.

"Beauchamp would make a desirable member," he said at once, "and in admitting him we secure another member as well, no less a person than his uncle, the well-known Mr. Sutherland. You remember, do you not, what a pile he made on the Stock Exchange not two years back?"

Chetwynd crossed towards the door, "I am going out," he said, "I will leave you two to discuss the matter. Write by today's post, Cato, and send the necessary prospectus to Beauchamp," He closed the door behind him.

Kort went across to the mantelpiece, lit a fresh cigarette, and offered me one, which I declined.

"Has it not struck you lately, Cato, that things have gone somewhat badly?" was his next remark

"Can you be surprised?" I answered; "the tragedies that have occurred here are not likely to improve the status of the place. You, however, seem to be moderately complaisant over the matter."

"I am and I am not," was his answer. His voice dropped, he stood silent, then he said, rousing himself: "I have noticed, Cato, in your manner for some time the patent fact that you dislike me. I think I know your reason. It is this. Ever since I came to the Club I seem to you to be the

herald of disaster, I see it myself, and I cannot tell you how distressed I am, for I need not say how truly I have the real interests of the Sanctuary Club at heart I am glad to have the opportunity of saying this to you now, and at the same time to deplore the occurrence of those two most unfortunate affairs—I allude to the tragic death of poor Banpfylde and the no less terrible suicide of my old friend Charles Ridley. It has really seemed as if fate were against us in these matters, but you must remember that from the very nature of things a place like the Sanctuary Club lays itself open to occurrences scarcely ordinary. The members a re abnormal, both mentally and physically."

"I suppose that is so," I replied, "but I am glad you see the coincidence. Until you became our partner, Kort, we were in a flourishing condition. I don't want to blame you, although at times I frankly admit that I have suspected you. Now, what about Beauchamp?"

"He is a nice fellow, very ill, needs careful attendance, and there is nothing at all mysterious about him," was Kort's answer.

"Very well, I will write to him to-day."

I wrote to Beauchamp, inclosed the prospectus of the Club, and said we should be glad to admit him as a member.

He arrived in the course of a few days, and being unable to walk was wheeled into the Club in a chair. He was a young-looking man, but must have been over thirty years of age. His face was thin and very pale, his hair receded from his forehead, and was already slightly grey round the temples. Death was plainly written on his face. He was accompanied by a tall, stout, elderly man, who was introduced to us both as Beauchamp's uncle, the well-known Mr. Sutherland, of Stock Exchange fame. Sutherland had a somewhat hard cast of face, light, wide-open grey eyes, and a quick, keen, alert manner. The invalid, on the contrary, was very dreamy, and appeared not to take the slightest interest in his new surroundings. His chair was presently lifted up by his attendants, and he was conveyed to the rooms reserved for him.

On that very same day, and before we doctors had assembled for our consultation over Beauchamp, I was in my private sitting-room when I heard the handle of the door softly turn and a light footfall sound on the floor. I turned my head in some surprise, for patients were not in the habit of entering my room without first knocking. Then I started to my feet.

"Mrs. Kort!" I exclaimed, "what can I do for you?"

She was slightly out of breath, and her blue eyes looked brighter than usual. There was a vivid spot of colour on each cheek, and I noticed

that she had grown painfully thin.

"I am glad you are better," I continued; "welcome down amongst us once more. Why, you are almost a stranger; it is quite six weeks since I have had the pleasure of seeing you about the house."

"If you keep such an accurate memory with regard to my movements," she answered, slowly, "why are you not more careful of my health?"

"I careful of your health?" I exclaimed. "But, my dear madam, I have not the charge of your health; your, husband treats you himself."

"My husband! Then that accounts," she said, slowly. She laid her slim hand on the top of a chair which stood near. "I told Horace several times lately that I particularly wished to be placed under your medical treatment, Dr. Cato. He replied that he was quite willing that it should be so, and said that he would himself ask you to visit me. When you did not come I sent my maid Susan for you several times, but I invariably had an answer back to say you would be with me as soon as possible; but you never came, never. Last night I dreamt that you wished to come, but were kept back by force, by strong means, so at danger to myself I have now come to ask you for the real explanation of your non-appearance. Yes, that is why I have come." As she uttered the last few words she paused, and that queer vagueness came into her voice which I had always noticed about her when I met her anywhere except in the Davos suite.

"What was I saying?" she asked me, in a piteous tone.

"Many and strange things," was my reply. "You wanted me to visit you, and I never came. You spoke of danger to yourself; pray go on, I am much interested."

"But I cannot recall any of those words. Where am I? What is wrong?" She looked wildly round her.

"Sit down," I said, I forced her into a seat, took her hand, and felt her pulse. The pulse was fluttering and uneven; I noticed also that the pulses in her temples were throbbing perceptibly.

"It is only what always happens," she said, faintly, "when I—when I" She stopped and drew herself up with a look of affright "What can be wrong?" she exclaimed. "What have I come to see you about?"

"In order to consult me about your health," I said, soothingly.

"Yes, yes," she said—she was evidently making a frantic effort to retain her fast-fleeting memory.

"It is going, going," she said, feebly; "this is always the case when I have oh, I cannot remember anything more."

"Never mind," I said, "you will be all right in your own rooms. I will promise faithfully to visit you there within an hour; you had better go back at once."

"To my own rooms—where are they?"

"In the Davos suite of rooms in the Sanctuary Club. Go, my dear madam, you surely must remember."

"The Davos suite of rooms in the Sanctuary Club?" she said. She looked round her with a vacant expression. "Where is the Sanctuary Club? Where are the Davos rooms? Are we not in Vienna?"

"No, no; we are in England, and you are in the Sanctuary Club."

"We are not in England, we are in Vienna. I tell you I won't stay here, I won't. I hate this dreadful, dreadful place; it was here — it was here" she grasped me by the arm, terror filling her eyes. There was nothing for it but for me to take her back to her own rooms. I drew her hand through my arm, led her gently upstairs, down the corridor which led to the Davos suite, and then, opening the door of the outer apartment, which was also kept at a high altitude, took her through to her rooms. The moment she entered the vestibule she became quieter, her nervousness vanished, the perplexity left her face, memory was evidently returning; she withdrew her hand from my arm.

"You are better?" I said.

"I am well," she replied, "or at least almost well. Dr. Cato, I have something most important to say to you. I want to consult you. Let us say, for the sake of expediency, that it is on the subject of my health. In one sense, too, that is true, but there is something you must know, something you must know ***at once***. Will you stay and hear it now, or will you come later on?"

I thought of the consultation which was pending with regard to Beauchamp. told her that I could not stay now, but would be back within an hour.

"Very well," she answered, sadly; "I am sorry you have to go, but I will faithfully expect you at the end of that time."

"You may assuredly do so," was my answer. I left the room.

She went as far as the door of her own apartment, and stood looking after me. The sadness and pathos of her attitude would be difficult to describe. I heard someone speak to her in a harsh tone from within—doubtless the disagreeable maid. She entered her rooms at once and shut the door.

A very few moments later we three doctors met in consultation over our new patient, Harold Beauchamp. His strange complaint had made great

strides, and was evidently in the last stage. As we made our examination I noticed that Kort seemed unusually deferential, and had cast aside his ordinary somewhat overbearing and self-assertive airs. He yielded at once to Chetwynd's and my diagnosis, and asked what treatment we should recommend.

"Perfect rest, for one thing," said Chetwynd; "and as to drugs, there is only one in my opinion worth trying, and that is uranium nitrate. It has had a great reputation lately in similar cases, and I certainly advocate it from what I have seen of its effects. It ought to be given in good doses, say five grains three times a day, but we must carefully watch the results."

"I know the name in the Pharmacopoeia, but have never yet prescribed it," I said.

"It is fairly new," replied Chetwynd. "Do you agree with this treatment, Kort?" he continued.

"Yes," said Kort.

We said a few more words, and a daily routine was marked out for the sick man, which would include as much amusement and fresh air as he had strength for. It was arranged that Mr. Sutherland, who seemed devoted to his nephew, should be his constant companion, and at present no special nurse was required. I then went away and, without saying a word to Chetwynd, went up at once to Mrs. Kort's rooms. I went through the anteroom and knocked at the door of her private sitting-room. The moment I did so it was opened by the maid.

"I have called to see Mrs. Kort," I said; "is she within?"

"My mistress cannot see you, sir—she is lying down."

"But she expects me," I said. "Have the goodness to say that I am waiting."

The woman withdrew, evidently with great unwillingness. She came hack in a moment.

"My mistress is very sorry–" she began.

"No, I am not sorry," was the queer and almost reckless echo within the room. "I wish to see Dr. Cato—show him in, Susan, immediately."

The maid's dull, freckled complexion assumed a tinge of pink. She slowly withdrew from her position in front of the door and allowed me to enter.

"You can go, Susan," said her mistress.

I looked at Mrs. Kort in some astonishment As. a rule she walked with a slight stoop, as though her feebleness was so great that she could

scarcely support the weight of her slim and willowy figure. She resembled at these times a lily with a broken stem. Now she was absolutely upright, her head well thrown back, her eyes intensely bright She looked not only beautiful, but also in perfect health. Susan gave her an amazed glance. She then slowly, with manifest unwillingness, left the room. When she got as far as the door she turned and faced Mrs. Kort.

"You will suffer for this, madam," she said.

Mrs. Kort did not even glance in her direction.

"Go!" she repeated. The woman went, shutting the door behind her.

"You are afraid of that woman?" I said.

"I am," she answered. "I am afraid of everyone in this house with the exception of yourself and Dr. Chetwynd."

