

# JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST.\*

BY COTTREL HOE.

Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.

## NUMBER VII.—THE MODERN WIZARD IN HIS MAGIC ATTIC.



WHEN Jennie entered the carriage in which her friend was waiting, the other cried, "Well, have you seen him?" apparently meaning the Director of Police.

"No, I did not see him, but I talked with him over the telephone. I wish you could have heard our conversation; it was the funniest interview that I ever took part in. Two or three times I had to shut off the instrument, fearing the Director would hear me laugh. I am afraid that before this business is ended you will be very sorry I am a guest at your house. I know I shall end by getting myself into an Austrian prison. Just think of it! Here have I been 'holding up' the Chief of Police in this Imperial city as if I were a wild western brigand. I have been terrorising the man, brow-beating him, threatening him, and he the person who has the liberty of all Vienna in his hands; who can have me dragged off to a dungeon-cell any time he likes to give the order."

"Not from the Palace Steinheimer," said the Princess, with decision.

"Well, he might hesitate about that; yet, nevertheless, it is too funny to think that a mere newspaper woman, coming into a city which contains only one or two of her friends, should dare to talk to the Chief of

Police as I have done to-night, and force him actually to beg that I shall remain in the city and continue to assist him."

"Tell me what you said," asked the Princess eagerly; and Jennie related all that had passed between them over the telephone.

"And do you mean to tell me that you are going to give that man the right to use all the information you have acquired, and allow him to accept complacently all the *kudos* that such a discovery entitles you to?"

"Why, certainly," replied Jennie. "What good is the *kudos* to me? All the credit I desire I get in the office of the *Daily Bugle* in London."

"But, you silly girl, holding such a secret as you held, you could have made your fortune," insisted the practical Princess, for the principles which had been instilled into her during a youth spent in Chicago had not been eradicated by her residence in

Vienna. "If you had gone to the Government and said, 'How much will you give me if I restore to you the missing gold?' just imagine what their answer would be."

"Yes, I suppose there was money in the scheme if it had been really a secret. But you forget that to-morrow morning the Chief of Police would have known as much as he knows to-night. Of course, if I had gone alone to the Treasury vault and kept my discovery to myself, I might, perhaps, have 'held up' the Government of Austria-Hungary as successfully as I 'held up' the



"Jennie entered the carriage."

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Chief of Police to-night. But with the Director watching everything I did, and going with me to the chemist, there was no possibility of keeping the matter a secret."

"Well, Jennie, all I can say is that you are a very foolish girl. Here you are, working hard, as you said in one of your letters, merely to make a living, and now, with the greatest nonchalance, you allow a fortune to slip through your fingers. Now, I am simply not going to allow this. I shall tell my husband all that has happened, and he shall make the Government treat you honestly, if not generously. I assure you, Jennie, that Lord Donal—no, I won't mention his name, since you protest so strenuously—but the future young man, whoever he is, will not think the less of you because you come to him with a handsome dowry. But here we are, at home; and I won't say another word on the subject if it annoys you."

When Jennie reached her delightful apartments—which looked even more luxuriantly comfortable bathed in the soft light that now flooded them from quiet-toned shaded lamps than they did in the more garish light of day—she walked up and down her sitting-room in deep meditation. She was in a quandary—whether or not to risk sending a coded telegram to her paper was the question that presented itself to her. If she were sure that no one else would learn the news, she would prefer to wait until she had further particulars of the Treasury catastrophe. A good deal would depend on whether the Director of Police took anyone into his confidence that night or not. If he did not, then he would be aware that only he and the girl possessed that important piece of news. If a full account of the discovery appeared in the next morning's *Daily Bugle*, then, when that paper arrived in Vienna, or even before, if a synopsis were telegraphed to the Government, as it was morally certain to be, the Director would know at once that she was the correspondent of the newspaper whom he was so anxious to frighten out of Vienna. On the other hand, her friendship with the Princess von Steinheimer gave her such influence with the Chief's superior, that, after the lesson she had taught him, he might hesitate to make any move against her. Then, again, the news that to-night belonged to two persons might on the morrow come to the knowledge of all the correspondents in Vienna, and her efforts, as far as the *Bugle* was concerned, would have been vain. This consideration decided the girl, and, casting off all sign of hesitation, she sat

down at her writing table and began the first chapter of the solution of the Vienna mystery. Her opening sentence was exceedingly diplomatic: "The Chief of Police of Vienna has made a most startling discovery." Beginning thus, she went on to details of the discovery she had that day made. When her account was finished and codified, she went down to her hostess and said—

"Princess, I want a trustworthy man, who will take a long telegram to the central telegraph office, pay for it, and come away quickly before anyone can ask him inconvenient questions."

