

THE ORACLE OF MADDOX STREET

L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace

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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 werden in dieser Reihe ebenfalls veröffentlicht werden. Die interessanteste Protagonistin aus der Zusammenarbeit mit L.T. Meade ist 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 nicht alle Texte dieser Reihe zugänglich; sollte sich das ändern, werden sie ebenfalls in dieser Reihe wiederveröffentlicht werden.

Quelle: Deutsche Wikipedia-Seite.

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The Dead Hand

My name is Diana Marburg. I am a palmist by profession. Occult phenomena, spiritualism, clairvoyance, and many other strange mysteries of the unseen world, have, from my earliest years, excited my keen interest.

Being blessed with abundant means, I attended in my youth many foreign schools of thought. I was a pupil of Lewis, Darling, Braid and others. I studied Reichenbach and Mesmer, and, finally, started my career as a thought reader and palmist in Maddox Street.

Now I live with a brother, five years my senior. My brother Rupert is an athletic Englishman, and also a barrister, with a rapidly growing practice. He loves and pities me—he casts over me the respectability of his presence, and wonders at what he calls my lapses from sanity. He is patient, however, and when he saw that in spite of all expostulation I meant to go my own way, he ceased to try to persuade me against my inclinations.

Gradually the success of my reading of the lines of the human hand brought me fame—my prophecies turned out correct, my intuition led me to right conclusions, and I was sought after very largely by that fashionable world which always follows anything new. I became a favourite in society, and was accounted both curious and bizarre.

On a certain evening in late July, I attended Lady Fortescue's reception in Curzon Street. I was ushered into a small ante-room which was furnished with the view of adding to the weird effect of my own appearance and words. I wore an Oriental costume, rich in colour and bespangled with sparkling gems. On my head I had twisted a Spanish scarf, my arms were bare to the elbows, and my dress open at the throat. Being tall, dark, and, I believe, graceful, my quaint dress suited me well. Lady Fortescue saw me for a moment on my arrival, and inquired if I had everything I was likely to want. As she stood by the door she turned.

"I expect, Miss Marburg, that you will have a few strange clients to-night. My guests come from a varied and ever widening circle, and to-night all sorts and conditions of men will be present at my reception."

She left me, and soon afterwards those who wished to inquire of Fate appeared before me one by one.

Towards the close of the evening a tall, dark man was ushered into my presence. The room was shadowy, and I do not think he could see me at once, although I observed him quite distinctly. To the ordinary observer he doubtless appeared as a well set up man of the world, but to me he wore quite a different appearance. I read fear in his eyes, and irresolution, and at the same time cruelty round his lips. He glanced at me as if he meant to defy any message I might have for him, and yet at the same time was obliged to yield to an overpowering curiosity. I asked him his name, which he gave me at once.

"Philip Harman," he said; "have you ever heard of me before?"

"Never," I answered.

"I have come here because you are the fashion, Miss Marburg, and because many of Lady Fortescue's guests are flocking to this room to learn something of their future. Of course you cannot expect me to believe in your strange art, nevertheless, I shall be glad if you will look at my hand and tell me what you see there."

As he spoke he held out his hand. I noticed that it trembled. Before touching it I looked full at him.

"If you have no faith in me, why do you trouble to come here?" I asked.

"Curiosity brings me to you," he answered. "Will you grant my request or not?"

"I will look at your hand first if I may." I took it in mine. It was a long, thin hand, with a certain hardness about it. I turned the palm upward and examined it through a powerful lens. As I did so I felt my heart beat wildly and something of the fear in Philip Harman's eyes was communicated to me. I dropped the hand, shuddering inwardly as I did so.

"Well," he asked in astonishment, "what is the matter, what is my fate? Tell me at once. Why do you hesitate?"

"I would rather not tell you, Mr. Harman. You don't believe in me, go away and forget all about me."

"I cannot do that now. Your look says that you have seen something which you are afraid to speak about. Is that so?"

I nodded my head. I placed my hand on the little round table, which contained a shaded lamp, to steady myself.

"Come," he said rudely, "out with this horror—I am quite prepared."

"I have no good news for you," I answered. "I saw something very terrible in your hand."

"Speak."

"You are a ruined man," I said, taking his hand again in mine, and examining it carefully. "Yes, the marks are unmistakable. You will perpetrate a crime which will be discovered. You are about to commit a murder, and will suffer a shameful death on the scaffold."

He snatched his hand away with a violent movement and started back. His whole face was quivering with passion.

"How dare you say such infamous things!" he cried. "You go very far in your efforts to amuse, Miss Marburg."

"You asked me to tell you," was my reply.

He gave a harsh laugh, bowed low and went out of the room. I noticed his face as he did so; it was white as death.

I rang my little hand-bell to summon the next guest, and a tall and very beautiful woman between forty and fifty years of age entered. Her dress was ablaze with diamonds, and she wore a diamond star of peculiar brilliancy just above her forehead. Her hair white as snow, and the glistening diamond star in the midst of the white hair, gave to her whole appearance a curious effect.

"My name is Mrs. Kenyon," she said; "you have just interviewed my nephew. Philip Harman. But what is the matter, my dear," she said suddenly, "you look ill."

"I have had a shock," was my vague reply, then I pulled myself together.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"I want you to tell me my future."

"Will you show me your hand?"

Mrs. Kenyon held it out, I took it in mine. The moment I glanced at it a feeling of relief passed over me. It was full of good qualities—the Mount of Jupiter well developed, the heart-line clear and unchained, a deep, long life-line, and a fate-line ascending clear upon the Mount of Saturn. I began to speak easily and rapidly, and with that fluency which often made me feel that my words were prompted by an unseen presence.

"What you tell me sounds very pleasant," said Mrs. Kenyon, "and I only hope my character is as good as you paint it. I fear it is not so, however; your words are too flattering, and you think too well of me. But you

have not yet touched upon the most important point of all—the future. What is in store for me?”

I looked again very earnestly at the hand. My heart sank a trifle as I did so.

“I am sorry,” I said, “I have to tell you bad news—I did not notice this at first but I see it plainly now. You are about to undergo a severe shock, a very great grief.”

“Strange,” answered Mrs. Kenyon. She paused for a moment, then she said suddenly: “You gave my nephew a bad report, did you not?”

I was silent. It was one of my invariable rules never to speak of one client to another.

“You need not speak,” she continued, “I saw it in his face.”

“I hope he will take the warning,” I could not help murmuring faintly. Mrs. Kenyon overheard the words.

“And now you tell me that I am to undergo severe trouble. Will it come soon?”

“Yes,” was my answer. “You will need all your strength to withstand it,” and then, as if prompted by some strange impulse, I added, “I cannot tell you what that trouble may be, but I like you. If in the time of your trouble I can help you I will gladly do so.”

“Thank you,” answered Mrs. Kenyon, “you are kind. I do not profess to believe in you; that you should be able to foretell the future is, of course, impossible, but I also like you. I hope some day we may meet again.” She held out her hand; I clasped it. A moment later she had passed outside the thick curtain which shut away the ante-room from the gay throng in the drawing-rooms.

I went home late that night. Rupert was in and waiting for me.

“Why, what is the matter, Diana?” he said the moment I appeared. “You look shockingly ill; this terrible life will kill you.”

“I have seen strange things to-night,” was my answer. I flung myself on the sofa, and for just a moment covered my tired eyes with my hand.

“Have some supper,” said Rupert gently. He led me to the table, and helped me to wine and food.

“I have had a tiring and exciting evening at Lady Fortescue’s,” I said. “I shall be better when I have eaten. But where have you been this evening?”

“At the Appollo—there was plenty of gossip circulating there—two society scandals, and Philip Harman’s crash. That is a big affair and likely to keep things pretty lively. But, my dear Di, what is the matter?”

I had half risen from my seat; I was gazing at my brother with fear in my eyes, my heart once again beat wildly.

"Did you say Philip Harman?" I asked.

"Yes, why? Do you know him?"

"Tell me about him at once, Rupert, I must know. What do you mean by his crash?"

"Oh, he is one of the plungers, you know. He has run through the Harman property and cannot touch the Kenyon."

"The Kenyon!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. His uncle, Walter Kenyon, was a very rich man, and has left all his estates to his young grandson, a lad of about thirteen. That boy stands between Harman and a quarter of a million. But why do you want to know?"

"Only that I saw Philip Harman to-night," was my answer.

"You did? That is curious. He asked you to prophesy with regard to his fate?"

"He did. Rupert."

"And you told him?"

"What I cannot tell you. You know I never divulge what I see in my clients' hands."

"Of course you cannot tell me, but it is easy to guess that you gave him bad news. They say he wants to marry the heiress and beauty of the season, Lady Maud Greville. If he succeeds in this he will be on his feet once more, but I doubt if she will have anything to say to him. He is an attractive man in some ways and good-looking, but the Countess of Cheddsville keeps a sharp look out on the future of her only daughter."

"Philip Harman must on no account marry an innocent girl," was my next impulsive remark. "Rupert, your news troubles me very much, it confirms—" I could not finish the sentence. I was overcome by what Rupert chose to consider intense nervousness.

"You must have your quinine and go to bed," he said; "come, I insist, I won't listen to another word."

A moment later I had left him, but try hard as I would I could not sleep that night. I felt that I myself was on the brink of a great catastrophe, that I personally, was mixed up in this affair. In all my experience I had never seen a hand like Philip Harman's before. There was no redeeming trait in it. The lines which denoted crime and disaster were too indelibly marked to be soon forgotten. When at last I did drop asleep that hand accompanied me into the world of dreams.

The London season came to an end. I heard nothing more about Philip Harman and his affairs, and in the excitement and interest of leaving town, was beginning more or less to forget him, when on the 25th of July, nearly a month after Lady Fortescue's party, a servant entered my consulting-room with a card. The man told me that a lady was waiting to see me, she begged for an interview at once on most urgent business. I glanced at the card. It bore the name of Mrs. Kenyon.