"Believe me, Mrs. Kort," I said, "that if necessary we will protect you. You say you wish to consult me medically. I can scarcely take up your case without letting your husband know, but a patient is undoubtedly at liberty to choose her own physician."

"I told Horace," she answered, "that I particularly wished you to treat me, and he replied that he was quite willing that you should do so."

"Sit down, then, and tell me your symptoms at once."

She seated herself on the edge of a chair, clasping and unclasping her thin hands.

"Mine are not ordinary symptoms, and mine is not an ordinary story," she began. "To understand my symptoms you must know my story, and it is—oh, God! it is a ***most terrible one***! I tell it you at the risk of my life, but I would rather do so than allow things to go on as they have been going on lately. You remember Mr. Ridley?"

"Mr. Charles Ridley?" I said.

"Yes; the man who was supposed to have died by his own hands."

I nodded. I felt my heart beat faster.

"I can throw light on that matter," she began; u I can also tell you something about myself. You wonder—I am sure you wonder—why I am well in these rooms, and why I am ill, miserable, almost imbecile, out of them. You wonder, do you not?"

"I have wondered very much," I replied.

"Well, I am prepared to give you the reason. I can stand this misery no longer. I would rather my wretched life came to an end, I will tell you and Mr. Chetwynd all. Can you both come up here to-night, and can you—"

The words had scarcely passed her lips before the door of the room was thrown briskly open, and Kort entered, I shall never forget the curious effect of his presence on his wretched wife. She had been bending towards me talking earnestly, but now she seemed to stiffen, as though lead were poured through her veins, the words froze on her lips, she gave a nervous laugh, and said: "Do you want me, Horace?"

"I want Cato," was his reply. He spoke cheerfully, but I noticed that his dark eyes flashed a lightning glance from one of us to the other.

"I wish to consult with you immediately, Cato. I am sorry, Isobel, to interrupt your *tête-a-tête*, but it is impossible to help matters."

"Your wife wishes to place herself under my care for a time," I said, rising as I spoke, "She tells me that she has alluded to the subject to you, and that you have made no objection. In nervous cases like hers a change of treatment often has the most beneficial result."

"You have no objection, Horace; you said so," was Mrs. Kort's remark.

"I should like to see her in conciliation with Chetwynd," were my next words, "and to go very carefully into her symptoms."

"I make no objection," said Kort, with a shrug of his shoulders, "but at the first consultation it will be necessary for me to be present; you can then prescribe exactly what treatment you like, Cato; but come now at once. There is a marked change for the worse in poor Seafield, and I do not think he will last out the day."

Kort alluded to one of our consumptive patients who had long been in a dying condition.

I rose slowly.

"With regard to Mrs. Kort, shall we arrange for a consultation this evening?" I said.

She was standing now at one of the windows. I saw her glance out into the lovely grounds, but I doubt if she saw anything; her face was the colour of death.

"Shall we consult over your wife this evening?" I repeated.

"As you please," he answered.

"Oh, thank you, Horace," she exclaimed, a ring of joy in her voice; "and you will come, Dr, Cato, you will be sure to come?"

She darted past Kort and seized both my hands.

"You will not fail me?" she said.

"Assuredly no," I answered.

"Whatever you hear?" she continued.

"Whatever I hear," I said. I left the room, Kort following me immediately.

That evening, therefore, Kort, Chetwynd, and I saw her together in her bedroom. But I was circumvented after all. She was sitting up in bed looking listless and uninterested in everything. When we came in she scarcely noticed us, replied vaguely to all my questions, and watched her husbands face as though she would read the answers he wished her to give in his countenance. In the end we came away, Chetwynd fully convinced that the wretched girl was a confirmed lunatic and full of pity for Kort, whom he considered a most indulgent and self-sacrificing husband.

"My hope is," said Kort, after our consultation had come to an end, "that a long residence in the Davos suite, joined to absolute quiet and freedom from excitement, may gradually combat the worst symptoms from which my poor wife suffers. But, Cato," he added, "you must be cruel to be kind, and should she break out of her restraint and come to visit you, you must treat her wild words as you would those of any other person who is not responsible for her actions."

I held my tongue. Appearances were all in favour of Kort's statement, but I could not forget Ridley's words, and I wondered what had taken place at Vienna five terrible years ago.

Meanwhile, our new patient, Beauchamp, was going on fairly well. He was uncomplaining, cheerful, never alluding to his sufferings, satisfied with any small attentions which were paid to him, and, in short, as amiable a patient as we had ever admitted to the shelter of the Sanctuary Club. He came downstairs most evenings, and soon made himself a favourite with the other members. He was an accomplished musician, and often sat for hours at the piano playing a dreamy sort of music, and which he somewhat shyly informed us he had composed himself.

The custom of the firm was that after a careful consultation each patient was put under the special care of one doctor alone. Beauchamp, by his own and his uncle's desire, was attended entirely by Kort. This seemed natural enough, as Kort had been the one to introduce him to the Club, and Sutherland told me on one occasion that he knew Kort personally for several years, Sutherland himself after the first day or two turned out an agreeable member of our little community. He could tell good stories, could raise the laugh even at his own expense, and had a certain dry humour which, although somewhat caustic, also made him a rather brilliant member of society. He was devoted to his nephew, and although at first I had not been favourably impressed by him, when I saw him with poor Beauchamp, attending to his smallest whim, solicitous, more than solicitous, for his comfort, I took myself to task for my

undue suspicions.

"What is the matter with me?" I thought "Can all this be the effect that queer man Kort has over me? I wish, I do wish, I could induce Chetwynd to see the fellow through my glasses."

Some weeks after Beauchamp's admission I happened to go into the library one evening. I found the invalid there alone. He was listlessly turning the pages of an illustrated paper. As I entered he looked at me with tired eyes.

"How are you to-day?" I asked.

He forced himself to give a cheerful smile.

"I am afraid I am no better," he answered. "I do not seem to benefit from the treatment. Is there any chance for me, Dr. Cato?"

"I hope so," I answered, somewhat vaguely. Then I continued: "You must remember the old proverb, 'While there is life there is hope.'"

He shrugged his shoulders as if he disliked my stereotyped answer.

"That medicine, for instance, does me no good," he said again; "I don't seem actually to lose much ground, but then, on the other hand, I don't gain any."

He sighed heavily and lay back in the deep chair in which he was seated, I went and stood by the fire. Now and then I glanced at him. He had all the marked symptoms of his distressing complaint—it was making rapid progress, although there was no reason to apprehend immediate danger. As I watched him the sick man once again raised his soft, brown eyes to my face.

"I wish to ask you a frank question," he said. "I am quite aware that I am not your patient, but I believe you will tell me the truth. How long have I to live?"

"That I cannot possibly say," was my answer. "I will be as frank as you desire. Tiresome and worrying as you find your life, your malady is not in itself fatal You may have many years yet before you. I have even known cases like yours go on to old age."

"That would be a very melancholy state of things," he said, slowly. He paused again. "Now I will tell you," he continued, "why I asked that question. Two mornings ago I happened to overhear a conversation between Mr. Kort and my uncle. I did not catch everything they said, but I knew that they were discussing me and my symptoms, and I caught the words—'laryngeal spasm.' What did they mean by that expression? What is laryngeal spasm?"

"Nothing to alarm you," I said. "Do not worry yourself about things of that sort. Try and get some hobby to amuse yourself with."

I hurried off to find Chetwynd. These things were getting on my nerves—I scarcely knew what to do or what to think. When I entered my friend's consulting-room I found to my disappointment that he was out, and would not be in until the evening. About eight o'clock that same evening I met him. He told me immediately that Beauchamp was dead. As had been expected, a sudden spasm of the glottis had ended the scene.

While he was talking Kort entered.

"Yes," he said, "it is all over with our poor young friend I am sorry for Sutherland, he is much distressed. By the way, he wishes to have the body removed to his own house in Surrey, preparatory to the funeral at Woking."

"Why at Woking?" I asked.

"Because Beauchamp left directions in his will that he was to be cremated. I will undertake the matter, and of course sign the death certificate, as I was with him at the last."

Neither Chetwynd nor I had anything to say with regard to this, and Kort immediately left the room. The next morning the body of poor Beauchamp was removed from the Sanctuary Club, and I tried to banish his memory from my mind. This was not difficult, for at that time I had a great deal of work which occupied me. Several members were at last coming to the Club, and I had every hope that we were on the eve of another period of prosperity.

Kort was absent for a few days after poor Beauchamp's death, and it occurred to me that now would be the time to visit Mrs. Kort and get her to tell me what that secret was which lay heavy on her heart.

I cannot understand now why I did not avail myself of this opportunity, but excess of work certainly called off my attention into other channels, and in spite of myself I now and then inclined to Chetwynd's belief that the poor girl was really insane.

Beauchamp died in November, and it was, I remember well, on the 13th of the following December, about eleven o'clock in the morning, that the next scene in this queer drama took place. Chetwynd and I were together in my room when a servant entered with a card, saying that a gentleman was waiting to see me at once, I took up the card and read the following name:—

Mr. Walter O'Brien,
Home and Colonial Assurance Company,
Royal Exchange Buildings, E.C.

"Show Mr. O'Brien in," I said to the servant. Then I turned to Chetwynd. "We may as well see him," I said, "but I conclude he is merely one of the usual touting insurance agents."

The next instant a middle-aged man, well dressed, entered the room, He stood for a moment looking from one of us to the other.

"I am Dr. Cato," I said. "You expressed a wish to see me; will you take a chair?"