"Would it not be better to call a Dienstmann?"

"A Dienstmann? That is your commissionaire, or telegraph messenger? No, I think not. They are all numbered and can be traced."

"Oh, I know!" cried the Princess; "I will send our coachman. He will be out of his livery now, and he is a most reliable man; he will not answer inconvenient questions, or any others, even if they are asked."

To her telegram for publication Jennie had added a private despatch to the editor that it would be rather inconvenient for her if he published the account next morning, but she left the decision entirely with him. Here was the news, and if he thought it worth the risk, he might hold it over; if not, he was to print it regardless of consequences.

As a matter of fact, the editor, with fear and trembling, held the news for a day, so that he might not embarrass his fair representative, but so anxious was he that he sat up all night until the other papers were out, and he heaved a sigh of relief when, on glancing over them, he found that not one of them contained an inkling of the information locked up in his desk. And so he dropped off to sleep when the day was breaking. Next night he had nearly as much anxiety, for, although the *Bugle* would contain the news, other papers might have it as well, and so for the second time he waited in his office until the other sheets, wet from the press, were brought to him. Again fortune favoured him, and the triumph belonged to the *Bugle* alone.

The morning after her interview with the Director of Police, Jennie, taking a small hand-satchel, in which she placed the various bottles containing the different dusts which the chemist had separated, went abroad alone, and hailing a fiacre, gave the driver the address of Professor Carl Seigfried. The carriage of the Princess was always at the

disposal of the girl, but on this occasion she did not wish to be embarrassed with so pretentious an equipage. The cab took her into a street lined with tall edifices and left her at the number she had given the driver. The building seemed to be one let out in flats and tenements; she mounted stair after stair, and only at the very top did she see the Professor's name painted on a door. Here she rapped several times without any attention being paid to her summons, but at last the door was opened partially by a man whom she took, quite accurately, to be the Professor himself. His head was white, and his face deeply wrinkled. He glared at her through his glasses, and said to her, "Young lady, you have made a mistake; these are the rooms of Professor Carl Seigfried."

"It is Professor Carl Seigfried that I wish to see," said the girl hurriedly, as the old man was preparing to shut the door.

"What do you want from him?"

"I want some information from him about explosives. I have been told that he knows more about explosives than any other man living."

"Quite right—he does. What then?"

"An explosion has taken place producing the most remarkable results. They say that neither dynamite nor any other known force could have had such an effect on metals and minerals as this power has had."

"Ah, dynamite is a toy for children!" cried the old man, opening the door a little further and exhibiting an interest which had up to that moment been absent from his manner. "Well, where did this explosion take place? Do you wish me to go and see it?"

"Perhaps, later on. At present I wish to show you some of its effects, but I don't propose to do so here in the passage-way."

"Quite right—quite right," hastily ejaculated the old scientist, throwing the door wide open. "Of course, I am not accustomed to visits from fashionable young ladies, and I thought at first there had been a mistake; but if you have any real scientific problem, I shall be delighted to give my attention to it. What may appear very extraordinary to the lay mind will doubtless prove fully explainable by scientists. Come in, come in."

The old man shut the door behind her, and led her along a dark passage, into a large apartment, whose ceiling was the roof of the building. At first sight it seemed in amazing disorder. Huge as it was, it was cluttered with curious-shaped machines and instruments. A twisted conglomeration of

glass tubing, bent into fantastic tangles, stood on a central table, and had evidently been occupying the Professor's attention at the time he was interrupted. The place was lined with shelving, where the walls were not occupied with cupboards, and every shelf was burdened with bottles and apparatus of different kinds. Whatever care Professor Seigfried took of his apparatus, he seemed to have little for his furniture. There was



"She rapped several times."

hardly a decent chair in the place, except one deep arm-chair, covered with a tiger's skin, in which the Professor evidently took his ease while meditating or watching the progress of an experiment. This chair he did not offer to the young lady; in fact, he did not offer her a chair at all, but sank down on the tiger's skin himself, placed the tips of his fingers together, and glared at her through his glittering glasses.