The moment I saw it that nervousness which had troubled me on the night when I saw Philip Harman and read his future in the ghastly lines of his hand returned. I could not speak at all for a moment; then I said, turning to the man who stood motionless waiting for my answer:

"Show the lady up immediately."

Mrs. Kenyon entered. She came hurriedly forward. When last I saw her she was a beautiful woman with great dignity of bearing and a kindly, sunshiny face. Now as she came into the room she was so changed that I should scarcely have known her. Her dress bore marks of disorder and hasty arrangement, her eyes were red with weeping.

"Pardon my coming so early, Miss Marburg," she said at once; then, without waiting for me to speak, she dropped into a chair.

"I am overcome," she gasped, "but you promised, if necessary, to help me. Do you remember my showing you my hand at Lady Fortescue's party?"

"I remember you perfectly, Mrs. Kenyon. What can I do for you?"

"You told me then that something terrible was about to happen. I did not believe it. I visited you out of curiosity and had no faith in you, but your predictions have come true—horribly true. I have come to you now for the help which you promised to give me if I needed it, for I believe it lies in your power to tell me something I wish to discover."

"I remember everything," I replied gravely; "what is it you wish me to do?"

"I want you to read a hand for me and to tell me what you see in it."

"Certainly, but will you make an appointment?"

"Can you come with me immediately to Godalming¹? My nephew Philip Harman has a place there."

"Philip Harman!" I muttered.

¹ Godalming ist eine Kleinstadt in England mit heute ungefähr 20.000 Einwohnern und liegt am Fluss Wey etwa 60 Kilometer südwestlich von London, nahe Guildford in der südenglischen Grafschaft Surrey.

"Yes," she answered, scarcely noticing my words, "my only son and I have been staying with him. I want to take you there; can you come immediately?"

"You have not mentioned the name of the person whose hand you want me to read?"

"I would rather not do so—not yet, I mean."

"But can you not bring him or her here? I am very busy just now."

"That is impossible," replied Mrs. Kenyon. "I am afraid I must ask you to postpone all your other engagements, this thing is most imperative. I cannot bring the person whose hand I want you to read here, nor can there be any delay. You must see him if possible to-day. I implore you to come. I will give you any fee you like to demand."

"It is not a question of money," I replied, "I am interested in you. I will do what you require." I rose as I spoke. "By the way," I added, "I presume that the person whose hand you wish me to see has no objection to my doing so, otherwise my journey may be thrown away."

"There is no question about that," replied Mrs. Kenyon, "I thank you more than I can say for agreeing to come."

A few moments later we were on our way to the railway station. We caught our train, and between twelve and one o'clock arrived at Godalming. A carriage was waiting for us at the station, we drove for nearly two miles and presently found ourselves in a place with large shady grounds. We drew up beside a heavy portico, a man servant came gravely forward to help us to alight and we entered a large hall.

I noticed a curious hush about the place, and I observed that the man who admitted us did not speak, but glanced inquiringly at Mrs. Kenyon, as if for directions.

"Show Miss Marburg into the library," was her order. "I will be back again in a moment or two," she added, glancing at me.

I was ushered into a well-furnished library; there was a writing-table at one end of it on which papers of different sorts were scattered. I went forward mechanically and took up an envelope. It was addressed to Philip Harman, Esq., The Priory, Godalming. I dropped it as though I could not bear to touch it. Once again that queer nervousness seized me, and I was obliged to sit down weak and trembling. The next moment the room door was opened.

"Will you please come now, Miss Marburg?" said Mrs. Kenyon. "I will not keep you long."

We went upstairs together, and paused before a door on the first landing.

"We must enter softly," said the lady turning to me. There was something in her words and the look on her face which seemed to prepare me, but for what I could not tell. We found ourselves in a large room luxuriously furnished—the window blinds were all down, but the windows themselves were open and the blinds were gently moving to and fro in the soft summer air. In the centre of the room and drawn quite away from the wall was a small iron bedstead. I glanced towards it and a sudden irrepressible cry burst from my lips. On the bed lay a figure covered with a sheet beneath which its outline was indistinctly defined. "What do you mean by bringing me here?" I said, turning to the elder woman and grasping her by the arm.

"You must not be frightened," she said gently, "come up to the bed. Hush, try to restrain yourself. Think of my most terrible grief; this is the hand I want you to read." As she spoke she drew aside the sheet and I found myself gazing down at the beautiful dead face of a child, a boy of about thirteen years of age.

"Dead! my only son!" said Mrs. Kenyon, "he was drowned this morning. Here is his hand; yesterday it was warm and full of life, now it is cold as marble. Will you take it, will you look at the lines? I want you to tell me if he met his death by accident or by design?"

"You say that you are living in Philip Harman's house?" I said.

"He asked us here on a visit."

"And this boy, this dead boy stood between him and the Kenyon property?" was my next inquiry.

"How can you tell? How do you know?"

"But answer me, is it true?"

"It is true."

I now went on my knees and took one of the child's small white hands in mine. I began to examine it.

"It is very strange," I said slowly, "this child has died a violent death, and it was caused by design."

"It was?" cried the mother. "Can you swear it?" She clutched me by the arm.

"I see it, but I cannot quite understand it," I answered, "there is a strong indication here that the child was murdered, and yet had I seen this hand in life I should have warned the boy against lightning, but a death by lightning would be accidental. Tell me how did the boy die?"

"By drowning. Early this morning he was bathing in the pool which adjoins a wide stream in the grounds. He did not return. We hastened

to seek for him and found his body floating on the surface of the water. He was quite dead."

"Was the pool deep?"

"In one part it was ten feet deep, the rest of the pool was shallow. The doctor has been, and said that the child must have had a severe attack of cramp, but even then the pool is small, and he was a good swimmer for his age."

"Was no one with him?"

"No. His cousin, Philip Harman, often accompanied him, but he bathed alone this morning."

"Where was Mr. Harman this morning?"

"He went to town by an early train, and does not know yet. You say you think it was murder. How do you account for it?"

"The boy may have been drowned by accident, but I see something more in his hand than mere drowning, something that baffles me, yet it is plain—Lightning. Is there no mark on the body?"

"Yes, there is a small blue mark just below the inner ankle of the right foot, but I think that was a bruise he must have got yesterday. The doctor said it must have been done previously and not in the pool as it would not have turned blue so quickly."

"May I see it?"

Mrs. Kenyon raised the end of the sheet and showed the mark. I looked at it long and earnestly.

"You are sure there was no thunder-storm this morning?" I asked.

"No, it was quite fine."

I rose slowly to my feet.

"I have looked at the boy's hand as you asked me," I said, "I must repeat my words—there are indications that he came by his death not by accident but design."

Mrs. Kenyon's face underwent a queer change as I spoke. She came suddenly forward, seized me by the arms and cried:

"I believe you, I believe you. I believe that my boy has been murdered in some fiendish and inexplicable way. The police have been here already, and of course there will be an inquest, but no one is suspected. Who are we to suspect?"

"Philip Harman," I could not help answering.

"Why? Why do you say that?"

"I am not at liberty to tell you. I make the suggestion."

"But it cannot be the case. The boy went to bathe alone in perfect health. Philip went to town by an earlier train than usual. I saw him off myself, I walked with him as far as the end of the avenue. It was soon afterwards that I missed my little Paul, and began to wonder why he had not returned to the house. I went with a servant to the pool and I saw, oh, I saw that which will haunt me to my dying day. He was my only son, Miss Marburg, my one great treasure. What you have suggested, what I myself, alas, believe, drives me nearly mad. But you must tell me why you suspect Philip Harman."

"Under the circumstances it may not be wrong to tell you," I said slowly. "The night I read your hand I also as you know read his. I saw in his hand that he was about to be a murderer. I told him so in as many words."

"You saw that? You told him! Oh, this is too awful! Philip has wanted money of late and has been in the strangest state. He has always been somewhat wild and given to speculation, and lately I know lost heavily with different ventures. He proposed to a young girl, a great friend of mine last week, but she would have nothing to do with him. Yes, it all seems possible. My little Paul stood between him and a great property. But how did he do it? There is not a particle of evidence against him. Your word goes for nothing, law and justice would only scout you. But we must act, Miss Marburg, and you must help me to prove the murder of my boy, to discover the murderer. I shall never rest until I have avenged him."

"Yes, I will help you," I answered.

As I descended the stairs accompanied by Mrs. Kenyon a strange thought struck me.

"I have promised to help you, and we must act at once," I said. "Will you leave this matter for the present in my hands, and will you let me send a telegram immediately to my brother? I shall need his assistance. He is a barrister and has chambers in town, but he will come to me at once. He is very clever and practical."

"Is he entirely in your confidence?"

"Absolutely. But pray tell me when do you expect Mr. Harman back?"

"He does not know anything at present, as he was going into the country for the day; he will be back as usual to-night."

"That is so much the better. May I send for my brother?"

"Do anything you please. You will find some telegraph forms in the hall and the groom can take your message at once."

I crossed the hall, found the telegraph forms on a table, sat down and filled one in as follows:

COME AT ONCE—I NEED YOUR HELP MOST URGENTLY. DIANA.

I handed the telegram to a servant, who took it away at once.

“And now,” I said turning to Mrs. Kenyon, “will you show me the pool? I shall go there and stay till my brother arrives.”

“You will stay there, why?”

“I have my own reasons for wishing to do so. I cannot say more now. Please show me the way.”

We went across the garden and into a meadow beyond. At the bottom of this meadow ran a swift-flowing stream. In the middle of the stream was the pool evidently made artificially. Beside it on the bank stood a small tent for dressing. The pool itself was a deep basin in the rock about seven yards across, surrounded by drooping willows which hung over it. At the upper end the stream fell into it in a miniature cascade—at the lower end a wire fence crossed it. This was doubtless done in order to prevent the cattle stirring the water.