He bowed and dropped into the nearest seat.

"I have called, Dr. Cato," he began, "as you see by my card, on behalf of the Home and Colonial Assurance Company, of which I happen to be the manager. I am anxious to have a conversation with you on a matter of the greatest importance, and I must ask you to oblige me with a private interview."

"I have no secrets from my partner, Dr. Chetwynd," I replied; "you can speak quite freely in his presence."

Mr. O'Brien looked uneasy, but presently, with a slight bow to Chetwynd, he began: "My inquiries are in connection with the late Mr. Harold Beauchamp, who died here last month, and upon whose life our company have issued a policy of fifty thousand pounds. An application has been made by Mr. Beauchamp's uncle, Mr. Sutherland, of Ray Park, Surrey, through his solicitors, for the money. Mr. Beauchamp left, we understand, a will in which Mr. Sutherland is his sole heir. Now, certain rumours with relation to Mr. Sutherland's past, with which, gentlemen, I need hardly trouble you, have made us delay in paying the insurance, and we are bound to make every investigation. I understand that Mr. Beauchamp died in this house. Are you two doctors certain that he died of natural causes?"

"Mr. Harold Beauchamp died of laryngeal spasm following ataxic paraplegia," I answered, quickly. "But as our other partner, Mr. Kort, was attending him, I will ask him to come here at once."

I rose and rang the bell, and told the servant to ask Mr. Kort to come to see me without delay. In a very few moments he entered the room. I introduced him to Mr. O'Brien, and told him the object of O'Brien's visit. He looked quietly at the manager of the insurance company, and did not speak for a moment.

"You suspect Mr. Harold Beauchamp of not having died of natural causes?" he said then, slowly.

"Hardly that," answered Mr. O'Brien, "so much as we desire to be absolutely certain that his death was due to natural causes before paying such a large sum of money to his uncle."

"I presume you saw my certificate of death?" continued Kort; "and if you did you know the cause of death that I assigned."

"We saw the certificate, of course, Mr. Kort, and I need hardly say that we do not for a moment doubt the genuineness of the paper; but what we want to know is this: would it have been possible to administer any poison which would simulate such a cause of death?"

"Certainly not," answered Kort. "I was with Beauchamp when he died—it was a perfectly natural process. May I ask why you suspect foul play?"

"For two reasons—the first relates to Mr. Sutherland's private affairs; the second to the fact of the rapid cremation of the body."

"The cremation was in accordance with the dead man's will, which, of course, you are at liberty to read," was Kort's reply.

"I am aware of that," said Mr. O'Brien, now speaking a little testily; "nevertheless, the cremation makes any analysis impossible—therefore I have come here to-day to make these inquiries."

"You have your answer from Mr. Kort," I said.

"You are prepared to swear to the impossibility of foul play?" he continued, turning to Kort.

"I am."

"Very well. I thank you, gentlemen. That is all." He rose, and with an expression of evident dissatisfaction and perplexity, took up his hat and left the room.

"This is a queer business," said Kort, turning to me. "Did you, Cato, happen to know that Beauchamp's life was so heavily insured?"

"I had no idea of such a thing," was my reply; "but, of course, the suggestion of poisoning is absurd."

"Oh, quite," he replied, and after a few more words he left us.

"Another queer affair," I said to Chetwynd, in a desponding tone. "What is the doom which hangs over us? The Club cannot long go on with such tragedies and suspicions filling the very air."

Chetwynd made no reply for a moment.

"Too queer," he said at last; "these cannot be mere coincidences. Cato, I do not know what you will think of me, but I am at last inclined to share your fears."

"About Mrs. Kort? About poor Charles Ridley? About—"

"About everything."

I had never seen my friend look more grave than he did at this moment.

"I must think the matter out," he said. "I will come and see you again when I have formed a more definite conclusion. At present all is hazy, and yet, and yet—things are queer, too queer, too queer." He left the room. As he did so I noticed that strange look in his eyes which they always wore when he was absorbed in a deep problem.

It was not until the afternoon of that same day that I saw him again. He entered my consulting-room and turned the key in the lock.

"Why do you do that?" I asked.

"Because I have something to say, and we must not be disturbed. Listen. Whether right or wrong, I have discarded the idea of Mrs. Kort's insanity. There are several matters which much disturb me. Kort will ruin this Club, and us also, if we are not careful, but we must be wary and sure of our facts. Now, I have something else to tell you."

"What?" I inquired.

"It has to do with poor Beauchamp. It may be quite a wild idea, but here it is. I went to the dispensary just now in order to look at the bottle containing the uranium nitrate, the drug which, you remember, Beauchamp was taking. I cannot, of course, say how much of the medicine was used for him, because Kort made it up from the crystals in the bottle, but it struck me that as the bottle was nearly full when Beauchamp came, it looks uncommonly low now."

"Good heavens!" I cried, "do you mean that you suspect that the poor fellow may have been given too big a dose of it by Sutherland?"

"It is possible that Sutherland got hold of the bottle, for I think Kort trusted him absolutely. From O'Brien's remark there is something odd with regard to Sutherland's past life, and he alone, so far as we can tell, is benefited by the death of his nephew. One thing at least is certain—if such a dose were given to Beauchamp it would certainly kill him."

"Since you do not know the amount that was originally in the bottle, I do not see what use there is in saying anything about it," I replied, gloomily.

Chetwynd paced up and down the room quickly.

"You can prove nothing," I continued; "the body has been cremated, and, therefore, all trace of poisoning gone."

"Has it?" he muttered. His steps quickened. Suddenly he stopped and turned to me.

"Do you know that uranium nitrate is a non-volatizable metal?" he said, fixing his eyes on my face, and pronouncing each word slowly.

I stared back at him in astonishment, not seeing at first what his meaning was. Then I sprang to my feet.

"What!" I cried, "you mean that it would be still in the ashes?"

"Yes, I mean that. If my suspicion that Beauchamp's death was caused by an excessive close of uranium nitrate is correct, a careful quantitative analysis of the ashes might reveal some interesting evidence."

"By Jove! Chetwynd, that is an idea. Yes, it would certainly be the case. What do you mean to do?"

"I shall sift this matter thoroughly. I have been slow in my suspicions, but now that they are aroused I promise you I will not let the grass grow under my feet. I mean to go immediately to town to see O'Brien. Come, let us go together."

Five minutes later we were rapidly driving towards the City.

"You know," said Chetwynd, as we drove along, "that recent experiments have abundantly proved that a metal can be isolated from ashes when not volatilized by cremation, and certainly uranium would not be. Silver, copper, and many other metals would act in the same way, but the great point in this case will be the fact that uranium is such a rare metal that no counsel for the defence could possibly uphold a plea of its accidentally having found access to the ashes."

"I see," I replied, with enthusiasm; "yes, if any very large quantity is found in the ashes our case will be proved."

"Our case?" he said, glancing at me.

"Yes," I replied, "for my private impression is that Kort has a hand in this matter. I cannot help suspecting the man. I believe there is an evil influence over our house, and the sooner the man who exercises this terrible power is exposed the better."

"But Kort does not benefit in the least," said Chetwynd, in a gloomy tone.

"Nevertheless, the two men were in league," was my answer.

We arrived at the office of the insurance company, and were at once shown into the manager's private room. His amazement when Chetwynd disclosed his idea was beyond description.

"Really," he cried, "it is scarcely credible. One would have thought that cremation, at any rate, would have destroyed for ever all evidence of poisoning if a suspicion of such were to exist."

"In the case of uranium nitrate such would not be the case," replied Chetwynd.

O'Brien turned suddenly to me.

"Do you, Dr. Cato, corroborate Dr. Chetwynd's statement?" he asked.

"Certainly I do," I answered. "My friend is one of the first analytical chemists in London."

"Very well," he replied, snatching up his hat, "I shall act on this immediately. Can I rely on you to make this analysis if I obtain possession of the ashes?" he added to Chetwynd.

"Certainly, but it will be a police affair, of course, and the Government analyst, Russell, would have to do it; but as he happens to be a great friend of mine, I daresay he will allow me to help him if you mention the special details."

He hurried off, and we returned to the Club, deciding that it would be wisest not to mention anything about the matter to Kort.

The insurance company and the Home Office evidently wasted no time, for at six o'clock on the following evening a letter was brought to Chetwynd by special messenger.

"Here you are, you see," he said, handing it across to me. I read as follows:—

> *Somerset House, W.C.*
>
> *Dear Chetwynd,*
>
> *The Home and Colonial Assurance Company have acted on your advice—an ingenious idea certainly, and worthy of you. They have just received the necessary authority from the Home Office, and Beauchamp's ashes will be here at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. If there is anything in this, a more formal analysis will doubtless be necessary, but in the first instance I should greatly value your assistance and advice. Can you be with me sharp at the hour I have mentioned?*
>
> *Yours very truly,*
> *Maurice Russell.*

"You will go, of course?" I said, handing it back to him.

"Certainly," he replied, "and you had better come too, Cato. Russell knows your name, and will have no objection to your being present."

At ten o'clock the following morning Chetwynd and I left the Club together. The mission before us absorbed every thought. Surely there never was a more unique one—the analysis of the ashes of a cremated man, on the result of which the most astounding issues might hang[1].

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[1] Wer die Gelegenheit dazu hat, sollte die folgende Szene mit den entsprechenden Abschnitten in Richard Austin Freemans Roman "A Silent Witness" (1914) vergleichen. – B.L.

We reached Somerset House punctually at eleven o'clock, where Russell received us. Chetwynd introduced me, and asked if I might be present at the analysis.