"Now, young woman," he said sharply,

"what have you brought for me? Don't begin to chatter now, for my time is valuable. Show me what you have brought, and I will tell you all about it; and most likely a very simple thing it is."

Jennie, interested in so rude a man, smiled, drew up the least decrepit chair she could find, and sat down, in spite of the angry mutterings of her irritated host. Then she opened her satchel, took out the small bottle of gold, and handed it to him without a

He staggered forward, shrieking, "Ah, mein Gott—mein Gott!"

Then, to the consternation of Jennie, who had already risen in terror from her chair, the old man plunged forward on his face. Jennie had difficulty in repressing a shriek. She looked round hurriedly for a bell to ring, but there evidently was none. She tried to open the door and cry for help, but in her excitement could find neither handle nor latch. It seemed to be locked, and the key,

doubtless, was in the Professor's pocket. She thought at first that he had dropped dead, but the continuing moans as he lay on the floor convinced her of her error. She bent over him anxiously and cried, "What can I do to help you?"

With a struggle he muttered, "The bottle—the bottle—in the cupboard behind you."

She hurriedly flung open the doors of the cupboard indicated, and found a bottle of brandy, and a glass, which she partly filled. The old man had with an effort struggled into a sitting posture, and she held the glass of fiery liquid to his pallid lips. He gulped down the brandy, and gasped, "I feel better now. Help me to my chair."

Assisting him to his feet, she supported him to his arm-chair, when he shook himself free, crying angrily, "Let me alone! Don't you see I am all right again?"

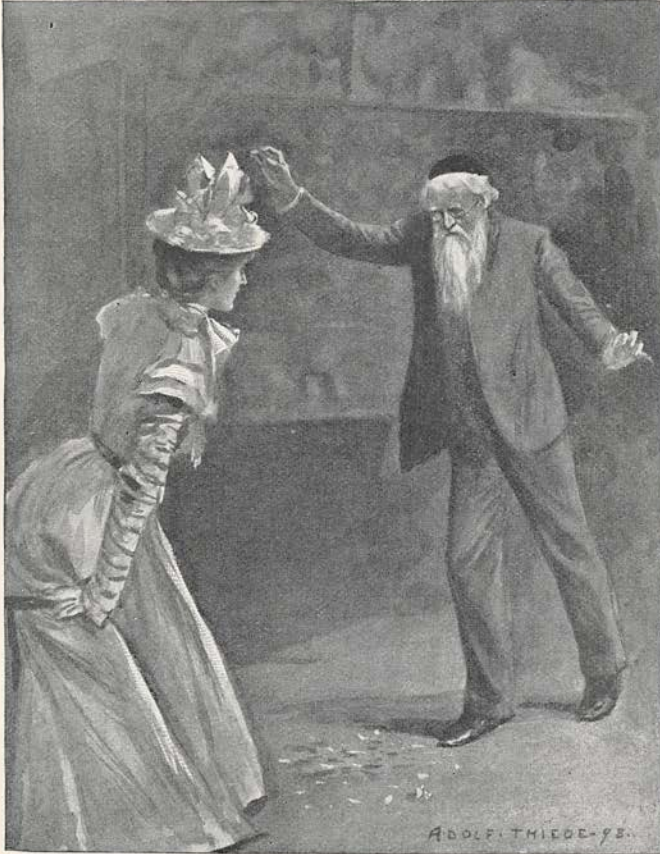
The girl stood aside, and the Professor dropped into his chair, his nervous hands vibrating on his knees. For a long interval nothing was

said by either, and the girl at last seated herself in the chair she had formerly occupied. The first words the old man spoke were, "Who sent you here?"

"No one; I came of my own accord. I wished to meet someone who had a large knowledge of explosives, and Herr Feltz, the chemist, gave me your address."

"Herr Feltz! Herr Feltz!" he repeated. "So he sent you here?"

"No one sent me here," insisted the girl.