I walked slowly round the pool, looking down into its silent depths without speaking. When I came back to where Mrs. Kenyon was standing I said slowly: “I shall remain here until my brother comes. Will you send me down a few sandwiches, and bring him or send him to me directly he arrives?”

“But he cannot be with you for some hours,” said Mrs. Kenyon. “I fail to understand your reason.”

“I scarcely know that yet myself,” was my reply, “but I am certain I am acting wisely. Will you leave me here? I wish to be alone in order to think out a problem.”

Mrs. Kenyon slowly turned and went back to the house.

“I must unravel this mystery.” I said to myself, “I must sift from the apparent facts of the case the awful truth which lies beneath. That sixth sense which has helped me up to the present shall help me to the end. Beyond doubt foul play has taken place. The boy met his death in this pool, but how? Beyond doubt this is the only spot where a solution can be found. I will stay here and think the matter through. If anything dangerous or fatal was put into the pool the murderer shall not remove his awful weapon without my knowledge.”

So I thought and the moments flew. My head ached with the intensity of my thought, and as the afternoon advanced I was no nearer a solution

than ever. It was between four and five o'clock when to my infinite relief I saw Rupert hurrying across the meadow.

"What is the meaning of this, Diana?" he said. "Have you lost your senses? When I got your extraordinary wire I thought you must be ill." I stood up, clasped his hands and looked into his face.

"Listen," I said. "A child has been murdered, and I want to discover the murderer. You must help me."

"Are you mad?" was his remark.

"No, I am sane," I answered; "little Paul Kenyon has been murdered. Do you remember telling me that he stood between Philip Harman and the Kenyon property? He was drowned this morning in this pool, the supposition being that the death occurred through accident. Now listen, Rupert, we have got to discover how the boy really met his death. The child was in perfect health when he entered the pool, his dead body was found floating on the water half-an-hour afterwards. The doctor said he died from drowning due to cramp. What caused such sudden and awful cramp as would drown a boy of his age within a few paces of the bank?"

"But what do you expect to find here?" said Rupert. He looked inclined to laugh at me when first he arrived, but his face was grave now, and even pale.

"Come here," I said suddenly, "I have already noticed one strange thing; it is this. Look!"

As I spoke I took his hand and approached the wire fence which protected the water from the cattle. Leaning over I said:

"Look down. Whoever designed this pool, for it was, of course, made artificially, took more precaution than is usual to prevent the water being contaminated. Do you see that fine wire netting which goes down to the bottom of the pool? That wire has been put there for some other reason than to keep cattle out. Rupert, do you think by any possibility it has been placed there to keep something in the pool?"

Rupert bent down and examined the wire carefully.

"It is curious," he said. "I see what you mean." A frown had settled on his face. Suddenly he turned to me.

"Your suggestion is too horrible. Diana. What can be in the pool? Do you mean something alive, something—" he stopped speaking, his eyes were fixed on my face with a dawning horror. "Were there any marks on the boy?" was his next question.

"One small blue mark on the ankle. Ah! look, what is that?"

At the further end and in the deep part of the pool I suddenly saw the surface move and a slight eddying swirl appear on the water. It increased into ever widening circles and vanished.

Rupert's bronzed face was now almost as white as mine. "We must drag the pool immediately," he said. "Harman cannot prevent us; we have seen enough to warrant what we do; I cannot let this pass. Stay here, Diana, and watch. I will bring Mrs. Kenyon with me and get her consent."

Rupert hurriedly left me and went back to the house across the meadow. It was fully an hour before he returned. The water was once more perfectly still. There was not the faintest movement of any living thing beneath its surface. At the end of the hour I saw Mrs. Kenyon, my brother, a gardener, and another man coming across the meadow. One of the men was dragging a large net, one side of which was loaded with leaden sinkers—the other held an old-fashioned single-barrelled gun.

Rupert was now all activity. Mrs. Kenyon came and stood by my side without speaking. Rupert gave quick orders to the men. Under his directions one of them waded through the shallows just below the pool, and reaching the opposite bank, threw the net across, then the bottom of the net with the sinkers was let down into the pool.

When this was done Rupert possessed himself of the gun and stood at the upper end of the pool beside the little waterfall. He then gave the word to the men to begin to drag. Slowly and gradually they advanced, drawing the net forward, while all our eyes were fixed upon the water. Not a word was spoken; the men had not taken many steps when again was seen the swirl in the water, and a few little eddies were sucked down. A sharp cry broke from Mrs. Kenyon's lips. Rupert kept the gun in readiness.

"What is it?" cried Mrs. Kenyon, but the words had scarcely died on her lips before a dark body lashed the surface of the water and disappeared. What it was we none of us had the slightest idea; we all watched spell-bound.

Still the net moved slowly on, and now the agitation of the water became great. The creature, whatever it was, lashed and lunged to and fro, now breaking back against the net, and now attempting to spring up the smooth rock and so escape into the stream. As we caught a glimpse and yet another glimpse of the long coiling body I wondered if there was a snake in the pool.

"Come on, quicker now," shouted Rupert to the men, and they pressed forward, holding the creature in the net, and, drawing it every moment

nearer the rock. The next instant Rupert raised the gun, and leaning over the water, fired down. There was a burst of spray, and as the smoke cleared we saw that the water was stained with red blood.

Seizing the lower end of the net and exercising all their strength the men now drew the net up. In its meshes, struggling in death agony, was an enormous eel. The next moment it was on the grass coiling to and fro. The men quickly dispatched it with a stick, and then we all bent over it.

It was an extraordinary-looking creature, six feet in length, yet it had none of the ordinary appearance of the eel. I had never seen anything like it before. Rupert went down on his knees to examine it carefully. He suddenly looked up. A terrible truth had struck him—his face was white.

“What is it?” gasped poor Mrs. Kenyon.

“You were right. Diana,” said Rupert. “Look. Mrs. Kenyon. My sister was absolutely right. Call her power what you will, she was guided by something too wonderful for explanation. This is an electric eel, no native of these waters—it was put here by someone. This is murder. One stroke from the tail of such an eel would give a child such a dreadful shock that he would be paralysed, and would drown to a certainty.”

“Then that explains the mark by lightning on the dead child’s hand.” I said.

“Yes,” answered my brother. “The police must take the matter up.”

Before that evening Mr. Harman was arrested. The sensational case which followed was in all the papers. Against my will, I was forced to attend the trial in order to give the necessary evidence. It was all too damning and conclusive. The crime was brought home to the murderer, who suffered the full penalty of the law.

Finger Tips

I was sitting in my drawing-room late one afternoon in the end of a sunny and hot July, when Miss Kate Trevor was announced.

My brother Rupert and I had just been carrying on a discussion as to where we were to spend the holidays. We had come to no decision, and Kate's appearance on the scene was very welcome.

"How nice to catch you at home, Di!" she exclaimed. "How do you do, Mr. Marburg?" she continued, turning to my brother and shaking him heartily by the hand. "I was afraid you had flown like the rest of the world."

"We have neither of us yet made up our minds where to go," he answered. "The Continent does not appeal to us, and we have neither time nor money to visit places further afield."

"Where are you going, Kate?" I asked. "You look as if you needed a holiday too—you are quite thin and pale. Is anything the matter?"

She coloured slightly and glanced at Rupert.

"You want me to go away?" he said.

He rose lazily from his chair and left the room.

The moment he had closed the door behind him, Kate turned to me.

"With your usual penetration, Diana," she said, "you see below the surface. There is something the matter, and I think—I do think that if relief does not come soon, I shall lose my senses."

As she spoke, her dark, lovely eyes filled with tears; the colour mounted into her cheeks, leaving them the next instant paler and more wan than ever.

"You look quite ill," I said. "What can be the matter?"

"I can put the case in a nutshell," she replied. "My difficulty and my misery are both common enough. I am on the eve of becoming engaged to one man, while with all my heart I love another."

"You love Captain Cunnynggham," I said. "I know all about that, remember. I have seen him, and I approve. You, as his wife, will be one of the most envied women in the world."

As I spoke, I glanced at her with all the admiration I felt for so beautiful a girl. Kate was a friend of mine, but I knew little or nothing about her people or her belongings; but it was only necessary to look into the depths of her soft black eyes to know that through some ancestor she must hail from the sunny south. No other clime could produce such raven locks and such a clear olive complexion. Her little features were straight and perfect in their own way, her lips coral red, her teeth a row of pearls.

Now the piquant little face was quite wan with suffering, and the coral lips drooped with all the pain of indecision.

"You are engaged to Captain Cunnynggham," I said. "Have you ceased to love him, that you speak of your engagement in such terms?"

"My engagement to Jim is broken off," she replied. "Not that I love him less; on the contrary, I care more for him than I ever did before; but circumstances are against us both, and even Jim himself has said that we must not think of marriage for the present."

"Then what about your all but engagement to another man?" I asked.

"I am coming to that," she answered. "It is a long story, Diana, and I can only give you its mere outline. I met six months ago a man well known in London society, of the name of Sir Edward Granville. He fell in love with me and asked me to marry him. I refused, but he would not take my refusal. He asked me again, and I told him that I was engaged to Jim.

"Three months afterwards poor Jim lost a lot of money on the Turf, and on making inquiries I found that he had done this in Sir Edward Granville's company. He was nearly distracted, and came to me himself and suggested that as far as any tie between us existed, we were to be absolutely free. The poor fellow was quite broken-hearted when he made this proposal. I agreed to it, for there seemed no help for it; but since then I have been sorry that I yielded.

"Immediately after my engagement with Jim was broken off, Sir Edward brought fresh pressure to bear. My mother exercised all her influence to induce me to accept so wealthy a man, and to give her the gratification of knowing that I had made a brilliant match. My father, who has lately been terribly short of money, added his intreaties to my mother's. Still I was firm, although my life for the last six months has been little short of misery.

"A week ago Sir Edward Granville called and asked to see me. I was forced to see him, although I longed to refuse. But to my great relief I found his attitude towards me considerably altered. He said quite frankly that he had been thinking over matters. That he loved me as much as ever, but on his honour as a gentleman he would no longer persecute me. He asked me to trust him.