"Certainly, Dr. Cato," he replied. "I know of you by reputation, and am glad to make your acquaintance. Come over to the laboratory now, and we will discuss the matter thoroughly." As he spoke, Russell crossed the room, opened the door, and led us down a passage into a splendidly-fitted laboratory on the same floor. As he closed the door of this room he spoke.

"Be fore we begin," he said, "in an analysis of such great importance we should clearly decide on our line of action. The substance we have to deal with is limited in amount, so we cannot afford to make mistakes. My idea is this. Whatever salt of uranium was administered, we shall now from the ashes doubtless find it in the form of oxide U_3O_8[2]. I propose to filter this out as a soluble nitrate, reduce it down to the dioxide[3], and then assume the oxygen required which would bring it up to the trioxide[4] with permanganate of potassium."

"Exactly," replied Chetwynd, "that is the process I should myself suggest."

"Very well. Shall we each analyze a portion and then compare results? But I must first find out if the ashes have arrived. They were to be brought up by a man from Woking; the messenger ought to be here now."

Russell had just pressed the bell to inquire about the ashes, when there was a knock at the door, and a man entered carrying a black bag.

"Are you the messenger from Woking?" asked Russell.

"Yes sir," answered the man.

"Have you got the ashes?"

"Yes, sir," The man opened the bag and produced a metal cinerary urn. On the outside was engraved the name, "Harold Walter Beauchamp."

"This is the certificate, sir, from the manager," he said, handing a paper as he spoke to Russell.

"Very well; that will do."

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[2] Uran(V,VI)-oxid, zu weiteren Uranoxiden im folgenden. – B.L.

[3] Gemeint ist Uran(IV)-oxid UO_2. Wird heute für die Herstellung der Brennelemente von Kernkraftwerken benötigt.– B.L.

[4] Uran(VI)-oxid UO_3, aus dem heute durch Reduktion mit Wasserstoff Uran(IV)-oxid gewonnen wird. – B.L.

The man retired, and Chetwynd and Russell began their investigations, while I watched them both with breathless interest.

Chetwynd was the first to remove the lid of the urn. He took a small quantity of the ashes on a spatula and made a solution of the nitrate.

"Now for the ferrocyanide of potassium," he said to me; "we should get in any case a brown precipitate." He added the reagent to the test-tube, and instantly a dense precipitate fell.

He uttered a cry.

"Absolutely loaded with it," he said, in a whisper.

I continued to watch him as with deft hands he drew the mystery that surrounded Beauchamp's death from the incinerated remains of his own body. It was a strange and wonderful piece of detection!

Meanwhile Russell in a distant part of the laboratory was making another careful analysis. At the end of an hour both men had completed their work. Russell rapidly ran over his calculations and in silence handed the paper across to Chetwynd, who compared it with his own figures.

"Six hundred and eighty-three grains!" cried Chetwynd; "a lethal dose with a vengeance."

As he spoke he handed the paper to me. I stared at it without speaking. Though I had been practically convinced that foul play had been used, now that the ugly and terrible demonstration of it stared me in the face, without the possibility of error, I seemed scarcely able to realize it.

"We must take these papers immediately to O'Brien," said Chetwynd. "He is the person to take the next step in this terrible affair."

Thanking Russell for his assistance, we both left the room. A few moments later we were in the office of the insurance company. We told O'Brien what had taken place. He listened with intense eagerness. We then showed him the figures. His amazement was almost beyond words.

"A warrant must be taken out immediately for the arrest of Sutherland," he said; "that is my affair. As to Kort, whether he is guilty or not, he must be subpoenaed to appear at the trial. I do not think we can do more at present."

The insurance manager was in a state of excitement impossible to describe.

"Will you wait in town for me, gentlemen?" he said; "it may be two or three hours before I can get the necessary formalities completed, but this very day that scoundrel shall be locked up."

We promised to return again to the office in a short time, and he left us. To arrange the formalities and obtain the required assistance of the law was after all but the work of a few hours, and early that same afternoon we, a silent party, travelled down to Sutherland's place, Ray Park, in Surrey. I scarcely dared contemplate the wretched man's hideous fate should nothing transpire to clear him of the awful charge on which he was to be arrested. Hiring a fly at Inchampton we drove to Ray Park, some two miles from the station. It was a small but pretty red brick house, and scarcely fulfilled the impression its somewhat pretentious title gave it.

O'Brien rang and knocked loudly. Almost instantly the door was opened, and to our utter amazement and consternation the tall figure of Kort stood before us.

"In the name of all that is wonderful, what has brought you here?" he cried, looking from one of us to the other, and as far as we could tell not in the least suspecting the hideous truth.

"We want to see Sutherland," I answered. I had scarcely said the words before the officer of the law who accompanied us stepped forward.

"I must see Mr. Sutherland without a moment's delay," he said. "I hold here a warrant for his arrest on suspicion of causing the death of the late Harold Beauchamp by the administration of poison."

"What, has the news got out already?" said Kort, his face turning from red to white and from white to red again. The police officer forced his way into the house. Kort stood for a moment as if he would keep him out, then stepped back to let him pass.

"You can all come in," he said. "I did not know the terrible news had got abroad. I am stunned by this. The wretched Sutherland sent for me this morning. You are too late, officer. Come, I have something to show you."

As he spoke Kort walked down the hall, and threw open a door.

"He is beyond your power—look!"

We all found ourselves in one of the reception-rooms, Seated in a chair, with his head bowed upon the table and one arm hanging loosely, sat Sutherland, I uttered a cry as 1 raised him. The man was dead,.

"Yes, he is dead," said Kort. "He sent for me early this morning in order to confess his crime, and knowing how I might possibly Harold Beauchamp, Without collusion or complicity I designed and carried it out alone. I obtained the uranium nitrate from the dispensary of the Sanctuary Club and administered two large doses myself. I had got into severe monetary trouble, and the insurance money on my nephew's

life was be implicated, wrote a long confession saying that when he had done so he should give himself up. He has, as you see, but to the judgement of no earthly tribunal, I had left hjm for a few moments, and found him thus a short time before you arrived. Smell this glass—it contained hydrocyanic acid, painless and swift."

While Kort was speaking the inspector glanced through a sheet of paper which lay beside the dead man on the table.

"Yes, it is a full confession," he said. He read aloud as follows:—

> *I, Edgar Walter Sutherland, hereby of my own free will, without reservation or equivocation, confess the terrible crime I have committed—the murder of my nephew, the only means by which I could put myself straight.*
>
> *I write this confession now in order to clear from blame or suspicion Mr. Kort, on whom, owing to the circumstances of the case, such might possibly fall. I cannot bear the load of guilt any longer. My mind is going. God help me,*
>
> *Edgar Walter Sutherland.*

A silence followed the words of the police-officer, He looked at O'Brien.

"Well, sir," he said, "we cannot arrest a dead man."

"And as your company will not have to pay the insurance money in any case now, I presume the law will have nothing further to do in the matter," said Chetwynd.

Chapter VI

The Secret of the Prison House

Chetwynd and I were leaving Ray Park on the night which followed poor Sutherland's death, Kort accompanied us.

"I will come with you if you have no objection," he said. "As far as I can tell there is nothing more for me to do here, but if necessary I can return to-morrow."

Neither Chetwynd nor I found ourselves able to utter a word. Kort seemed to take our silence for consent, and we three went back to the Club. We did not reach our destination until between nine and ten o'clock. Dinner was over, and many of the members were scattered in different quarters of the large central hall. Cards and games of all sorts were the order of the hour; everything looked peaceful and quite as usual. Not one of our guests suspected through what a time of tragedy and strain we three medical men had just passed.

Chetwynd and I said a few words to our different guests, and presently found ourselves in the corridor which led to our consulting-rooms. These happened to be close together.

"I am coming with you, Cato," said Chetwynd, "there is much to talk over."

There was a ring in his voice which I recognised. My friend was roused at last, roused with a vengeance. The moment we entered my consulting-room he turned the key in the lock, and then came and stood near me.

"Pray sit down," I said.

"I cannot sit," was his answer. "You know what I think of this."

"How can I guess your thoughts?"

"Good God! Cato, you can, and you do. This is no time for subterfuge. We have both the same thought, we both know that the man Kort is guilty."

"Guilty of many things, doubtless," I answered; "but scarcely of the crime which we thought he had participated in early in the day."

"I do not believe in Sutherland's confession," was Chetwynd's answer. "I have seen Sutherland's writing several times, and my impression is that what we read to-day is nothing more or less than a clever forgery. Kort was desperate and would stick at nothing. Cato, he must resign his partnership immediately. If he refuses we must close the Club."

"Ah," I said, "you are coming to my conclusion; it is a relief to hear you. You agree with me fully?"

"I agree with you. This is the third shady affair in which Kort has been implicated during the last few months. For the reputation of the Club, to say nothing of your reputation and mine, we must put things straight without the possibility of further mistake, and our only way, so far as I can see, is through Mrs. Kort. There is not the slightest doubt that she is cognisant of her husband's character. The few words she has dropped to you are sufficient to prove this. There was a time when I believed her insane, led to my belief by Kort's specious words. I no longer hold that theory. There is something wrong with the woman—what, God only knows—but, it least in the Davos rooms, she is in full possession of her faculties. We have got to discover what awful hold her husband has over her. Our next interview must be under official authority. I propose that we have it early to-morrow morning. It is too late to-night to do anything, but I shall telephone as soon as ever I can to-morrow to Inspector Clarkson, put the whole thing before him, and beg him to take up the matter privately and at our expense. Each individual occurrence may be insufficient for our purpose, but linked together they make a formidable chain to break."

