

lute face of the old gentleman convinced him that every protest, every entreaty would remain fruitless. He took his hat and umbrella and, silently and with lowered head, followed the police officials from the room.

Peter Martin rubbed his hands with a satisfied look and placed the banknotes in his wallet. Then he sent his name by the head waiter to Mr James Harris, of London, who received his visitor without delay and, as it seemed, with great pleasure.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THEIR OWN TRAP.

THE information which old Katherine had given her mistress proved correct.

The latter had been at home but a short time after the visit to the detective, and had hardly finished giving instructions to her old servant, when Ernestine returned.

The latter gave a circumstantial report of her various errands. She had purchased sundry articles which Katherine was to call for toward three o'clock. Dora consented to everything, and anticipated her companion's wishes by herself giving Katherine the order.

They had hardly sat down to dinner when the anonymous letter arrived.

After reading it, Dora had to confess to herself that she should have believed it implicitly if she had not been forewarned.

She consulted with Ernestine as to the contents of the letter, as Martin had advised, or, in a measure, directed her to do; and Frau Hennig declared, without hesitation, that the proposition ought to be accepted.

A cab was, therefore, ordered.

It was long after two o'clock. Ernestine proposed that they should start, as the writer of the letter would certainly expect them to be punctual.

'He will wait till we come,' replied Dora, who was listening to every sound which made itself heard. 'And, besides, we have plenty of time. The carriage will take us there quickly.'

'The cab ought to be here. It is time for Katherine to start, too.'

'Patience!' said Dora, with a weak attempt at pleasantry. 'You are generally so calm and composed; why this restlessness and excitement now?'

'Is it not natural that I should be excited?' replied Ernestine. 'We are at length face to face with the solution of a mystery which we have so long been seeking in vain to unravel. Can you wonder that I am anxious lest that solution should again escape us?'

'Then the writer of this letter would be an impostor.'

'We have no guarantee that he is not one. But there is the cab, let us hurry. Katherine had better start, too, so that she can be back before we return.'

Just then the bell rang. Katherine opened the door and ushered two gentlemen into the drawing-room—the detective and a stranger.

'I have the honor of presenting to you Mr James Harris, of London,' said Martin, turning to Dora, without taking the slightest notice of the surprise of her companion.

'I am happy to make your acquaintance, sir,' replied Dora, motioning to the gentleman to sit down.

'I feel obliged, in your own interest, to remind you that we ought not to delay a moment longer,' said Ernestine, urgently.

'This is Frau Hennig, I suppose?' asked the old gentleman, with a smile. 'Will you be kind enough to inform me of the nature of the relations on which the intimacy between you and Herr Theodor Sonnenberg is based?'

Ernestine's sharp eyes grew staring, her narrow, tightly compressed lips twitched convulsively; she knew already that all was lost.

'Who are you, and what gives you the right to put that question to me?' she asked, tossing her head defiantly.

'I think I might as well tell you the truth, at once,' continued Martin, calmly. 'You wish to know who I am? I am an official of the criminal police. And what justifies my question? A confidential conversation which you had with Sonnenberg last evening, and of which we know every word. Excuse me, you will be so good as not to leave this room, and to keep quiet.'

He had interrupted her as she was about to hasten from the room; his resolute manner showed her that it would be in vain to try to outwit him.

'You will remain here and await further events,' he continued, and his voice now sounded stern and threatening. 'I advise you to listen to my warning; you will repent of it bitterly if you neglect to do so.'

'And this is your doing, Dora!' cried Ernestine, with a furious look. 'I should be ashamed—'

'You ought to be ashamed of your own treachery!' Dora interrupted her, indignantly; 'and of being in league with a criminal.'

'Who calls Sonnenberg a criminal?' cried Ernestine, indignantly.