"I was surprised and grateful, and I said that I would. He then begged for a proof of my trust. He said that he had taken a house on the river at Goring for the season, that he was making up a house party, and that Captain Cunyngham was to be one of the guests. His special request was that my mother and I should spend a week at Goring.

"I promised. I cannot say whether I was doing right or wrong, but I promised. Mother and I go to Goring on the 1st—that is next Thursday. And, Diana, now for your part in this comedy or tragedy, for Heaven only knows which it will turn out. Sir Edward has sent you a special invitation. It seems that he has met you in the house of a mutual friend. Here is his invitation. You must accept it for my sake."

She tossed a letter into my lap. I opened and read it. It ran as follows:

Dear Miss Marburg,

Unless you have already made definite plans for your holiday, will you do me the honour of joining my house party at Goring on the 1st? Your friend, Miss Trevor, will be there. She is bringing you this note, and I hope will persuade you to come.

Yours truly,

Edward Granville.

"It is very kind of Sir Edward," I said, "but I scarcely know him. What can he want me for?"

"Never mind what he wants you for, Di. Just remember that I want you—that you may be of the most enormous use to me. Come you must. You dare not leave me alone in my present predicament."

"I don't like it," I said, rising and beginning to pace up and down the room. "I wonder you arranged to go. You don't consider poor Captain Cunyngham, when you allow yourself to be made love to by another man in his presence."

"Sir Edward has promised not to make love. Don't be nasty and spiteful, Di. Say at once that you will come."

As she spoke, the beautiful girl put her arms round my neck, and looked into my face with such pleading in her eyes that it was impossible to resist her.

"Of course I'll come," I answered. "I like you far too well to leave you in the lurch."

"I knew you would not fail me," she exclaimed. "Now I shall be quite happy, and shall be equal to the occasion, whatever it may be."

A few moments later she left me, having arranged that she and her mother would call for me on Thursday morning and drive me to Paddington.

When we were alone, I told Rupert where I intended to spend the first few days of my holidays.

"Do as you like of course, Di," was his answer; "but I wish you were not going."

"Why?" I asked.

"I would rather my sister did not stay in Sir Edward Granville's house."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"Only this," he said. "Granville is not the sort of man I care about, though I have heard nothing definite against him. Go now, however, as you have promised, and tell me when you come back whether my intuitions are correct or not."

Rupert's words gave me a vague sense of uneasiness; yet I was glad I had promised not to desert Kate in this crisis in her affairs.

On the following Thursday, Mrs. Trevor, Kate and I went down to Goring. Our host met us at the station and gave us all a most cordial welcome. As we drove to the house I watched Sir Edward with considerable curiosity. I had met him before, but until now I had no reason to feel any special interest in him. He was a clean-shaven, spare-looking man, with restless grey eyes and a hard mouth. It needed but a glance to show me that his was the character to carry through his own wishes regardless of pain to others.

Almost by second nature, as these thoughts coursed through my brain, I glanced at his hands, which were ungloved. I noticed the long and broad thumb of an iron will—the spatulate fingers of precision and determination. The man who has these characteristics sticks at nothing to obtain his ends. I have seen them in the hands of great generals and also in the hands of great criminals. I looked from the baronet to Kate, who was talking in her liveliest style and looking more sprightly and bewitching than I had ever seen her.

As it was late in the day when we arrived, we were shown at once to our respective rooms in order to dress for dinner. I had brought my maid with me, and sat to rest for a few minutes while she unpacked my

things. In less than an hour I went down to one of the big drawing-rooms, where from twenty to thirty guests were assembled. Amongst them I saw Kate, who, in a very simple white dress with a bunch of lilies in her belt, looked fragile and lovely.

She had the gracious bearing and regal appearance of a young queen, and as she turned to talk to a man who stood near I did not wonder at Sir Edward's infatuation. For something had brought the final touch of beauty to those delicate features, and there was an expression in her eyes which only love itself could awaken. The softness joined to the fire, the timidity joined to the strength, were enough to captivate any man, and Sir Edward, not far off, saw this look directed to another man. I watched him although he did not know it, and I saw him clench one of his hands tightly, while his face turned livid.

Jim Cunnyingham was a young guardsman by profession. He was fair and stalwart and squarely built. I knew him well, having met him before on many occasions; but although at first sight he looked as well and handsome as ever, I soon observed a change in him. Some suspicious crow's feet were beginning to show round his merry blue eyes, his face was thin, and when he was not looking at or talking to Kate, he had the expression of one quite bowed down by care.

I sank into a seat, and my host came up and introduced me to one or two people. Presently he brought Captain Cunnyingham to my side.

"Will you take Miss Marburg in to dinner, Cunnyingham?" he said.

The meal was announced, and we went through the library into the spacious dining-room in a distant wing.

We were scarcely seated before Captain Cunnyingham bent towards me.

"I cannot tell you," he said, "how glad I am that you are here. Have you come with any intention of reading our hands?"

"I have come for rest, not on business," was my reply.

"All the same, I shall beg of you to have a look at my hand," he said.

"Your curious profession interests me."

"But have you any real belief in my art, or do you treat it as an amusing pastime?" I said.

"I cannot say that I absolutely believe in palmistry," he said, "but I have sufficient faith in it to treat it with respect, and also to have recourse to it. A fortnight back I had my character and future told me by one of your craft in London, and am anxious to have an independent opinion to see if the two correspond."

"To whom did you go?" I asked.

"Madame Sylvia, in Chester-street."

"May I ask whether she gave you a good character or the reverse?"

"I am quite willing to answer you," he replied, with a grim laugh; "her prognostications were the reverse of pleasant. She said, too, that my hands were most extraordinary; she photographed them and had casts taken, and gave me a long written opinion. I went to see her with Sir Edward. He, apparently, has the greatest faith in her."

Sir Edward must have overheard the last words, for he bent towards me from his place at the head of the table.

"I take the deepest interest in palmistry, Miss Marburg," he said, "and if you will honour me by looking at my hand by-and-by I shall be much obliged."

I replied gladly in the affirmative—I was all too anxious to study Sir Edward's palm.

He resumed his conversation with his right hand neighbour, and I turned to Captain Cunyngham.

"Have any of Madame Sylvia's predictions come to pass?" I asked.

"Yes, I am sorry to say," he replied; "I had a very bad time lately at Goodwood with Sir Edward, and other things have also gone wrong," he added.

"You mean that you have lost money?"

"Yes, far more than I could afford. I owe at the present moment between twenty-five and thirty thousand pounds, and how I am to pay it, Heaven only knows. I backed Sir Edward's horse for the Cup. He told me it was a certainty. I have lost heavily also at *écarté*. You don't know, perhaps, that our host is himself a confirmed gambler. But he is one of the lucky ones."

Captain Cunyngham sighed. After a moment he said again:

"Luck follows his footsteps as certainly as it eludes mine. He has great wealth, and is always adding to his possessions. And the climax of his good luck, Miss Marburg, is—"

"What?" I asked.

"The winning of Kate Trevor."

"You are mistaken," I said, "he has not won her."

"Watch her, and tell me that again," was his answer.

Sir Edward had been obliged to take a married lady into dinner, but he had managed that Kate Trevor should sit on his other side. He was looking at her now as he talked, and she was returning his glance. Bright as stars were her eyes, and her merry laughter reached our ears. Sir Edward was telling her about an ornament of great value which he had in

his possession, and I heard him say that he would show it to the entire party after dinner. When we returned to the drawing-room Kate made her way to my side.

"Now tell me exactly what Jim has been talking to you about," she said.

"He said that Sir Edward Granville is invariably lucky," was my answer, "and that amongst all the treasures which fate and fortune have tumbled into his lap, the greatest of all will soon be his."

She did not affect to misunderstand me—tears filled her eyes.

"Does Jim really think that?" she said.

"I am afraid he does," I replied.

She was silent, the pretty white hand which lay on her white dress trembled—with a sudden nervous movement she broke off one of the lilies at her belt, and began to pull it to pieces.

"I heard you and Sir Edward talking about a jewel," I interrupted—"a jewel or an ornament?"

"An ornament," she said—"a curious thing of great value which Sir Edward has inherited from a gipsy ancestor. He told me that since his great-grandfather married a true Romany the luck of his house has been proverbial. She brought the ornament into the family, and as long as the head of the house holds it he obtains all he wishes in love, war, or business."

"But if it goes?" I said.

"Then he dies, goes bankrupt, or morally ruined."

"And does he believe this nonsense?" I queried.

"As much as you believe in the lines on the human hand," she answered.

"But, come, here is Sir Edward, and he has brought the ornament with him."

Our host now stood in the centre of the great hall and held what looked like a Maltese Cross in his hand. The ornament measured six inches each way, and was a perfect blaze of diamonds and rubie. None of the stones were particularly large, but their number was bewildering.

Sir Edward looked around him, his eyes met mine, and he suddenly to my surprise put the cross into my hand.

"You would like to examine it, Miss Marburg?" he said.

I looked carefully at the glittering and lovely thing.

"What is it worth?" I asked.

"Considerably over thirty thousand pounds," was his reply.

Then he added, dropping his voice, and speaking as if to me alone, although Miss Trevor and Captain Cunningham heard every word he uttered.

"The miracle is that I have kept this cross so long, for it has a very special market value. One big stone is generally safe, for a thief cannot well dispose of it; but if this were stolen it could be easily broken up and the diamonds and rubies, none of them specially large in themselves, could be disposed of separately. Now I will return it to my safe in the library—but pray wait for me, Miss Marburg, for I have a special favour to ask of you."

He was absent for about two minutes—when he returned he came to my side.

"Will you give us a short *séance*?" he asked. "I beg for this favour at the request of my guests."

I paused for a moment, then I said quietly:

"I will do so on a special condition—will you allow me to read your hand first of all?"

He coloured, and I saw a look of annoyance in his eyes, but his reply came quickly.