"I echo your words, Chetwynd," I replied; "matters cannot go on as they are doing. If for no other reason, for the sake of that wretched woman upstairs, we must take the bull by the horns."

We talked a little longer and afterwards retired to our rooms, but I for one could not sleep. The catastrophe which hung over our heads was all too imminent. It needed but a breath of the truth to get abroad for each member of the Club to resign. In any case now, I greatly feared that we were scarcely likely to save ourselves.

At an early hour on the following morning Chetwynd telephoned to Clarkson.

The reply came back that the inspector would be with us in an hour.

I had many patients to see that morning, and, after attending them, passed through the laboratory on my way to Chetwynd's room. As I entered the large outer laboratory I found Kort engaged in conversation with an elderly, Jewish-looking man, evidently a foreigner. The moment Kort saw me he came forward in his usual deliberate and perfectly calm manner, and introduced the stranger as Mr. Myerstein.

"My lawyer," he added.

I rather wondered why Kort was seeing his lawyer that morning, but had not time to give serious thought to the matter. The sound of wheels on the gravel sweep arrested my attention, and I recognised Clarkson as he dismounted from the dog-cart which we had sent to the station to meet him. I myself conducted the inspector to Chetwynd's room, and we there began to discuss the whole case.

After listening to our story, Clarkson said, quietly: "I may as well inform you that for a long time the house has been under observation on account of Mr. Kort, but we could take no action until you called one of us in to investigate. From what you have told me I am now quite justified in demanding one thing."

"What is that?" I asked.

"An interview with Mrs. Kort. I wish to interview the lady without a moment's delay. You, Dr. Cato, are practically certain that Mrs. Kort is in possession Of information as to her husband's character which she is anxious to divulge?"

"Yes," I replied, "From the occasional short interviews I have had with her, I am certain on this point."

"Then matters are simplified at once," said Clarkson. "If both you gentlemen are prepared to certify to the lady's sanity while in her own apartments any evidence obtained there will be valid. Now, from what you have told me I shall insist on such an interview. We will, therefore, hold it at once. If the result should occasion it I can soon get the necessary warrant to arrest Mr. Kort. Is he in the house at present?"

"He is," I answered. "I saw him just before you arrived. Shall I send for him to come here?"

"I should be glad to see him," replied the inspector. I pressed the bell. "Tell Mr Kort that his presence is required here at once," I said to the servant, who bowed and withdraw.

"He will do what he can to prevent our interviewing his wife," I said. "That goes without saying. He will make his usual excuse that she cannot stand excitement."

The inspector smiled drily but said nothing. We waited in silence. It was clear to all of us that we were at last on the verge of the great crisis to which events had been gradually leading up. There was no possible loophole for the truth to escape, I felt sure that we could bring the authority of the law into requisition and demand a full explanation from Mrs. Kort. Once this was given the rest would be easy. Only one misgiving had 1 now, and that was caused by Kort's own extraordinary self-possession, and also by his presence in the Club.

"He must have returned to guard his wife," I said to myself; "he has come back to keep her in check. It is impossible that he should not be aware of his own danger. But what hold can he possibly have over her which would prevent her telling us the truth when we interview her alone?"

Suddenly the handle of the door clicked, and I involuntarily started in my seat. Kort quietly entered the room. He was holding himself erect as usual, his face looked quite calm, and his dark, somewhat melancholy eyes glanced from one of us to the other with an expression of well-assumed surprise. When his gaze fell upon Inspector Clarkson I saw him lift his heavy eyebrows just for a moment, and the dawn of a smile flitted round his lips.

Meanwhile the officer's keen grey eyes fixed themselves on his face with an impatient and penetrating look.

"You wished to see me?" asked Kort, in a low voice. He glanced at each of us in turn.

"We do," I answered, "pray sit down."

He sank into an easy chair and folded his arms.

"You are of course aware, Mr. Kort," I began, and as I spoke I rose to my feet, "that the position in which we in this Club are placed, owing to the continued occurrence of events of a suspicious nature, admits of only one line of action. Waiving for the moment the fact that nothing has been actually proved against you, Dr. Chetwynd and I have decided to request you to resign your partnership with us, on account of the strong circumstantial evidence against you. Further, since it is directly due to your instrumentality that the reputation of the Club and our own reputations are seriously involved, we desire to arrive at some explanation of this mysterious business. We have, therefore, decided to invoke the aid of the authorities."

"I fully comprehend you," answered Kort, quietly, "and I also entirely sympathize with your intentions."

"There is one point it is necessary to deal with without further delay," I continued. "From short and interrupted interviews with your wife"—as

I uttered the latter words I noticed the slightest contraction of the man's folded arms and the faintest hardening of the lines round his mouth. I went on quickly—"I am driven to believe that she can explain a good deal to us of what is still dark as regards these matters, and we, in the company of Inspector Clarkson, have decided to see her this morning in her own apartments. On more than one occasion she has been on the point of making some disclosure to me, but was prevented from doing so owing to her extraordinary attacks of lapses of memory, attacks which I fail to understand."

"I am not surprised that you cannot understand them," was Kort's answer. "I, who have watched her so closely, have utterly failed to come to any explanation myself. But with regard to your previous remarks. I am glad to have the opportunity of saying that I intend to resign my partnership and to leave England. But as to this interview which you propose holding with my wife, before you do so I must give you a word of warning." His eyes brightened with a deadly glitter as he looked full at me. "My wife's condition is a very precarious one. She is, as I have told you before, insane"—here he glanced at Chetwynd. "This wholesale invasion of her private roooms will be fraught with the utmost danger to her, and I refuse to let you see her." And he abruptly left the room.

The inspector shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing can be done," he said, "unless Mr. Kort will leave his wife free for us to see her."

"There is little hope of that, I fear," I said. "But we will watch for every chance, and let you know at once should any opportunity occur. Do not rest over this matter," I continued, to the inspector, "employ your keenest wits upon it, your most able detectives, make every inquiry in your power."

"I will, sir, and if you want me ring me up and I'll be here as soon as ever I can. At present I am afraid there is nothing further that I can do."

The man left the room. When we found ourselves alone I turned to Chetwynd.

"This is maddening," I cried. "The face of that unhappy woman upstairs haunts me. Have you not noticed her yourself, Chetwynd? While her lips refuse to betray that fiend, her eyes speak volumes, and whenever we have seen her, her misery has been apparent. If she is not already insane she soon will be, driven to it by that man's villainies. He is a monster in human shape."

"Like the Evil One, he has brains and knows how to use them," said Chetwynd, gloomily. "Yes, I sympathize with every word you say, Cato,

but how to solve the mystery, how to get at the truth is the puzzle. If Mrs. Kort cannot help us, to whom are we to apply?"

"Have you nothing to suggest?" I asked "You don't mean to say you will let him go, you will let him take his miserable wife away without settling his heavy account with us and with her, and with the law of the land? Chetwynd, I have often heard you boast that you never yet were beaten by a problem. Turn your mind on this. Break through this horrible suspicion and anxiety."

He made no answer. To and fro he paced the room in silence. His hands were thrust deep into his pockets, his head bent down.

"Has Kort said when he is leaving?" he suddenly asked.

"Not a word."

"Very well, I have an idea. It is this. I will go immediately and try to find out something of his past and of his wife's past. It is possible, through channels now at the disposal of everyone, to get information about her prior to her marriage, I am certain that it is only by going back and taking up the threads of his earlier days and then following them carefully that we shall get a solution of the present mystery. Will you, Cato, stay quietly here and watch events while I go and make inquiries? If I am not back to-night, you will hear from me."

"Very well," I answered, "anything you think best. Up to the present the members suspect nothing. There is no one specially ill; you can be spared without exciting suspicion."

The rest of the day passed without anything fresh occurring. At dinner Kort and I sat, one at the head, the other at the foot of the long dining-table. Conversation of the usual kind went on. Outwardly, all was sunshine, for the day happened to have been particularly fine, and some of the members of the Club were in specially high spirits. One lady in especial told me that she herself was deriving so much benefit by our treatment that she intended to bring her daughter to the Club the following week. As she said the latter words, she slightly dropped her voice.

"Why does not Mrs. Kort take her rightful position in this establishment?" she asked. "I met her for the first time last night What a very beautiful young woman she is, but she looked ill. Is she ill?"

"I am sorry to tell you that Mrs. Kort is a chronic invalid," was my reply.

"She told me last night that she occupied the Davos suite. Is she consumptive?"

"Not that I know of," I said.

"But why does she stay in those rooms? She scarcely ever leaves them. I thought they were intended for consumptive patients."

"Primarily so, but they are also suitable for other maladies."

"And what is hers? May I know?"

"I wish I could tell you," I answered. "Her illness puzzles us all not a little." As I spoke I raised my voice, and just at that moment encountered the keen, cold glance of Kort. We rose from the table without anything further being said with regard to Mrs. Kort.

Between nine and ten that evening Kort entered my sitting-room.

"I shall not keep you a moment," he said. "This is Wednesday; my wife and I intend leaving here on Friday morning."

"You make a hasty exit," was my answer.

"I could not stay an hour longer than absolutely necessary under this roof," was his reply. "I shall be glad to go. With regard to money matters and the terms of my partnership, I have placed all my affairs in the hands of my lawyer, Mr. Myerstein; he will correspond with you on these subjects."