"The vial crashed into a thousand pieces."

word. The old man took it somewhat contemptuously, shook it backward and forward without taking out the cork, adjusted his glasses, then suddenly seemed to take a nervous interest in the material presented to him. He rose and went nearer the light. Drawing out the cork with trembling hands, he poured some of the contents into his open palm. The result was startling enough. The old man flung up his hands, letting the vial crash into a thousand pieces on the floor.

"It is as I tell you. Herr Feltz merely gave me your address."

"Where did you get that powdered gold?"

"It came from the *débris* of an explosion."

"I know; you said that before. Where was the explosion? Who caused it?"

"That I don't know."

"Don't you know where the explosion was?"

"Yes, I know where the explosion was, but I don't know who caused it."

"Who sent you here?"

"I tell you no one sent me here."

"That is not true; the man who caused the explosion sent you here. You are his minion. What do you expect to find out from me?"

"I expect to learn what explosive was used to produce the result that seemed to have such a remarkable effect on you."

"Why do you say that? It had no effect on me. My heart is weak. I am subject to such attacks, and I ward them off with brandy. Some day they will kill me. Then you won't learn any secrets from a dead man, will you?"

"I hope, Professor Seigfried,

that you have many years yet to live, and I must further add that I did not expect such a reception as I have received from a man of science, as I was told you were. If you have no information to give to me—very well, that ends it; all you have to do is to say so."

"Who sent you here?"

"No one, as I have repeated once or twice. If anyone had, I would give him my opinion of him when I got back. You refuse to tell me anything about the explosive that powdered that gold?"

"Refuse? Of course I refuse! What did you expect? I suppose the man who sent you here thought, because you were an engaging young woman and I an old dotard, I would gabble to you the results of a life's work. Oh, no, no, no; but I am not an old dotard. I have many years to live yet."

"I hope so. Well, I must bid you good morning. I shall go to someone else."

The old man showed his teeth in a forbidding grin.

"It is useless. Your bottle is broken, and the material it contained is dissipated. Not a trace of it is left."

He waved his thin, emaciated hand in the air as he spoke.

"Oh, that doesn't matter in the least," said Jennie. "I have several other bottles here in my satchel."

The Professor placed his hands on the arms of his chair, and slowly raised himself to his feet.

"You have others," he cried, "other bottles? Let me see them—let me see them!"

"No," replied Jennie, "I won't."

With a speed which, after his recent collapse, Jennie had not expected, the Professor ambled

round to the door and placed his back against it. The glasses over his eyes seemed to sparkle as if with fire. His talon-like fingers crooked rigidly. He breathed rapidly, and was evidently labouring under tense excitement.

"Who knows you came up to see me?" he whispered hoarsely, glaring at her.

Jennie, having arisen, stood there, smoothing down her perfectly fitting glove, and answered with a calmness she was far from feeling.



"The Professor ambled round to the door and placed his back against it."

"Who knows I am here? No one but the Director of Police."

"Oh, the Director of Police!" echoed the Professor, quite evidently abashed by the information. The rigidity of his attitude relaxed, and he became once more the old man he had appeared as he sat in a heap in his chair. "You will excuse me," he muttered, edging round towards his chair again; "I was excited."

"I noticed that you were, Professor. But before you sit down again, please unlock that door."

"Why?" he asked, pausing on his way to the chair.

"Because I wish it open."

"And I," he said in a higher tone, "wish it to remain locked until we have come to some understanding. I can't let you go out now; but I shall permit you to go unmolested as soon as you have made some explanation to me."

"If you do not unlock the door immediately, I shall take this machine and fling it through the front window out on the street. The crashing glass on the pavement will soon bring someone to my rescue, Professor, and, as I have a voice of my own and small hesitation about shouting, I shall have little difficulty in directing the strangers where to come."

As Jennie spoke she moved swiftly towards the table on which stood the strange aggregation of reflectors and bent glass tubing.

"No, no, no!" screamed the Professor, springing between her and the table. "Touch anything but that—anything but that. Do not disturb it an inch—there is danger—death not only to you and me, but perhaps to the whole city. Keep away from it!"

"Very well, then," said Jennie, stepping back in spite of her endeavour to sustain herself-control; "open the door. Open both doors and leave them so. After that, if you remain seated in your chair, I shall not touch the machine, nor shall I leave until I make the explanations you require, and you have answered some questions that I shall ask. But I must have a clear way to the stair, in case you should become excited again."