"With pleasure. May I conduct you to the library?"

I seated myself in a chair at the head of the room, and one by one those who wished to consult me entered. Sir Edward was the first. His hand bore out all my ideas with regard to his character. There was obstinacy, which could amount to cruelty; there was a passionate and absorbing selfishness; and, what gave grim significance to those two qualities an overmastering sense of superstition. I mumbled a few words in praise of what small virtues he possessed, and as I saw that he was all too anxious to get the ordeal over, quickly dismissed him.

One by one several of the visitors consulted me, and at last it was Captain Cunningham's turn. I bent over his hand with great interest. There was no question that the good qualities in it largely predominated, but I was disappointed to perceive how a certain weakness of character in his face was repeated in his hand. I gave him as fair an estimate as I could of his better qualities, and he left me with a smile of satisfaction on his face. Poor fellow! I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. Beyond doubt he was in Sir Edward's power, and Sir Edward could be cruel to gain his ends.

On the following morning but one I had an insight into the true motive of this house party. Kate Trevor, Captain Cunningham, and I had not

been invited to meet together in Sir Edward's house without a very definite reason.

The morning in question happened to be a glorious one, and I awoke earlier than usual. I determined to get up and have a stroll by the river's bank before breakfast. Accordingly I rang for my maid, Parker. It was a few moments before she appeared. When she entered the room, her usually placid face was blazing with excitement.

"Oh, miss!" she cried, "such a dreadful thing has happened in the night."

"What do you mean?" I answered.

"The house has been broken into, miss, and Sir Edward Granville's diamond and ruby cross has been stolen."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed. "Why, he keeps it in a safe, which is supposed to be burglar-proof."

"Yes, miss, but the safe was opened in the night and the cross taken. None of the other jewels or plate were touched. For that matter, Sir Edward hadn't much down here. The cross is gone, however, and they say it takes the family luck away with it—Sir Edward is almost off his head."

"How was the theft discovered?"

"The butler thought he heard footsteps early this morning, miss, and he went to arouse Sir Edward, but when they got to the library it was too late, for Sir Edward's desk was broken open, and also the tin box where he keeps the keys of the safe. The safe has been burgled and the thief has escaped."

"Is it known how he got in?"

"That's the strange thing, miss, for neither doors nor windows, as far as we can tell, have been touched. The notion is that someone in the house has done it—but who, is the question. Sir Edward has telegraphed for detectives to Scotland Yard. I never saw a gentleman in such a state. Fit to tear his hair, he is; the local police are with him now."

I hastily dressed and went downstairs.

Several of the guests were standing about in different groups in the hall. Our host was nowhere to be seen. The subject of the robbery was the one topic on everyone's lips.

Who could have done it? and how was it done? were the problems which riveted the attention of each of us at this moment. Presently a door to our right opened, and Sir Edward, accompanied by a police inspector, joined us.

"My dear friends," he said, "you must not let my loss make you all miserable. Do go out and enjoy yourselves. Breakfast will be ready presently."

"But what steps do you propose to take, Sir Edward?" said an elderly gentleman now coming forward. His name was General Raglan.

"I have sent for detectives from Scotland Yard," was Sir Edward's answer. "Until they arrive nothing can really be done."

"When do you expect them?"

"Probably between nine and ten o'clock."

"Then," said General Raglan, glancing round at us all, "I think I speak in the names of everyone present. We should like to be in the house when your detectives arrive—in order to give the police all the help in our power towards the elucidation of this mystery."

"I am very much obliged to you, General Raglan," said Sir Edward, a look of relief stealing over his face. "I did not like to ask you, but it will be best for all of us to have the matter properly investigated."

"That is precisely what I have informed Sir Edward," said the police inspector, now speaking for the first time.

Shortly before ten o'clock the London detective arrived, and at General Raglan's suggestion we all assembled in the hall. We stood about there in groups, and I found myself not far from Captain Cunnynggham. His face was pale and he looked strangely nervous. Once he came close to me and glanced at me as if about to say something, but the next instant he turned aside, evidently unable to disclose what troubled him. His depression was remarked by more than one person present, but strange to say Kate Trevor did not seem to notice it.

Kate was in wonderfully good spirits. There were spots of vivid colour on her cheeks caused by the excitement of the hour. She laughed and talked merrily, and was eager in her conjectures with regard to the nature of the burglary. I saw Captain Cunnynggham glance at her once or twice in surprise, and I must own that her manner troubled me not a little. But after watching her closely, I came to the conclusion that a great deal of her riotous spirits was put on, and that in reality she felt as strangely nervous as the rest of us.

In about half-an-hour Sir Edward joined us. He walked quickly through the hall, and stood on a raised platform at one end. His face looked hard and white, and I never liked his expression less.

"I am extremely sorry, ladies and gentlemen," he said, in a loud voice, "that this most unfortunate affair has happened while you are my guests. It is very kind of you to assemble here to listen to what I have

got to say. Inspector Fawcett from Scotland Yard has been with me for the last half hour, and, with the aid of the local police, we have gone most carefully into the matter.

"The inspector and the police have arrived at the unanimous conclusion that the robbery has been effected by some person in the house, or at least by some person in collusion with someone outside. This is abundantly proved by the fact that no windows or doors have been tampered with, that there are no footmarks on the soft grass outside, that there is not the slightest sign of disturbance in any of these directions.

"By a lucky chance Inspector Fawcett has discovered a clue, and this clue he wishes to put to the test at once. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am put into a most unpleasant predicament. Inspector Fawcett cannot put his clue to the test without your collaboration. But if you refuse to help me I have not a word to say."

"We will help you," said General Raglan. "I speak, I am sure, in the names of everyone present?"

"Certainly," echoed each voice in the hall.

Sir Edward bowed.

"Thank you," he said; "the matter is of great importance to me, and I should like the clue so miraculously afforded to be brought to its just conclusion."

"What is the clue?" asked General Raglan.

"I will tell you. Yesterday afternoon a painter came here to varnish a cabinet in which I keep the billiard balls. This cabinet was put into a cupboard in order not to be used until it was dry. To my certain knowledge no one entered the cupboard between the time when the painter returned me the key and the time of the burglary. At three o'clock this morning my butler drew my attention to the cupboard door. I found that the lock had been forced, and the thief, who had previously broken open my desk and also the tin box where I keep the key of the safe, had entered, opened the safe, and removed the diamond pendant. Having committed the theft, he returned the key to the tin box, which he locked, but he was unable to lock the desk or the door of the cupboard, having no keys for the purpose.

"Now, pray listen. By a remarkable chance it has just been discovered that the thief on entering the cupboard, must have bent down to open the safe, and in doing this rested his hand upon one of the knobs of the newly-varnished cabinet, and, the varnish not being dry, *an impression of the palm of his hand* has been left upon it."

An audible murmur of sensation ran through the group as Sir Edward made this startling disclosure.

"I have had the knob removed," he continued, "it is now in the possession of Inspector Fawcett. The request I have to make is that each person will in turn go into the library and submit his or her hand to Inspector Fawcett for comparison with the impression on the knob. The same ordeal I shall ask my servants to submit to. I have one thing further to say. Among my guests there is a lady who is specially skilled in the marks of the hand. Miss Marburg, by Inspector Fawcett's request, I have to ask you if you will kindly give your services in the impending examination?"

"Certainly, Sir Edward," I replied.

"We will all gladly submit our hands for examination," said a gentleman present.

The London detective now motioned me to follow him, and the three police officers and I entered the library, and closed the door.

Inspector Fawcett showed me the newly-varnished wooden knob, holding it carefully in his hand as I gazed at it.

The next moment I could have screamed aloud, for the impression of the hand which I looked at I instantly recognised. I knew the markings of the human hand too well to have the least doubt. I was gazing at the reverse impression of the left hand of Captain Cunyngham, which I had studied so carefully two nights before.

"Do you recognise this impression, Miss Marburg?" said Inspector Fawcett, looking me full in the face.

"I do," I replied instantly, "but if you proceed with the examination you will quickly discover it for yourself."

"You will not say any more?"

"No," I answered, "nothing more at present."

He bowed to me, and then proceeded quickly with his examination.

One by one the visitors filed into the library, one by one their hands were compared with the impression of the hand on the knob—they then retired again. At last it was Captain Cunyngham's turn. His face was very white, but he entered the room with a firm and steady step. His eyes met mine—something in the expression of my face must have put him on his guard. He looked full at the detective.

"Before you put my hand to the test," he said, "I wish to tell you that I know absolutely nothing of this matter."

Detective Fawcett gave him a quick glance, then looked at me, and then went through the usual examination.

“Will you, Miss Marburg,” he said, “give your careful attention?”

We both bent over the Captain’s hand, looking carefully at the lines. One by one they corresponded with those on the wooden knob.

“There is no question, sir, that the lines on the knob and the lines in your hand correspond exactly,” said the detective. “Is not that your opinion, Miss Marburg?”

“I am sorry to say it is,” I answered. “It is not within the bounds of possibility that any other hand could have made the impression which we are now looking at. Line for line, mount for mount, everything precisely corresponds.”

“It is enough evidence for my purpose,” said the detective. “Captain Cunnynggham, it is my painful duty to ask Sir Edward Granville to give you in charge for breaking open this safe and stealing the diamond and ruby pendant.”

Captain Cunnynggham reeled against the wall as the man said these words. It was just as if someone had struck him a physical blow. He did not utter a word, nor attempt to defend himself.

The impression on the knob was horrible in its perfect clearness—the palm of the hand was absolutely distinct.

Inspector Fawcett, who seemed intensely interested, now held the knob in the same position in which it was when on the cabinet, in order to see as far as possible how the thief had held it in order to get the necessary impression. As he did so, the light fell full on the cabinet and I started forward. I saw for the first time something else. This was none other than the clear impression of four finger-tips on the varnished surface of the cabinet just beyond the knob. These finger-tips revealed the exact minutiae of the skin ridges.