I made no answer and merely bowed as he left me. He closed the door, and I sat on by the fire. What was the mystery? Beyond doubt Mrs. Kort held the key of the situation which for some inexplicable reason she refused to render up. Would those two go out of our lives, and the tragedy which concerned them remain for ever unsolved?

At eleven o'clock that night a messenger brought me a short note from Chetwynd.

Getting nearer. Not home to-night. Stay in to-morrow."

I burned the note in case it should fall into other hands, and then went to bed.

In spite of my depression Chetwynd's words had cheered me. I had every faith in his sagacity, and I knew that his note was pregnant with meaning. The following day passed quietly. Chetwynd did not return nor did I get any tidings of him. Kort was busy as usual, just as though he intended to remain at the Sanctuary Club for ever. I heard nothing with regard to Mrs. Kort, and a wild desire to enter her presence and forte the truth from her was abandoned as soon as it occurred to me.

In the afternoon I met Kort in the hall. I now observed with a certain degree of pleasure a strange restlessness in his manner; his face, too, was pale. He inquired at once where Chetwynd was. I replied briefly that he had left the Club on special business.

At a quarter past four that afternoon, as the usual custom was, the servant entered my sitting-room with the post-bag to ask for the country letters. I noticed as he spoke that he had several letters in his hand, and, as I put mine into the bag, he added the pile which he held. When he did this I happened to notice one in Kort's handwriting. It was addressed to his lawyer, Myerstein, at some place in the south-west district I gave it a passing thought, and then forgot it. The man left the room, and I sat on by the fire. Hours passed, I felt more and more depressed, and less and less inclined to move. Suddenly I started to my feet. How the time had gone by! It was nearly seven o'clock. I was about to leave the room to dress for dinner when the door was quickly opened and Chetwynd walked in.

"My dear fellow," I cried, grasping his hand, "what news?"

He closed the door, locked it; and returned to the middle of the room. His face was calm, but I knew him weU enough to be sure that beneath his apparent coolness a terrible furnace of excitement was consuming him.

"I have discovered information of the utmost importance with regard to Mrs. Kort," he said, quietly.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I will tell you," he continued. "It may explain a good deal. Her maiden name was Elkington. She was the only daughter of a certain Captain Elkington, who died when she was quite a girl, leaving her, however, sufficient money to maintain her in comfort. She was fond of science, and elected to take a medical course. She went to Vienna to study medicine in the schools there, and took her degree. While there she became engaged to our poor young friend, Philip Sherwin. Ah, you start!"

"I have reason to," I replied; "I cannot forget poor Sherwin's dying words: '*Ask him (Kort) about Isohel when I am gone.*'"

Chetwynd was silent for a moment.

"Pray listen," he said then; "there is more to follow. Miss Elkington was engaged to Sherwin. Kort appeared upon the scene. He was also studying medicine, and, doubtless, met his wife at the medical schools. The next event in the chain of circumstances was this. Miss Elkington broke off her engagement to Sherwin and married Kort. A few months afterwards the husband and wife left Vienna under extraordinary circumstances. These circumstances are not divulged. It is certain that Kort had done something in the highest degree discreditable if not felonious. There were, it appears, three people who knew his secret—his own wife, Philip Sherwin, and poor Ridley. As we know, Ridley died

under, to say the least of it, suspicious circumstances. Sherwin has also died; there is now only the wife whose lips Kort by some fiendish means has sealed."

"But," I interrupted, "if any such danger were to be apprehended from his wife's speaking, and he is the black villain we have every reason to believe him to be, why has he not made an attempt on her life?"

"That I cannot tell you. There is no doubt a reason why he does not dare to kill her. From our interviews it is evident that she is under the influence of some terrible fear. Our only chance is to see her when her husband and maid are out of the house, and the cause of terror, whatever it may be, withdrawn."

"But that will be impossible," I replied. "If things are as you suggest, he will take very good care not to leave her."

Chetwynd put his hand to his brow with a restless gesture.

"That is so," he answered, slowly. "We are indeed beset with difficulties, I wish I could learn what special business Kort is now transacting with that rascally lawyer Myerstein. I have inquired about him, and he bears a character, to say the least, shady. If we knew that we might get a clue. Well, I have done my best, and yet, now that I review all, we seem to have got no further. If we could only get the slightest idea of what this business is between Myerstein and Kort our way might be clear."

"Kort told me," I replied, "that he was leaving here on Friday, that is to-morrow morning. He further said that his affairs in connection with the Club were being wound up by Myerstein, and that Myerstein would communicate with us on the matter."

"There is more behind," said Chetwynd. "I wish I knew; I earnestly wish I knew."

"Kort wrote to Myerstein by the post which left here soon after four o'clock," I said, suddenly.

"He did? I would give my hand to see that communication. How do you know he has written?"

"I saw the letter when the servant brought me the post-bag."

Chetwynd lay back in his chair and clasped one of his hands across his eyes. The silence lasted a long time, so long that at first I thought my friend had fallen asleep; but a glance at him and the taut tendons of his hand clasped across his eyes told me that he was thinking long and deeply.

"Cato," he said, at last.

"Well?" I replied.

"Are you prepared in the cause of that unhappy woman to play a daring, underhand game, as well as to commit an indictable offence?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"There is no help for it," said my friend. He sprang suddenly to his feet. His face was all alive, his eyes shone with intense excitement. "We have got but two hours." he added; "if we do not succeed now all is lost."

"Explain yourself," I said.

"We must get possession of the letter which has been posted to Myerstein this afternoon."

"My dear fellow," I exclaimed, "that really is impossible."

"It is not impossible, but it is of course improbable, and we shall be running a great risk; but in view of the tremendous issues at stake, and the almost certainty that the letter contains a clue which would put the position into our hands, it is worth the attempt. My conscience allows me to make it. Will you come with me, and will you join me?"

"I dislike the thought of it," I said. "Hitherto, we at least have been—"

"Oh, pooh!" interrupted Chetwynd, "there are times when a man must sacrifice his so-called honour. The woman upstairs demands that of us. She is Kort's dupe, his victim; she must be rescued. I am not ashamed of what I mean to do. Will you join me or not?"

"I will join you," I said, slowly.

"Then stay here till I come back. Time is short. It is a quarter to eight now. I will return as soon as ever I can."

He hurried out of the room, leaving me alone, I rang the bell and told the servant who appeared that neither Dr. Chetwynd nor I would be able to be present at dinner.

"Ask Mr Kort from me to take the head of the table," I continued.

The man received my message, bowed, and withdrew. I spent the time of Chetwynd's absence pacing up and down the room. At half past eight he returned with a small, black bag.

"Come now, quickly," he said; "we must have a hansom. I have got the address It is number thirty-eight, Gledham Gardens, South Kensington."

"Tell me, what is your scheme?" I asked.

"A bold and risky one. You shall soon know."

Outside we hailed the nearest hansom.

"South Kensington Museum," whispered Chetwynd to the driver, "and a sovereign to yourself if you do it in three-quarters of an hour."

The man nodded and away we sped at a spanking trot.

"We will get out at the Museum and walk the rest of the way," said Chetwynd. "I find the letter will be delivered at half past nine. We shall be just in time."

He made no further remark till we alighted close to the Oratory. He then paid the man and we hurried off in the direction of Gledham Gardens.

"Are you going to bribe the postman?" I asked.

"No, hush! we are here." As he spoke we turned the corner of a large square, in the centre of which stood the usual garden.

"That is the house," he said, pointing in a certain direction. He glanced at his watch. "Twenty minutes past nine. Stand here and wait for me in the shade of this tree," he continued. He crossed the road and went up the steps of number thirty-eight to the hall door, where he stood for a minute or two. Then he again crossed the road and waited in the shade of the garden. Several people passed, and a policeman on his beat went slowly by, Chetwynd never stirred, and I watched him wondering, A double knock at a door close by caused me to start and turn round. The postman delivering the last post at the various houses was coming down the road. Outside number thirty-eight he stopped for a moment or two, drew some letters from his bag, glanced at them, ran up the steps, put them in the letter-box, and came down again. The moment he did so Chetwynd glided softly across the road and ran up the steps of the house. In less than a minute he was hurrying towards me.

"Round here, quick!" he said, catching my arm, and drawing me down a turning.

"What in the name of Heaven have you been doing?" I said.

"I have got it," he answered, as he raised his hand to a crawling four-wheeler. Directly we were inside he drew forth, to my utter amazement, the same letter which I had seen go into the post a few hours back.

"One moment before we read it, Cato," he said. He opened his little bag and took out a strange-looking sort of black silk pouch—the orifice oblong, and held in that shape by a band of copper wire.

"My post-bag," he whispered, "my own little patent post-bag, very simple. I passed this through the flap of Mr. Myerstein's letter-box, leaving these two little black silk threads hanging out and quite invisible. The postman put in his letters, four altogether, this one and three others. I then drew out my bag by the silk threads—it of course contained the letters. I removed the one and returned the others. Cato, we are thieves, but upon my word it is a lucky coup. There was just the chance of course of a servant happening to be in the hall. This I had to risk, but we are safe, I have succeeded. Now for the contents."

I had scarcely time to recognise the subtle ingenuity of his plot before he had torn open the envelope and glanced at the contents.

"By Jove!" he cried, "see here!"

I bent forward and in breathless excitement glanced over the page. It contained the following words:

> *Just a line to say all well. She did not dare to speak. Don't forget 11.45 to-night. Burn this.*
>
> *H.K.*

"You see it is tonight, whatever it is," I said. "My theory is right: there is a double game playing. We must get back with all possible speed. We must be in time to prevent the catastrophe, whatever it may be. There is no stopping now. We must act on this letter."