"I'll unlock the doors; I'll unlock both doors," replied the old man tremulously, fumbling about in his pockets for his keys. "But keep away from that machine, unless you want to bring swift destruction on us all."

With an eagerness that retarded his speed, the Professor, constantly looking over his shoulder at his visitor, unlocked the first

door, then hastily he flung open the second, and tottered back to his chair, where he collapsed on the tiger skin, trembling and exhausted.

"We may be overheard," he whined. "One can never tell who may sneak quietly up the stair. I am surrounded by spies trying to find out what I am doing."

"Wait a moment," said Jennie.

She went quickly to the outer door, found that it closed with a spring latch, opened and shut it two or three times until she was perfectly familiar with its workings, then she closed it, drew the inner door nearly shut, and sat down.

"There," she said, "we are quite safe from interruption, Professor Seigfried; but I must request you not to move from your chair."

"I have no intention of doing so," murmured the old man. "Who sent you? You said you would tell me. I think you owe me an explanation."

"I think you owe me one," replied the girl. "As I told you before, no one sent me. I came here entirely of my own accord, and I shall endeavour to make clear to you exactly why I came. Some time ago there occurred in this city a terrific explosion—"

"Where? When?" exclaimed the old man, placing his hands on the arms of his chair, as if he would rise to his feet.

"Sit where you are," said Jennie firmly, "and I shall tell you all I can about it. The Government, for reasons of its own, desires to keep the fact of this explosion a secret, and so very few people outside of official circles know anything about it. I am trying to discover the cause of that disaster."

"Are you—are you working on behalf of the Government?" asked the old man eagerly, a tremor of fear in his quavering voice.

"No. I am conducting my investigations quite independently of the Government."

"But why? But why? That is what I don't understand."

"I would very much rather not answer that question."

"But that question—everything is involved in that question. I must know why you are here. If you are not in the employ of the Government, in whose employ are you?"

"If I tell you," said Jennie with some hesitation, "will you keep what I say a secret?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the scientist impatiently.

"Well, I am in the service of a London daily newspaper."

"I see, I see; and they have sent you here to publish broadcast over the world all you can find out of my doings. I knew you were a spy the moment I saw you. I should never have let you in."

"My dear sir, the London paper is not aware of your existence even. They have not sent me to you at all. They have sent me to learn, if possible, the cause of the explosion I spoke of. I took some of the *débris* to Herr Feltz to analyse it, and he said he had never seen gold, iron, feldspar, and all that, reduced to such fine, impalpable

The old man, in spite of the prohibition, rose uncertainly to his feet.

Jennie sprang up and said menacingly, "Stay where you are!"

"I am not going to touch you. If you are so suspicious of every move I make, then go yourself and bring me what I want. There is a map of Vienna pinned against the wall yonder. Bring it to me."

Jennie proceeded in the direction indicated. It was an ordinary map of the city of Vienna, and as Jennie took it down she noticed that across the southern part of the city a semi-circular line in pencil had been drawn, and, examining it more closely, saw that the



"Don't look at that map!" shrieked the Professor."

grains as was the case with the sample I left with him. I then asked him who in Vienna knew most about explosives, and he gave me your address. That is why I am here."

"But the explosion—you have not told me when and where it occurred!"

"That, as I have said, is a Government secret."

"But you stated you are not in the Government employ, therefore it can be no breach of confidence if you let me have full particulars."

"I suppose not. Very well, then, the explosion occurred after midnight on the seventeenth in the vault of the Treasury."

stationary part of the compass had been placed on the spot where stood the building which contained the Professor's studio. She paid closer attention to the pencil mark and observed that it passed through the Treasury building.

"Don't look at that map!" shrieked the Professor, beating the air with his hands. "I asked you to bring it to me. Can't you do a simple action like that without spying about?"

Jennie rapidly unfastened the paper from the wall and brought it to him. The scientist scrutinised it closely, adjusting his glasses the better to see. Then he deliber-

ately tore the map into fragments, numerous and minute. He rose—and this time Jennie made no protest—went to the window, opened it, flung the fluttering bits of paper out into the air, the strong wind carrying them far over the roofs of Vienna. Closing the casement, he came back to his chair.

“Was—was anyone hurt at this explosion?” he asked presently.

“Yes, four men were killed instantly, a dozen were seriously injured and are now in hospital.”