I felt myself turning pale as I noticed them, for I saw that, by leaving these marks of the finger-tips, poor Captain Cunnynggham had doubly convicted himself of the crime; as surely, in fact, as if he had confessed it fully. I remembered Professor Galton’s² well-known and exhaustive researches on finger-prints, the fact which he has abundantly proved being that no two persons in the world have the same skin ridges, and also that these ridges never alter in the most remote degree, except in growth, from babyhood to old age. The evidential value of these skin ridges is so great that where they are brought into requisition no escape is possible. Beyond doubt, the finger tips on the varnish would settle

² Gemeint ist Francis Galton (1822–1911) (zur Zeit der Abfassung dieser Kurzgeschichte noch nicht zum Ritter geschlagen), einer der Väter der Daktyloskopie.

the matter at once without further discussion, and I felt forced to draw the detective's attention to them.

He smiled grimly.

"That is true," he said. "These marks will of course clinch the matter. They are most important evidence."

"Well," I said, "for my own satisfaction will you kindly allow me to take an impression of Captain Cunnyingham's finger tips and compare them with those marked on the cabinet?"

"There is no objection," was the answer.

In a few moments I had melted a square bar of sealing-wax and taken an impression of the finger tips of Jim Cunnyingham's left hand, the hand in question.

"Give me one moment while I make a cursory examination," I said, and, taking out my lens, I began to focus first one finger tip and then the other, and finally to examine the impression on the varnish.

The next instant I uttered a cry, and seizing Captain Cunnyingham by the hand, began wringing it in an ecstasy of delight, for I could not find words to express myself coherently at the moment. Both the Captain and Inspector Fawcett must have thought that I had suddenly gone mad.

"Cleared, acquitted, free!" I almost shouted. "The correspondence of the palm is nothing when we have got this. By what means, or by what hand that impression was made, it is absolutely certain that it is not yours—certain beyond all possibility of doubt—and what is far more important, we have a clue to the identity of the real man, to an absolute certainty, for he has left on that cabinet a sign manual that will differentiate him from every other human being at this moment living on our planet."

As I uttered these words I looked up. Sir Edward Granville had entered the room. He had evidently been startled by hearing my loud and excited tones.

Inspector Fawcett was now closely comparing the finger prints.

"What is all this excitement about, Inspector?" asked Sir Edward.

"A very queer business, I am afraid, sir. There has been some deep game played somewhere. The impression on this varnish corresponds exactly with this gentleman's hand as far as the palm goes, but the finger tips don't fit."

"The finger tips!" cried the baronet. "What do you mean, Miss Marburg? What are you all talking about? There are no lines on the finger tips."

“Oh, aren’t there, Sir Edward?” I said, trembling with excitement as a fantastic thought flashed through my brain. “Let me show, you.” And I held the sealing wax once more in the flame. “Kindly press the top of your middle finger on the wax, Sir Edward, and I will explain it to you.” “Nonsense!” he cried angrily, drawing back. “What does this mean? Are you mad, Miss Marburg?”

“Mad or sane, I should like you to do it. Inspector Fawcett, will you request Sir Edward to give us the impression of one of his finger tips in this wax?”

“You had better do it, Sir Edward. What the young lady says is quite true. It will be on these finger tips that the evidence will turn. They are the important things, and I shall be obliged to get the impression of all the finger tips of the people at present residing in this house.”

“Please give us yours first, Sir Edward,” I said, once more warming the wax.

“It is necessary that it should be done, Sir Edward,” said the Inspector. “The lack of correspondence between the impression of the palm and the finger tips on the varnish proves that either Captain Cunyngham had someone else’s finger tips, or that someone else had Captain Cunyngham’s palm. Now to counterfeit a palm is comparatively easy by reproduction in india-rubber from a cast—to counterfeit the skin ridges is next door to impossible. The deduction therefore is that someone wished to have Captain Cunyngham accused of the crime and has counterfeited his palm knowing nothing of the infinitely more important evidential value of finger tips.”³

“By the way,” added the man, turning suddenly to Jim Cunyngham, “have you ever had a cast taken of your hand?”

“About a month ago in London,” was the immediate answer.

“Ah! by whom?”

“Madame Sylvia of Bond Street.”

The detective turned to Sir Edward.

“You may as well be the first to have your fingers printed, as you are here,” he said.

The baronet instantly obeyed, and as he made the impression on the wax, I saw the three police officers exchange significant glances. They

³ Nach diesem doch sehr einfach Beweis erlaube ich mir, auf den wunderbaren Roman “The Red Thumbmark” von Richard Austin Freeman hinzuweisen, wo ein einzelner Daumenabdruck doch mit sehr viel mehr Aufwand und wissenschaftlicher Akkuratess als gefälscht entlarvt wird.

knew quite as well as I did, that they were in the presence of the guilty man.

"Now," said the detective, "we will proceed with the others."

He went to the door which led into the hall as he spoke, and asked General Raglan to come forward. A few words were sufficient to put the General in possession of the new and startling facts which were now before us.

One by one the guests, in a state of great excitement, appeared, and each and all submitted to the new test. Kate Trevor was the last to have the impression of her fingers taken. The detective cleared his throat and looked around him. He asked me to come forward and in silence I looked at the different impressions.

The last of all to be examined was that of Sir Edward Granville, the cores of whose finger tips corresponded exactly ridge by ridge even to the most remote and minute particulars with the impression made on the varnish.

I stood back in silence. The detective and I exchanged one glance.

"Will you explain?" he said to me.

I tried to speak, but no words would come.

"Then I will do it," he said. But before he could speak, Sir Edward Granville came forward. He pushed the detective aside and stood facing his guests.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "it is unnecessary for Inspector Fawcett to explain himself. The news you have to learn can be communicated in a few words. You see before you in the person of your host the guilty man. Why I concocted so desperate a scheme, and why at the last moment, by the most unlooked-for fatality, my guilt has been proved beyond a shadow of doubt, is not for me now to explain, nor will I enter into all my motives for this action. You will, doubtless, none of you, wish any longer to be my guests; carriages will therefore be ready to convey you to the railway station in an hour. I have now but one thing to do, and that is to congratulate Miss Marburg on her marvellous detective abilities."

As he spoke he bowed to me, and turning, without another word, left the library.

Then Sir Edward's guests found their tongues. What they said, how much they wondered is not for me to say.

But I have the happiness to relate that this story aroused such an interest in the fortunes of Captain Cunyngham that several members of that strange house party put their heads together, and between them

managed to extricate the young guardsman from his difficulties. Early in the following spring I had the happiness of seeing Kate Trevor united to the man she loved.

Sir Penn Caryll's Engagement

Sir Penn Caryll's engagement was the talk of all his friends. He was a man of about forty, of good family, fairly rich, and boasting of two nice country seats. He also kept a racing stable and added thereby considerably to his income. Sir Penn was so good looking, so cheery and gay of heart, that he was a great favourite, and more than one eager mother thought of him as an excellent husband for her daughter, and more than one pretty girl looked at him with eyes of favour.

Nevertheless Sir Penn had proved himself impervious to the charms of all fair women, until a certain day when a bright-eyed, Tasmanian girl, who went by the name of Esther Haldane, brought him to her feet. The girl in question was only nineteen, was to all appearances poor, and seemed to have no relations in London, except a brother, who was considered by those who knew best to be a somewhat questionable possession. Karl Haldane was a man without apparent profession, and with no certain income, and there was little doubt that he and his sister lived, before the engagement, more or less as adventurers.

After Sir Penn declared his attachment to Miss Haldane, however, he placed his country seat in Sussex at her disposal, putting her under the charge of his aunt, a certain Mrs. Percival, and going there himself at intervals. The wedding was to take place early in July. Sir Penn received the congratulations of his friends, and Miss Haldane was thought one of the luckiest girls of the day.

The time was the fourth of May. I was dining alone and was somewhat surprised when Sir Penn's card was brought to me with a request scribbled in writing that I would see him without a moment's delay. I hurried at once into his presence. His face was as a rule remarkable for its serenity, and I was startled when I observed the change in it.

"I fear you are not well," I said. "I hope there is nothing wrong."

"I am afraid there is," he replied. "May I tell you the object of my visit?" I asked him to seat himself, and prepared to listen with attention.

"I have decided to ask you to help me," he said abruptly. "An ordinary detective would be worse than useless. I have been brought into contact lately with the most extraordinary and uncanny phenomenon, and unless matters are put right without delay, I shall find myself in a serious financial difficulty. You may be certain I would not say these things to you without grave reason, and I must ask for the utmost secrecy on your part."

"Of course," I replied.

He bent forward and looked at me keenly.

"Have you ever, in all your experience of occult matters, come across a case of thought-reading in which you were satisfied that imposture was absolutely excluded, and that the thoughts of one person were really conveyed to the brain of another? Do such things exist in this world of reality?"

I paused before replying.

"You ask me a strange question, Sir Penn, and if you want my true opinion I do think such things possible."

"You think so? Who, then, can be safe? Now listen to my own personal experience. You know, of course, that I am the owner of a number of racehorses. Horse-racing is an expensive game, and my expenses are principally met by successful speculation on my horses. Now, of course, there are many secrets in a stable, such as which is the best horse for a certain race, or the capacity of any other horse. These things have to be kept from the outside world. The most important of all our secrets are obtained by what we call 'trials.'

"I will briefly explain. We have, say, half-a-dozen horses, and we wish to know which is the best for a certain distance. The horses are led out and mounted, and the trial gallop takes place. Now the horse that wins the race may not by any means be the best of the half-dozen horses that we wish to prove, for if such were the case anyone watching the trial would at once know our secret. So to keep the matter dark the various saddles are weighted with different weights, giving heavier loads for some horses to carry than others. In this manner we can not only calculate which is the best horse, but can keep the information from outsiders. For a slightly weighted bad horse will beat a heavily weighted good one.