We left the four-wheeler, got into a hansom, and, offering the driver anything he wished to ask, told him to take us with all possible speed to the Sanctuary Club. The horse was a good one, and it was scarcely half-past ten when we dashed in through the gates.

"Straight up; we will take the bull by the horns," exclaimed Chetwynd, and we both raced up the stairs. In the corridor which led to the Davos suite we met Kort, evidently coming from his wife's rooms. Chetwynd immediately stepped up to him.

"Cato and I wish to see your wife at once," he said. "We will take no denial; we must see her now without an instant's delay."

"You cannot," replied Kort. He quickly retreated and stood before the door. His face was livid with suppressed fear.

"Stand aside, Mr. Kort," I said, briefly; "your game is up."

"You are both mad," he almost shouted, quivering with fury. "I tell you if you enter that room her death will be on your hands."

Chetwynd pushed him aside and laid his hand on the hasp of the outer door.

"All right, go!" cried Kort. He sprang suddenly aside and shot down the corridor.

We opened the door and entered the anteroom, but before we reached the inner door a rush of air through the valves fell on our ears. We dashed into Mrs. Kort's room. She was standing in the middle of the floor, her eyes were fixed on the door by which we entered, but I do not think she saw either of us. She was breathing quickly and clutching her head with both hands. Suddenly, with a hoarse cry she fell to the floor, struggling and writhing as if in a death agony, her features twitched and

her left hand clutched convulsively at her head. In an instant we were both kneeling beside her. With her hand she pulled aside a mass of her thick black hair, and a loud cry burst from Chetwynd's lips. What he had seen I did not know. He cried out: "The lever! the lever! Go and exhaust, man. She is dying, quick!"

I sprang to the door, closed it, and rushed downstairs into the room where stood the great lever that worked the exhaust apparatus. In five minutes the sweat was pouring from every pore in my body. I knew nothing save that a life hung on my efforts, nor did I cease working the great lever till the mercury in the barometer stood at fifteen inches. Then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Well done! You have saved her."

I looked into Chetwynd's eyes, and their expression froze the blood at my heart.

"I said before that Kort was a fiend," he continued. "but my wildest dreams never guessed the depths of his iniquity. Come."

"What is wrong? Can you not explain?" I cried.

"There is no time yet, I will tell you presently. Watch this lever," he continued, turning to two men-servants who had followed him. "If anyone approaches it or attempts to tamper with it, keep him off and send for us."

We both returned to the Davos suite. We entered Mrs. Kort's sitting-room. She was there and alone. Someone had raised her from the floor. She was lying on a sofa. Her face was utterly white and exhausted. When she saw us she stretched out both her hands.

"I am better; I can breathe again," she said.

"The danger is past now," said Chetwynd; "but stay quiet, do not attempt to speak."

"But am I safe? Has he gone?"

"You are quite safe," answered Chetwynd.

She gave a deep sigh.

"I can live," she said, in a low voice, "the agony is over, but I nearly died."

"It was touch and go," said Chetwynd, briefly, "but never mind, do not say anything just yet."

She closed her eyes. In a moment or two she opened them.

"He tried it once before," she said, in a dreamy voice, "once when I would not do what he wished. It was soon after my marriage, when Philip Sherwin threatened to expose him."

Again she closed her eyes, she seemed too weak for further conversation.

"We will not disturb her for a few moments," said Chetwynd to me; "she has gone through agony which only she can fathom."

"But what about Kort?" I inquired. "Is he likely to come back? Is he likely to do her a further injury?"

"He must have seen that his game was up and has probably left the Club," was Chctwynd's answer; "but if you will stay here with Mrs. Kort I will go and inquire."

He went out of the room. In a few moments he returned with a strong restorative in his hand.

"I guessed aright, the man has already left the Club," he said, looking at me, then kneeling beside Mrs. Kort he slightly raised her head. "Drink this off," he said, "you will be better afterwards." He held the glass to her lips. She drained the contents to the last drop and then sat up on her sofa.

"Oh, I am much better," she said, with a deep sigh, "much stronger."

"You need not fear your husband's return," said Chetwynd then, "we have taken measures to secure you against the recurrence of the horrible torture to which he has just subjected you. Why he did this horrible deed we have yet to learn, but you need fear no repetition of it."

"Has he left the house?" she asked.

"Yes, he will never come near you again, Mrs. Kort. Dr. Cato and I are both determined men, and we would give our lives to help you. Now pray tell us all you can of your most miserable story."

She looked full at us, the pupils of her eyes began to darken, she breathed more quietly, then she sat up once more on her sofa.

"I will tell you," she said. "Something seems to assure me that the danger is over; it will be a relief to speak."

Neither Chetwynd nor I said a word. She began the recital of her terrible wrongs in a low voice.

"Five years ago. I married Mr. Kort in Vienna. I was studying medicine there at the time. I had always a great love for science, and for medical science in particular. I was thought clever, I had brains, and I longed to use them. I was particularly interested in everything which related to psychological research. The relation of mind to matter was a problem to which I hoped to devote my life. When I first met Mr. Kort I was engaged to a man whom I then sincerely loved, and who most passionately loved me. His name was Philip Sherwin."

Neither Chetwynd nor I spoke a word. She looked up at us with a half questioning glance, and then continued: "I was engaged to him—would that I had married him! Since then he has died."

"He died in this house," I said, slowly.

"Ah! you know about him," she exclaimed. "Of course, I heard that he died here. You will tell me of his last hours presently."

"We will," said Chetwynd, "but pray proceed now with your own story, it is of paramount importance for the time being."

She went on quietly.

"Mr. Kort had a wonderful manner, a strange and overpowering fascination. He soon exercised an extraordinary influence over me. He often talked to me on the subject which interested us both. How each pearly cell in the brain, to the sight the merest protoplasm, is really the agent through which the lives, thoughts, and emotions of all humanity are manifested, and in which the greatest sacrifices, renunciations, vices, and virtues have their origin. One day he asked me if I would be his wife. I told him that I was engaged to Philip Sherwin. That fact seemed not to affect him in the least. He pursued his attentions, and one night in the presence of several friends he mesmerized me. After that my will seemed weakened, he put me into the mesmeric trance from time to time, and at last I was completely in his power. I gave up the man to whom I was engaged for the other man who had completely won what I supposed was my heart. I thought of no one but him. He had so transformed my nature that Mr. Sherwin's most passionate appeals had not the slightest effect upon me. It did not seem to me a sin to break his heart. I little knew to what all this was leading up. Mr. Kort and I were married, and a month or two later my husband gave me a glimpse into his true mind. I had always thought that his love of science was one of the strongest motives of his nature. I now saw that there was something else even stronger. He was intensely, cruelly ambitious. He wanted to be a great discoverer; he wished his name to be handed down to the race as the man who had proved one of the most abstruse and, to my thinking, appalling theories that ever dawned upon the human mind. He told me on one special awful night that it was his belief that every thought or motion arises, not from a spiritual source, but merely from a physical change in certain cells in the brain. He said it would be possible to prove this by stimulating these cells, so that character, moral sense, even conscience itself, and all that had hitherto been accepted as belonging to the spiritual part of our nature, would be really at the mercy of the physiologist. He said this could only be proved by

experiment; that such an experiment could not be tried on the animal world, but only on a human subject I listened to him with horror at his words, but still without following their main adrift.

"'Then thank God you can never prove your theory,' was my remark.

"'Do you say so?' he answered, and he fixed his eyes on my face. 'I can by experiment on a human subject.'

"I turned from him when he said this, with a sense of sudden and sick fear. We were both in his laboratory. I rose and attempted to leave the room. He called me back in that voice which I was powerless to resist.

"'You can be that subject,' he said, and he put his hands on my shoulders and looked into my eyes.

"'I! Never! Never! Are you mad?' was my reply.

"'I am not mad, I am sane. I repeat my words. You can be my subject.'

"There was an expression in his eyes which drove me to my knees.

"'What do you mean?' I cried. 'You terrify me, you frighten me. You would not hurt me, your wife? Oh, Horace! give this ghastly thing up! Leave it in the secret rooms of God's treasure house. We are better off with the old beliefs.'

"He laughed a cruel laugh.

"'Come, Isobel,' he said. 'I have not mesmerized you for a long time, I mean to do so now.'

"I cried aloud in my terror. He held both my hands and stooping looked into my eyes. I struggled against his influence. I think I screamed, then memory and sensation faded and I remembered nothing more. When I came to myself all was changed. I felt sick and bewildered, and with great difficulty could recall what had happened before I had sunk to sleep. My husband was in the room with me. He was holding both my hands and telling me to keep calm. After a time I found to my horror that I was wearing a small metal cap on a part of my head, I asked him what it meant and he told me.

"'I have made the experiment on you, Isobel,' he said. 'To you is given the honour of being the means of proving the most marvellous theory in all the world. For the purpose of my experiment I was obliged to trephine a certain portion of your skul. I was not able to bring you back to consciousness after the operation, and only succeeded in doing so by preventing the normal atmospheric pressure of fifteen pounds to the square inch from pressing upon your brain. The exhaust cup which you are wearing relieves that pressure, and as long as you wear it your life is safe.'

"'But am I never to be well again?' I asked.

"'That depends,' he answered, and he gave a cruel smile.

"Time went on, but there was no improvement in my condition. Once I tried myself to remove the exhausted metallic cup. I immediately fainted, and should have died had my husband not rapidly replaced it. But even when wearing it my memory often failed me. About a month after my husband's awful experiment we made the acquaintance of a certain Mr. Charles Ridley. He often came to see us, and my husband and he became great friends. On the occasion of one of his visits I suddenly fainted in his presence. He was alone with me, and I never could tell what he discovered or what he did not. My husband rushed into the room and soon put me right, but after that I knew that Mr. Ridley suspected my husband.