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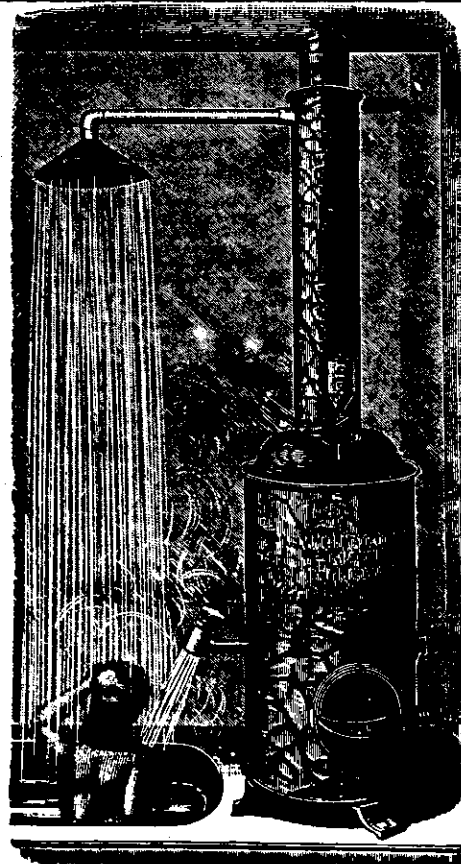
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'I' replied Martin. 'Even though he has not yet been proved to have committed murder, there is still a strong suspicion against him, and, however closely he may be allied to you, madam, you will no longer be able to prevent his arrest. As soon as he has entered this house, two police officials will guard the door, who have strict orders not to let him out again. You may hope to warn him by a cry, but that stratagem would fail entirely, and only occasion your own arrest.'

Ernestine had not been prepared for that terrible accusation.

She remembered the lady in grey—the gentleman from London had assuredly come to prove Sonnenberg's guilt. A sudden weakness overcame her; almost fainting, she sank into a chair; and her burning glance rested in horror on the grave face of the old gentleman, in which she read no mercy.

She was about to hasten to the window and call from it, in case that he was already near the house; but as she sprang from her seat, the Detective's hand grasped her arm with so tight a pressure that she cried out with pain.

'I advise you once more to keep quiet,' he said; 'otherwise you will only compromise yourself. The signal agreed upon has been given: The curtains in your bedroom are lowered, the servant has gone away in the cab—I tell you again, sit still, unless you wish to force me to handcuff you.'

'You dare utter such a threat to me? A lady?' cried Ernestine, in the highest indignation, and the look which she gave him would have crushed him if it had possessed the power of lightning.

'I would say the same to every female accomplice of a criminal, be she a lady or a servant-girl. You have not yet answered my question: What is Sonnenberg to you? Have you also married under a false name?'

'What put that into your head?' she asked angrily. 'My maiden name was Sonnenberg.'

'You gave me another name,' said Dora.

'Was I under obligations to tell you the truth about everything? You would have learned it soon enough if you had become my brother's wife; that was the only object which caused me to act as I did. And that object can be condemned neither by law nor by the rules of morality.'

'And when you recognised that it was impossible for you to attain that object,' said Dora, contemptuously, 'you planned a robbery with your brother, in order to secure to him the fortune of a lady who had never shown you anything but friendship and confidence.'

'So he is your brother?' remarked the old gentleman, keenly watching Frau Hennig's every movement. 'And is Sonnenberg indeed his real name?'

'Why do you doubt it?' asked she, hotly. 'Because he called himself John Brighton, in London.'

'I don't believe that; there must be some mistake. And not everything is true that has been said about him.'

'I suppose you are not aware that he has been in England?' the detective interrupted her. 'Of course you will declare that you know nothing about your brother's antecedents?'

'Why should I? Whatever I do know about him is not dishonourable, and if no robbery has been committed here, no one can be punished.'

'That is certainly plain speaking,' remarked Martin, sarcastically. 'You consider everything, are prepared for everything. You console yourself with the assurance that if you do not succeed here you will do so all the better in another place. I fear, however, that you will find yourself bitterly deceived in that hope, as the dealings of this shady man of honour have been put a stop to for the present, and probably for a long time to come.'

Again a wrathful look fell upon him from Ernestine's grey eyes.

'If you had to answer for that insult you could not do it,' she said.

But at that moment the detectives laid his hand firmly upon her mouth.

'Hush!' he whispered. 'Remember the handcuffs. I am not joking.'

For Dora, who had stationed herself where she could keep an eye on the ground glass pane of the hall door, had exclaimed in a low tone, 'Here he is!' and, with her finger to her lips, passed to another part of the room.

Martin ceased speaking, but did not relax his iron hold on Ernestine.

The key turned in the lock, footsteps were heard in the hall, and Theodor Sonnenberg appeared in the open door of the drawing-room.

Ernestine uttered a loud scream as the old gentleman took his hand from her mouth.

Sonnenberg had stopped in dismay when he saw the assembled group, instead of finding the rooms empty as he had expected.

'Walk in, I you please,' said Martin. 'Your retreat is out of. You are caught in your own trap.'

Sonnenberg at once comprehended the situation. He hoped that his presence of