"No one but the trainer and myself know what weights are applied to the saddles, and the whole thing is done just at the last moment before the horses start. After the trial only my trainer and myself know which

is the best horse. We then discuss what we will do and which horse I shall support in the betting market. Is that clear to you?"

"Perfectly," I replied.

"You doubtless also comprehend that if these matters were known to an outsider, he could profit immensely by backing my best horse, and could prevent me getting my money on at a good price."

"I understand."

"Then pray listen. For some time I have been certain that secrets with regard to the weights in the saddles have eked out, to my own immense loss and to the great gain of someone else. On looking carefully into the matter, I find that the bookmakers in London, through whom the fiend who is trying to ruin me must execute his commissions, have information with regard to the horses almost immediately after the trial takes place at Lewes.

"Now I will tell you of the last case. A trial took place of my horses on the twentieth of April on the Downs at eleven o'clock in the morning. On that occasion even my trainer did not know the weights that they carried. In order to make things quite safe I kept the knowledge altogether to myself. The people who witnessed the race were my aunt, Mrs. Percival, Miss Esther Haldane, the young lady to whom I have the honour of being engaged, I myself and my trainer. My bay horse Victor won the trial, though he was not first by any means in the race. We four talked the matter over on the Downs; we then walked home quietly all together. On reaching home at twelve o'clock I wired to my agent in cipher to invest heavily on Victor, whose price was twenty to one.

"That same afternoon I received the astounding information that he was first favourite at three to one, a large commission already having been executed. Now this commission was executed at Tattersall's, in London, at half-past eleven, actually within half-an-hour after the trial was known, and also half-an-hour before any of us reached home from the Downs. The thing is astounding, for even if anyone did secretly watch the trial it would be impossible, without knowing the weights, to tell which was the best horse. That knowledge was only known to us four, and to no one else in the world. You have, therefore, this fact to face. *A certain piece of information is known to four people on an open Down in Sussex at ten minutes past eleven, and yet that information is acted on in London twenty minutes later.* There is no question of my trainer playing me false, as he could not possibly communicate the information in the time I have mentioned, and I have come to the conclusion that

some extraordinary thought-transference is the only thing to fall back upon."

I was silent for a moment, then I said suddenly:

"Do you happen to remember, Sir Penn, if the sun was shining on that last occasion?"

"Why?" he asked, in some surprise.

"Because there would be just the possibility of your trainer heliographing the information."

"That is a clever suggestion," he exclaimed, "but it won't do. It happened to be a cloudy day."

"Then for the moment I see no solution," I replied. "May I ask if you know anyone who has ever threatened to read your thoughts?"

"Certainly I do. Karl Haldane, my future wife's brother, who calls himself a clairvoyant. To be plain with you, Miss Marburg, I have no particular fancy for Mr. Karl Haldane; but there is no doubt he is extremely clever, and Esther is devotedly attached to him. He certainly would be the last man who would try to ruin me. We must try to get at the solution in some other way."

"Nevertheless, may I ask you a question or two?" I said. "Was Mr. Haldane at your house when the affair you have just mentioned took place?"

"No, he had been staying with us, but he left early that morning."

"I should like to see him," I said, after a pause.

Sir Penn's eyes brightened.

"You are wrong in suspecting for a moment that Haldane has anything to do with the matter," he said. "Nevertheless if you like to meet him, you can: I am particularly anxious to introduce you to Esther. I have a big party down at Lewes just now. A trial of my horses for the Derby takes place early next week. Will you come to my place and be present at the trial? Can you do so?"

"Of course I will come. I would throw over any engagement for such an important, and I must say, to me, interesting case."

"Will you come to-morrow? I will meet you by the four o'clock train."

I promised to do so, and after thanking me warmly Sir Penn took his leave. Truly a queer case had now been put into my hands. Sir Penn was regarded amongst all his friends as a practical man; nevertheless, in his difficulties he consulted me, the occultist and believer in thought reading. One thing certainly was evident, either what had happened

was a genuine case of thought transference, or a very subtle form of fraud. The latter seemed truly to be impossible.

When I reached Lewes the next day Sir Penn was waiting for me. On arriving at Court Prospect, the name of his beautiful house, I found a large party assembled in the hall. Mrs. Percival, Sir Penn's aunt, was present, and was dispensing tea. I had met her before, and she came forward now and greeted me kindly.

"It is very good of you to come. Miss Marburg," she said, "and I have delighted more than one person present by saying I am sure you will give a *séance* while you are with us. Oh! of course I quite believe in palmistry, and Mr. Haldane, one of the best clairvoyants I have ever known, will arrive this evening. We shall doubtless have a most interesting time. Have you yet met Mr. Haldane?"

"No."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of introducing two kindred spirits. Ah! Esther, my dear, come here."

A slim, remarkably graceful girl rose from her seat at a little distance. She strolled leisurely towards us. I am tall, but Miss Haldane was half a head taller. Mrs. Percival made the necessary introduction. Miss Haldane looked at me slowly. All her movements were slow. She then opened her magnificent eyes a trifle wider than their wont and held out her hand.

"I am glad to see you," she said in a cordial tone.

She did not utter another word, but went back to her seat. I stood silent where she had left me. I no longer wondered at Sir Penn's infatuation. It was not the beauty of the girl that so impressed me; she was beautiful, for all her features were good; but from a strict standpoint there were prettier girls in the room. No, Miss Haldane's beauty lay in the extraordinary and almost wicked magnetism of her eyes. Those eyes knew too much. I did not think they looked good—they saw too deeply beneath the surface. Even I, callous to most things of that sort, felt my heart beat uncomfortably fast after Miss Haldane's extraordinary and penetrating glance.

"You look tired, Miss Marburg," said Mrs. Percival. "Won't you have some tea?"

She handed me a cup which I took mechanically. I was still thinking of Miss Haldane and her eyes. I felt quite sure that no one could see her without thinking of her eyes alone, the rest of her beautifully moulded face, graceful pose and slim young figure being all forgotten in the effect that the eyes produced.

In the drawing-room just before dinner I was introduced to Miss Haldane's brother. To my astonishment he was in every respect her opposite. He was a fair haired, stoutly built, ugly man. He was not only ugly but his expression was absolutely unpleasant. Nevertheless, he too had his charms. When he spoke you forgot the ugly features, the sunken eyes, the leer round the mouth. His voice was good, nay, beautiful. His intellect was undoubtedly powerful, and he had a sympathising manner which appealed more or less to all those to whom he spoke. He happened to be my neighbour at dinner on that first evening, and before the meal came to an end I had arrived at the conclusion that he was a most remarkable and most interesting man.

On the next day several of the guests took their departure, and Esther Haldane and I found ourselves alone. We went for a walk together on the Downs and afterwards sat in the cosy boudoir where she made tea for me.

"You must allow me to congratulate you," I said suddenly. "You are a very lucky girl."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Need you ask? You have won the affections of Sir Penn Caryll. You are about to marry him. I have known him since I was a child. You are in luck, Miss Haldane. You are going to marry a good man."

She fixed her eyes on me, the pupils dilating until they looked black; then very slowly the lovely eyes filled with tears. She dropped on her knees beside me.

"You are a clairvoyante," she said; "so, for that matter, is Karl. I am afraid of Karl, and very little would make me afraid of you. Will you look at my hand?"

She held it out as she spoke. I examined it attentively. I saw, to my regret, many bad points. The Mount of Mercury was sunken, the heart-line was chained, and Jupiter was remarkable for his absence. All these things proclaimed this girl, according to my creed, to be unscrupulous, even cruel. She did not look cruel, and I had no reason up to the present to doubt her honour. Nevertheless, I dropped her hand with a sigh. It was quite an unusual one for a girl to possess.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Am I so very bad?"

"I have seen more promising hands," I answered.

"Tell me what you see?"

"Do you really wish to know?"

"Yes."

"Forewarned is forearmed," I said, after a moment's pause. "Your circumstances are happy. Miss Haldane, and there is no reason why you should not lead a good and honourable life to the end of the chapter. Nevertheless, your hand points to a certain unscrupulousness in your character. For instance, I should not care to submit you to a very great money temptation."

"Oh, you are horrible!" she cried. Her face grew very white. "You frighten me; you talk nonsense, and yet, and yet it is nonsense that Karl believes in."

She began to rub the offending palm.

"I am going to my room," she said. "Your words have worried me."

Her manner was somewhat that of a spoilt child. I smiled to myself, but an unaccountable weight of suspicion and dread was hanging over me. Why should I believe anything evil of a beautiful girl like Esther Haldane? What object could she have in injuring the man whom she was about to marry? I felt ashamed of my own suspicions; nevertheless they would not quite go away.

On the next day the trial of Sir Penn's horses would take place, and on that evening just when dinner was coming to an end, Miss Haldane raised her voice and called across to her brother, who was sitting at the other end of the table.

"Karl," she cried, "Sir Penn has been asking if you will not give us a *séance* this evening. You have been very disagreeable not to do so before. You will oblige, I think I may say, *all* the company. Will you not consent on this occasion?"

The ladies bowed and smiled, and the men bent forward to watch what Haldane would do. I thought, or was I mistaken? that he gave his sister a sudden glance of understanding. Then he said with that slow sort of drawl which now and then characterised him:

"I shall have much pleasure in doing what the company wish."

Sir Penn expressed his satisfaction, and there was a chorus of approval from one and all.

When we met in the drawing-room Haldane came to the front.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have been asked to give to-night a demonstration of thought transference. This I am willing to do on a condition. I want you all to be absolutely satisfied that there is no deception. I will therefore leave the room in company with someone now present, who shall remain with me until I return.

"While I am away, a certain sentence employing intelligible words shall be decided upon by two persons in the room. All the company may

know the sentence if they so will, but it is essential that two should do so in order that there may be a witness that my interpretation of the said sentence is correct. The two persons who know the sentence will stand with their backs towards me at one end of the room; I will stand with my back towards them at the other. And if those two people faithfully think of that sentence, and of that sentence alone, I promise to read their thoughts and to say what it is. Do you all consider that fair?"