“Oh, my God—my God!” cried the old man, covering his face with his hands, swaying from side to side in his chair like a man tortured with agony and remorse. At last he lifted a face that had grown more pinched and yellow within the last few minutes.

“I can tell you nothing,” he said, moistening his parched lips.

“You mean that you *will* tell me nothing, for I see plainly that you know everything.”

“I knew nothing of any explosion until you spoke of it. What have I to do with the Treasury or the Government?”

“That is just what I want to know.”

“It is absurd. I am no conspirator, but a scientist.”

“Then you have nothing to fear, Herr Seigfried. If you are innocent, why are you so loth to give me any assistance in this matter?”

“It has nothing to do with me. I am a scientist—I am a scientist. All I wish is to be left alone with my studies. I have nothing to do with governments or newspapers, or anything belonging to them.”

Jennie sat tracing a pattern on the dusty floor with the point of her parasol. She spoke very quietly:

“The pencilled line which you drew on the map of Vienna passed through the Treasury building; the centre of the circle was this garret. Why did you draw that pencilled semi-circle? Why were you anxious that I should not see you had done so? Why did you destroy the map?”

Professor Seigfried sat there looking at her with dropped jaw, but he made no reply.

“If you will excuse my saying so,” the girl went on, “you are acting very childishly. It is evident to me that you are no criminal, yet if the Director of Police had been in my place he would have arrested you long ago, and that merely because of your own foolish actions.”

“The map proved nothing,” he said at last, haltingly, “and besides both you and

the Director will now have some difficulty in finding it.”

“That is further proof of your folly. The Director doesn’t need to find it. I am here to testify that I saw the map, saw the curved line passing through the Treasury, and saw you destroy what you thought was an incriminating piece of evidence. It would be much better if you would deal as frankly with me as I have done with you. Then I shall give you the best advice I can—if my advice will be of any assistance to you.”

“Yes, and publish it to all the world!”

“It will have to be published to all the world in any case, for, if I leave here without full knowledge, I will simply go to the police office and there tell all I know!”

“And if I do speak, you will still go to the Director of the Police and tell him what you have discovered!”

“No, I give you my word that I will not!”

“What guarantee have I of that?” asked the old man suspiciously.

“No guarantee at all except my word!”

“Will you promise not to print in your paper what I tell you?”

“No, I cannot promise that!”

“Still, the newspaper doesn’t matter,” continued the scientist. “The story would be valueless to you, because no one would believe it. There is little use in printing a story in a newspaper that will be laughed at, is there? However, I think you are honest, otherwise you would have promised not to print a line of what I tell you, and then I should have known you were lying. It was as easy to promise that as to say you would not tell the Director of Police. I thought at first some scientist had sent you here to play the spy on me, and learn what I was doing. I assure you I heard nothing about the explosion you speak of, yet I was certain it had occurred somewhere along that line which I drew on the map. I had hoped it was not serious, and begun to believe it was not. The anxiety of the last month has nearly driven me insane, and, as you say quite truly, my actions have been childish.”

The old man in his excitement had risen from his chair and was now pacing up and down the room, running his fingers distractedly through his long white hair, and talking more to himself than to his auditor.

Jennie had edged her chair nearer to the door, and had made no protest against his rising, fearing to interrupt his flow of talk and again arouse his suspicions.

“I have no wish to protect my inven-



tions. I have never taken out a patent in my life. What I discover I give freely to the world, but I will not be robbed of my reputation as a scientist. I want my name to go down to posterity among those of the great discoverers. You talked just now of going to the police and telling them what you knew. Foolish creature! You could no more have gone to the central police office without my permission, or against my will, than you could go to the window and whistle back those bits of paper I scattered to the winds. Before you reached the bottom of the stairs I could have laid Vienna in a mass of ruins. Yes, I could in all probability have blown up the entire Empire of Austria. The truth is, that I do not know the limit of my power, nor dare I test it."

"Oh, this is a madman!" thought Jennie, as she edged still nearer to the door. The old man paused in his walk and turned fiercely upon her.

"You don't believe me?" he said.

"No, I do not," she answered, the colour leaving her cheeks.

The aged scientist gave utterance to a hideous chuckle. He took from one of his numerous shelves a hammer head without the handle, and for a moment Jennie thought he was going to attack her; but he merely handed the metal to her and said—

"Break that in two. Place it between your palms and grind it to powder."