"A few weeks went by, when one day Philip Sherwin, the man whom I had once loved and so cruelly deserted, burst into my presence. He told me that Mr. Ridley had spoken to him; that he had put two and two together and knew all, He said that my husband was in reality a murderer. He uttered words which really opened my eyes. He declared that he meant to proclaim my husband's infamy to all the world. Into the midst of this scene Horace himself entered He spoke quietly, kept his temper, and presently got Mr. Sherwin to leave me. What followed that night I find almost impossible to describe. My husband had me completely in his power both soul and body.

"'Sherwin must hold his tongue,' he said. 'As to Ridley, he does not know all. He has not got Sherwin's scientific knowledge, and can never absolutely guess at the truth; but with Sherwin to aid him the thing will be common talk, I shall be ruined; I shall never be able to complete my discovery. I am desperate and would stop at nothing. You, Isobel, must wring a promise from him. If he does not swear to you that he will never reveal what he knows I will remove the metallic cup.'

"As bespoke I looked into his eyes and read my fate.

"'What is your life?' he said 'What is the life of any woman, any man, compared to the knowledge which through you I am gradually obtaining? I shall be the greatest psychological discoverer of my day. You must do what I wish and at once.'

"I yielded to his demands, for terror made me. I saw Philip and begged of him, because of our old love, to remain silent. I do not know how I spoke or how I argued; but, at last, driven to despair by my entreaties,

he made the promise. Until I gave him leave he would not betray my husband.

"A week afterwards Horace and I left Vienna. We went at once to Davos. When there, to my great astonishment, I became perfectly well, strong, and vigorous. I was not even obliged to wear the cup, and I much rejoiced at being able to do without it. My husband was more kind than he had been. I began to feel almost my usual health, but as soon as I went down into the valleys the oppression, loss of memory, and faintness returned. One day my husband told me that he had heard of your Club. He said that by special mechanical arrangements an artificial suite of rooms had been made here in which the atmospheric pressure could be kept the same as that of the mountain air at Davos. My husband was extremely anxious to become one of your partners. I had a few thousand pounds which my father left me. He asked me if I would give it to him in order that he might buy a share in the Sanctuary Club. This I was willing to do, as I wanted to return to England. He then brought me to England, and eventually I came here; but although I could live in comparative comfort in the Davos suite, the horror of my mind can never be described. More and more, day after day, my eyes were opened to the brutal character of the man to whom I had been united. He never minded what he said to me, and always explained his plans and intentions, assuring me as he watched my face that nothing was better for the success of his experiments than the manner in which I received them. Thus I knew all about him and all about his victims. It was he who incited Mr. Banpfylde to break the Prince Rupert's Drop, thus causing his death, while my husband rushed into the room in the dark and removed the jewel. Then most unexpectedly Mr. Charles Ridley appeared upon the scene. He knew enough about my husband's secret to make things unpleasant for him. My husband therefore devised his ruin and then his death. He put atropine into the bottle which contained the soda-water. Some of the contents got into the jockey's eyes with the usual result, a temporary paralysis of the pupils of the eyes. The jockey could not guide his horse, and thus the race was lost and Mr. Ridley ruined. But this was not enough. The next day the unfortunate man was supposed to have died by suicide. This was not the case. My husband shot him and proved an alibi in a most cunning way. On the previous day he himself took the photograph which, as you remember, saved him, and he put the plate into Mr. Ridley's camera in order that it should appear that Mr. Ridley had taken the photograph at a certain hour. It had in reality been taken twenty-four hours earlier, and Mr. Ridley had not taken any photograph that morning.

"Once again, it was my miserable husband who was in league with Mr. Sutherland to get the insurance money on the life of Harold Beauchamp. It was he who administered the poison to Mr. Beauchamp, and Mr. Sutherland and he were to divide the spoils between them. This scheme, as you know, failed owing to Dr. Chetwynd's genius. Mr. Sutherland, getting news of the removal of the ashes from Woking, committed suicide in terror, and my husband afterwards forged his confession, thus exonerating himself from all blame. Yes, few men have been so wicked, and the extraordinary thing is that he should have confided in me in the way he did; but he felt certain of my silence, knowing what the consequences would be to myself if I ever revealed the truth. There were moments, however, when I was so mad with misery and anguish, that I determined to risk all in order to let you know; but he invariably prevented me, and at last, seeing that I would creep away from my prison whenever I got the chance, he removed the cup. After this, my position became too awful. I was confined a close prisoner in my own rooms. My maid, Susan, was, of course, in his pay, and was in some ways a worse tyrant than even my husband himself. You have wondered, I dare say, why I did not send for you, why I did not speak. I dared not; I was in the utmost danger. My maid would have been listening by means of a tube which my husband had himself inserted into the wall between this room and my bedroom. She was ready the moment she heard me utter a word of our ghastly secret to communicate with him. He was then to release the valve and I should fall dead in this room. Now you know all. When you two forced your way in here an hour ago my husband saw that all was up, but at any cost he would seal my lips. He released the valve. But for Dr. Cato's quickness I should have been a dead woman."

She paused. For a time Chetwynd and I were silent, rooted to the spot by this horrible tale. Chetwynd was the first to speak; he turned to me.

"Stay with her, Cato, I must not waste a moment in loosing the hounds on Kort; he cannot have got far yet. He did not count on my inspiration when I sent you to the lever just in time."

"No, he thought the grave would cover the most ghastly part of his secret," was my answer; "but all is up with him now. Don't lose a moment, Chetwynd. That man must suffer the full penalty of his crimes."

Chetwynd went away. Two or three hours afterwards he came back. I was still in Mrs. Kort's room. She was lying on the sofa, her eyes closed. What her thoughts were I could not say. He handed me a telegram which he had just received. It was from Inspector Clarkson:

HAVE ARRESTED HORACE KORT AT SOUTHAMPTON.

"Thank God!" was my exclamation.

"The law will punish him," said my friend. "We will leave him for the present to his God and to the law of the land. I want to talk to you about someone else."

As he spoke he looked at Mrs. Kort.

"I am sending a nurse to look after you," he said; "your husband has left the Club and your wicked maid has also vanished. You need never fear seeing either of them again."

We went into the anteroom, as we did not like to leave Mrs. Kort too long alone.

"Can anything be done for her?" I asked.

"I hope so," he answered, briefly, "but do you know what has occurred?"

"I can partly guess, but I have not examined the skull."

"I have," he answered, "A portion of the right parietal bone has been depressed, which, as of course you know, would in ordinary circumstances cause all the symptoms of compression of the brain, stupor, lethargy, passing into coma, which unless relieved passes into death. To relieve this at the time was simple enough. Kort had merely to raise the bone and keep it raised till it had united with the surrounding bone. This he did not do, for it would have foiled his purpose and made experiments impossible, and so long as this state of things persisted, the ordinary atmospheric pressure would cause the natural train of symptoms of compression. But under a minus pressure, such as in our Davos suite, or under an apparatus locally applied, such as the metallic cup, Mrs. Kort would be well, as the portion of the bone would be raised and the pressure relieved."

"But what about the unhappy girl now? Is she to be a prisoner ail the rest of her days?" I cried.

"We must do what we can for her," answered Chetwynd; "but the condition of things is formidable. Our only chance is to raise the semi-detached bone, break away the callus that has formed, in order to give a fresh surface for healing, and trust to nature to unite it to the surrounding bone. The Davos rooms are excellently suited for our purpose, and she can remain there during convalescence. Then in a few weeks, if all goes well, we will gradually let in more and more atmospheric pressure and see how the bone stands it. If it has united and she suffers no uncomfortable symptoms, she can step out into the world a free woman."

"Will you undertake it?" I cried. "It will be the crowning triumph of your life."

" If she gives her consent," answered Chetwynd.

That evening we had another interview with Mrs. Kort. Chetwynd explained everything to her with the utmost fulness.

"With your medical knowledge you must understand what we mean," he said. "I will undertake the operation, and Cato will give you chloroform, provided you are willing; but I must frankly tell you that the danger is great, you may never come out of it alive."

"But if I do?" she asked, raising those wonderful sapphire eyes to his.

"If all goes well," he replied, "and I firmly believe and hope that all will go well, you will be a free woman on«e more."

"Then I consent," she answered. "How soon will you give me back my liberty?"

"To-morrow morning," said Chetwynd.

The operation was performed, and proved a complete success. In three weeks Mrs. Kort was convalescent. We gradually let in the atmospheric pressure. She showed no signs of distress, and came out of her prison well and eternally grateful. Nevertheless, a curious thing had happened. As she went into that awful prison house she did not return. She was a changed woman—strong and blooming, no doubt, but without any memory of the awful thing which had happened to her. Never from the day of her recovery has she been heard to inquire for her husband or to mention his name. All the memory of that fearful time in her life was blotted out as if it had never existed.

This was indeed well, for Kort was brought to trial and received the extreme penalty of the law for his awful crimes.

As to the maid, the police failed to find her, and she has doubtless long since left England.

Kort is dead. He lies in his dishonoured grave, and the world is all the better for his removal. But the Sanctuary Club lives and flourishes. Mrs. Kort is still a member, and the most invaluable help to Chetwynd and myself. Her lost memory she will never get again, but her wit, her brightness, and her beauty are the delight and surprise of all who come to the Club.

The End