"Certainly," said Sir Penn, "and I will bet you ten pounds, Haldane, that you fail."

"Done, Sir Penn," was the answer.

A discussion as to who should be the person to accompany Mr. Haldane outside the room, and to choose the sentence within the room, immediately ensued.

"In view of my wager, ladies and gentlemen," cried Sir Penn, "I think I may claim the right to be one of those to choose the sentence. As to my partner, I will leave the choice to yourselves."

I could see by Sir Penn's manner that he was determined to clear up the terrible suspicion that was haunting him.

"I will be your partner, if I may," said Miss Haldane, and she went up to Sir Penn, and laid her hand on his arm.

He seemed to hesitate for a minute; then he looked into her eyes, and said softly:

"As you wish."

Sir Penn then turned to me.

"Miss Marburg," he said, "may I ask you to accompany Mr. Haldane from the room?"

"With pleasure," I replied. I felt interested and excited, and was determined that no trickery should be played if I could prevent it.

Karl Haldane and I repaired to the library, and in exactly ten minutes' time returned to the drawing-room. There was a dead silence. Sir Penn and Miss Haldane stood at the further end of the room. Karl Haldane at once took up his position, with his back towards them. Being, as it were, in the position of umpire, I determined to watch the experiment with the utmost vigilance, and accordingly I crossed the room to where Sir Penn and Miss Haldane were standing. I stood near them and took care to watch them both. They were absolutely still. Miss Haldane's hands were locked in front of her, her features were as quiet as though she were sitting for her photograph; her face was whiter than usual,

and her strange eyes had a staring look. I thought the expression of the eyes unnatural—she looked as though she were about to cry.

Fully five minutes passed, and then Mr. Haldane called out in a clear, musical voice—

“I have received the impression. Judge, please, if I am correct. I presume I must thank Sir Penn for this copybook sentence. It is as follows:—

“*If you are using your powers for fraudulent purposes, beware!*”

“Am I right, Sir Penn?”

The Baronet’s reply was to come forward, open his pocket-book and hand the clairvoyant a bank-note for ten pounds. There was quite a sensation in the room.

Later that same evening Sir Penn found an opportunity of seeing me alone.

“What do you think of this affair?” he asked.

“I cannot tell you what I think of it at present,” was my answer. “I am certain there is an explanatory cause, although what it is I cannot say. Let me think over everything most carefully. Mr. Haldane leaves to-morrow, does he not?”

“Yes, thank goodness, by an early train. I don’t like the man and I cannot pretend that I do. I wish with all my heart he were not Esther’s brother. But let us turn to something more important. To-morrow the trial of my horses takes place. I propose that you and Mrs. Percival and Miss Haldane and myself go to see it. I have a colt named Fritz, who is in for the Derby, and I think I know what he can do. If the trial goes as I expect, Fritz will be the winner. The result of to-morrow’s trial must be kept absolutely a secret until I can operate in the market. If I find that the information again gets out—well, I shall cease to keep racehorses.”

“I will do my very best for you, Sir Penn,” I answered.

When he had left me I went to my room—there I sat down and prepared to think out the enigma. Hour after hour went by, and my busy brain felt on fire. Each moment I became more and more certain that some fraud was being worked by Mr. Haldane, but he could scarcely manage this without an accomplice, and terrible as the idea was, if there really was foul play, his sister must stand in that position towards him. Her hand betrayed her. What her motive was it was impossible to tell, but her hand made crime a contingency not too remote to contemplate.

As I thought and thought I became certain that if only I could discover the key to that evening’s performance, I should have also the key to the entire position. I recalled the scene vividly. Miss Haldane’s curious and rigid attitude; the peculiar expression in her eyes. I thought of all

the ordinary methods of communication—hand language—lip language. Both were out of the question. Yet the means must have been very sure in order to communicate the exact wording of the sentence.

Through what channel of the senses could it have passed? Was there any movement? I fixed my memory again, centring my whole thoughts upon it. The eyes! Esther Haldane's eyes had always struck me as wonderful—nay, more, as odd. They looked very odd as I gazed at them while the clairvoyant at the other end of the room was thinking out the sentence. She had blinked several times, too, as if about to cry.

I arose from my chair. A strange idea had struck me. I lit my candle and went down through the silent house. I entered the drawing-room. When I got there I quickly examined the exact places where Haldane and his sister had stood. From the place where Miss Haldane stood her eyes by means of a big mirror could be seen by Haldane. As I thought over this fact the dim outline of a terrible plot began to reveal itself. The human eyes are always naturally winking. Only a code, such as the Morse Telegraphic Code, was necessary. A long closing of the lids for a dash, a short one for a dot, and any communication was possible and could not be detected by the closest observer.

I left the drawing-room, and crossing over to the library took down a volume of the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," and carefully copied the letter signs of the Morse Telegraphic Code. I then returned to my room. During breakfast I watched Miss Haldane, and as I did so the simplicity of the wicked scheme, evidently evolved both by her brother and herself, was borne in upon me. She looked particularly handsome this morning, but also nervous and anxious.

The guests who were still staying in the house took their departure after breakfast, amongst those to leave being Karl Haldane. I saw him go up to his sister and kiss her. As he was leaving the room she turned very white, so white that I wondered if she were going to faint.

"Are you ill?" I said. "Does it trouble you so much to part from your brother?"

"We are very much attached," she said, her lips quivering.

"I have remarked that," I answered.

She flashed an excited glance at me.

"Who would not be?" she continued. "Has he not fascinated you? There is no woman who comes in contact with him who does not love him."

At that instant Sir Penn came into the room. He went up to her, and laid his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

"We are due on the Downs at eleven," he said. "Miss Marburg is coming with us."

"Are you?" asked Miss Haldane.

The information certainly gave her no pleasure.

"I should like to see the horses," was my answer.

Nothing more was said. Mrs. Percival came into the room, the conversation became general, and at about a quarter to eleven we four started for our walk. It was a glorious morning, sunny and warm. Nevertheless, our conversation flagged, and we walked on for some time in silence.

At length we reached the racing ground, and Sir Penn showed us a good position to witness the trial, in which some dozen horses were to take part. Mr. Martin, the trainer, and our four selves took up our position at the intended winning post on a little rise amongst some furze bushes. Sir Penn drew out his watch.

"It is exactly mid-day," he said.

"Here they come!" cried Miss Haldane excitedly, and in a few moments, with a thunder of hoofs, the animals galloped past.

"Just what I thought, Martin," said the baronet. "If Fritz doesn't bring home the Blue Riband this year he is certain to be in the first three."

"And if he is, you will be richer than ever," said Miss Haldane, laying her hand on his arm. "Do go, Miss Marburg, to look at the probable winner of the Derby. Take Miss Marburg to see Fritz, won't you, Penn?"

Sir Penn and the trainer moved up to where the horses were being pulled up. As Sir Penn did so he turned to me.

"Will you come?" he asked. "Won't you come too, Esther?"

"No," she replied. "I am feeling tired. I will stay with Mrs. Percival."

"Do, my dear," said the elder lady. "We will both sit down on this knoll of grass and wait for you, Penn, and for Miss Marburg."

I slowly followed Sir Penn, but when I had gone a few steps, I turned aside and pretended to be plucking some small flowers that grew on the edge of the common. My heart was beating almost to suffocation. I feared that Miss Haldane would observe me, and that I should lose a possible opportunity. But she had evidently forgotten my existence. Mrs. Percival had opened a newspaper and was beginning to read. Sir Penn and the trainer were more than a hundred yards away. I stood on her left. She rose slowly to her feet and gazed out steadily across the Down in the direction of an old ruined barn some six hundred yards off. I quickly took out pencil and paper and, keeping my eyes fixed on hers, marked the movement of the long and short closure of her lids. That slip of paper I have still, and this is the copy as I took it down:

FRITZWONTRIAL

Without a moment's pause or giving myself time to think I rushed up to her side.

"What are you doing?" I cried.

My voice startled her. She flashed round, fury in her eyes.

"Fritz won trial," I said, as I deciphered the dots and dashes from the code.

She stared wildly at me for one moment, then suddenly falling on her knees she burst into a passion of tears. At this instant Sir Penn came up.

"Esther!" he cried. "Miss Marburg, whatever is the matter?"

I turned to him.

"This is the matter," I answered. "The plot is discovered. Send a couple of stable lads to prevent anyone from leaving that barn, and bring whoever is there here at once."

In a moment the word was given, and Sir Penn turned to Miss Haldane. She still knelt on the grass, her face covered, the tears flowing between her fingers. Sir Penn's face turned white as death. I saw that he guessed the worst. The girl to whom he was engaged, and whom he loved with all his heart, had betrayed him. Nothing else greatly mattered at that moment.

"Look!" I cried.

Two boys on their horses had just headed off the figure of a man who was running with all his might towards the railway station. It was, I could see at a glance, Mr. Karl Haldane. A moment later he was brought to the spot where we stood. His face was also white, but very hard and determined-looking.

"Come, Esther, old girl," he said, speaking in an almost rough tone, and pulling the weeping girl to her feet. "You did your best. We must all fail at times. I presume," he added, "that Esther and I have failed, but will you explain why you sent two men to interfere with my liberty, Sir Penn?"

"I think I can best explain," was my answer.

I then proceeded, in the presence of Esther and Karl Haldane, to give step by step the means I had taken to discover their secret. When I had finished speaking there was silence. After a pause, which was the most impressive I ever endured, Esther Haldane approached Sir Penn.

"You can, of course, arrest both me and my husband," she said.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Your husband?"

“Yes, Karl Haldane is my husband. I have played you the meanest trick a woman can play a man. I tried first to win your love, secondly to win your money. I succeeded in the first. I failed in the latter. All that I have done I have done for my husband, the only man on God’s earth whom I really love. I love him so well that I can even go under for him. You can take what steps you please to punish us both. Come, Karl, our game is up.”

THE END