"You know that is absurd; I cannot do it."

"Why can't you do it?"

"Because it is of steel."

"That is no reason. Why can't you do it?"

He glared at her fiercely over his glasses, and she saw in his wild eye all the enthusiasm of an instructor enlightening a pupil.

"I'll tell you why you can't do it; because every minute particle of it is held together by an enormous force. It may be heated red-hot and beaten into this shape and that, but still the force hangs on as tenaciously as the grip of a giant. Now suppose I had some substance, a drop of which, placed on that piece of iron, would release the force which holds the particles together—what would happen?"

"I don't know," replied Jennie.

"Oh, yes, you do!" cried the Professor impatiently; "but you are like every other woman—you won't take the trouble to think. What would happen would be this. The force that held the particles together

would be released, and the hammer would fall to powder like that gold you showed me, and there would be an explosion, caused by the sudden release of the power, which would probably wreck this room and extinguish both our lives. You understand that, do you not?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, here is something you won't understand, and probably won't believe when you hear it. There is but one force in this world and but one particle of matter. There is only one element, which is the basis of everything. All the different shapes and conditions of things that we see are caused by a mere variation of that force in conjunction with numbers of that particle. Am I getting beyond your depth?"

"I am afraid you are, Professor."

"Of course; I know what feeble brains the average woman is possessed of; still, try and keep that in your mind. Now listen to this. I have discovered how to disunite that force and that particle. I can, with a touch, fling loose upon this earth a giant whose strength is irresistible and immeasurable."

"Then why object to making your discovery public?"

"In the first place, because there are still a thousand things and more to be learned along this line of investigation. The moment a man announces his discoveries, he is first ridiculed, then, when the truth of what he affirms is proven, there rise in all parts of the world other men who say they knew all about it ten years ago, and will prove it too—at least, far enough to delude a gullible world; in the second place, because I am a humane man, I hesitate to spread broadcast a knowledge that would enable any fool to blow up the universe. Then there is a third reason. There is another who, I believe, has discovered how to make this force loosen its grip on the particle—that is Keely, of Philadelphia, in the United States—"

"What! You don't mean the Keely motor man?" cried Jennie, laughing. "That arrant humbug! Why, all the papers in the world have exposed his ridiculous pretensions; he has done nothing but spend other people's money."

"Yes, the newspapers have ridiculed him. Human beings have, since the beginning of the world, stoned their prophets. Nevertheless, he has liberated a force that no gauge made by man can measure. He has been boastful, if you like, and has said that with a teacupful of water he would drive a



“‘Try to sip this brandy,’ she said.”

steamship over the ocean. I have been silent, working away with my eye on him, and he has been working away with his eye on me, for each knows what the other is doing. If either of us discovers how to control this force, then that man's name will go down to posterity for ever. He has not yet been able to do it; neither have I. There is still another difference between us. He appears to be able to loosen that force in his own presence; I can only do it at a distance. All my experiments lately have been in the direction of making modifications with this machine, so as to liberate the force within the compass, say, of this room; but the problem has baffled me. The invisible rays which this machine sends out, and which will penetrate stone, iron, wood, or any other substance, must unite at a focus, and I have not been able to bring that focus nearer me than something over half a mile. Last summer I went to an uninhabited part of Switzerland and there continued my experiments. I blew up at will rocks and boulders on the mountain sides, the distances varying from a mile to half a mile. I examined the results of the disintegration, and when you came in and showed me the gold, I recognised at once that someone had discovered the secret I have been trying to fathom for the last ten years. I thought that perhaps you had come from Keely. I am now convinced that the explosion you speak of in the Treasury was caused by myself. This machine, which you so recklessly threatened to throw out of the window, accidentally slipped from its support when I was working here some time after midnight on the seventeenth. I placed it immediately as you see it now, where it throws its rays into mid-air, and is consequently harmless; but I knew an explosion must have taken place in Vienna somewhere within the radius of half a mile. I drew the pencil semi-circle that you saw on the map of Vienna, for in my excitement in placing the machine upright I had not noticed exactly where it had pointed, but I knew along the line I had drawn an explosion must have occurred, and could only hope that it had not been a serious one, which it seems it was. I waited and waited, hardly daring to leave my attic; but hearing no news of any disaster, I was torn between the anxiety that would naturally come to any humane man in my position—who did not wish to destroy life—and the fear that, if nothing had occurred, I had not actually made the discovery I thought I had made. You spoke of my actions being

childish; but when I realised that I had myself been the cause of the explosion, a fear of criminal prosecution came over me. Not that I should object to imprisonment if they would allow me to continue my experiments; but that, doubtless, they would not do, for the authorities know nothing of science, and care less."

In spite of her initial scepticism, Jennie found herself gradually coming to believe in the efficiency of the harmless-looking mechanism of glass and iron that she saw on the table before her, and a sensation of horror held her spell-bound as she gazed at it. Its awful possibilities began slowly to develop in her mind, and she asked breathlessly—

"What would happen if you were to turn that machine and point it towards the centre of the earth?"

"I told you what would happen. Vienna would lie in ruins, and possibly the whole Austrian Empire, and perhaps some adjoining countries would become a mass of impalpable dust. It may be that the world itself would dissolve. I cannot tell what the magnitude of the result might be, for I have not dared to risk the experiment."

"Oh, this is too frightful to think about," she cried. "You must destroy the machine, Professor, and you must never make another."

"What! And give up the hope that my name will descend to posterity?"

"Professor Seigfried, when once this machine becomes known to the world, there will be no posterity for your name to descend to. With the present hatred of nation against nation, with different countries full of those unimprisoned maniacs whom we call Jingoos—men preaching the hatred of one people against another—how long do you think the world will last when once such knowledge is abroad in it?"

The Professor looked longingly at the machine he had so slowly and painfully constructed.

"It would be of such use to humanity if it were but benevolently employed. With the coal-fields everywhere diminishing, it would supply a motive force for the universe that would last through the ages."

"Professor Seigfried," exclaimed Jennie earnestly, "when the Lord permits a knowledge of that machine to become common property, it is His will that the end of the world shall come."

The Professor said nothing, but stood with deeply wrinkled brow, gazing earnestly at the

mechanism. In his hand was the hammer-head which he had previously given to the girl; his arm went up and down as if he were estimating its weight; then suddenly, without a word of warning, he raised it and sent it crashing through the machine, whose splintering glass fell with a musical tinkle on the floor.

Jennie gave a startled cry, and with a low moan the Professor struggled to his chair and fell rather than sat down in it. A ghastly pallor overspread his face, and the girl in alarm ran again to the cupboard, poured out some brandy and offered it to him, then tried to pour it down his throat, but his tightly set teeth resisted her efforts. She chafed his rigid hands, and once he opened his eyes and slowly shook his head.

"Try to sip this brandy," she said, seeing his jaws relax.

"It is useless," he murmured with difficulty. "My life was in the instrument, as brittle as the glass. I have——"

He could say no more. Jennie went swiftly downstairs to the office of a physician, on the first floor, which she had noticed as she came up.

The medical man, who knew of the scientist, but was not personally acquainted with him, for the Professor had few friends, went up the steps three at a time, and Jennie followed him more slowly. He met the girl at the door of the attic.

"It is useless," he said. "Professor

Seigfried is dead; and it is my belief that in his taking away Austria has lost her greatest scientist."

"I am sure of it," answered the girl, with trembling voice; "but perhaps after all it is for the best."

"I doubt that," said the doctor. "I never feel so like quarrelling with Providence as when some noted man is removed right in the midst of his usefulness."

"I am afraid," replied Jennie solemnly, "that we have hardly reached a state of development that would justify us in criticising the wisdom of Providence. In my own short life I have seen several instances where it seemed that Providence intervened for the protection of His creatures; and even the sudden death of Professor Seigfried does not shake my belief that Providence knows best."

She turned quickly away and went down the stairs in some haste. At the outer door she heard the doctor call down, "I must have your name and address, please."

But Jennie did not pause to answer. She had no wish to undergo cross-examination at an inquest, knowing that if she told the truth she would not be believed, while if she attempted to hide it, unexpected personal inconvenience might arise from such a course. She ran rapidly to the street corner, hailed a *fiacre* and drove to a distant part of the city; then she went to a main thoroughfare, took a tramcar to the centre of the town, and another cab to the Palace.

