

## Stories of the Sanctuary Club.

BY L. T. MEADE AND ROBERT EUSTACE. TOLD BY PAUL CATO.

### IV.—EAST OF NORTH.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Because the fact of my being married or single was a personal matter," he replied, quietly. "I did not wish to worry either of you with my private affairs, but circumstances

have lately arisen which make it important for me to have Isobel here."

I started and glanced at him eagerly.

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

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

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

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

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

did not take you into my full confidence before," he added.

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

Kort. I then went forward and held out my hand.

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

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

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

She sat on the nearest chair and looked around her.

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

"Cato is my name," I said.

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

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

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

The next day Mrs. Kort came downstairs and joined the rest of the guests. Wherever she went she made friends, and everyone present was more or less interested in her; but wherever she went, too, she carried that look of indescribable sadness about with her. What worry had she lived through? What mystery surrounded her past? She talked little, and at intervals complained of that curious and quite abnormal want of memory. But up in her apartments, where Chetwynd and I constantly visited her, she was as bright and even cheerful as any young woman I had ever met.

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

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

"But surely," I answered, "she ought to



"MRS. KORT ARRIVED."

watching her with apparently the most devoted affection. They were both followed by a brusque-looking, red-haired young woman, whom I concluded was Mrs. Kort's maid.

Sherwin's dying words about Isobel, the Isobel who had doubtless broken his heart, came back to me as I looked full at Mrs.

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

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

He had scarcely left the room before Chetwynd came in.

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

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

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

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

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

"That is my name," he replied. "You

have heard of me from our mutual friends, the Jacksons. I am tired of wandering in Continental spas, and hearing great things of your Club am anxious to inspect it."

Chetwynd introduced him to me.

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

Chetwynd led the way, and Ridley and I

followed. We showed him over the main part of the establishment, took him to the wing specially set aside for our various hydro-pathic treatments, and showed him that part of the Davos suite not occupied by Mrs. Kort.

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

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

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

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

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



"MR. CHARLES RIDLEY."

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

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

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

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

The little scene scarcely occupied a minute, and we were all chatting easily again almost directly; but I could not help watching Kort's manner, for I had never seen his face wear quite such an expression before. Usually so quiet and self-possessed, there was now a look of unrest, if not fear, in his eyes. He sat down and crossed one leg over the other, and the rapid but regular movement of the foot told me that his heart was beating fast—a secret sign I learned years ago, and often used, unsuspected by patients themselves. It told me he was restraining himself for all he was worth.

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

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

Ridley arrived towards the end of the week, and now, somewhat to my surprise, I saw that he and Kort were on friendly terms. Our new member was a good-humoured but uninteresting individual, the one great interest in his life being to read the sporting papers and send telegrams to his bookmaker. He had, however, one other hobby: he spent a great deal of time over photography—he possessed several excellent and expensive cameras, and in the afternoons would make excursions alone or accompanied by Kort for the purpose of getting good subjects for photography. When not so engaged he would spend most of his time in the smoking-room, anxiously watching the results of his

racing ventures as they were recorded on the green baize board where the tape was pinned. As I got to know him better I saw that he was cursed with nerves in a state of high irritation, and judging by this sign manual I perceived that many of his speculations were the reverse of successful.

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

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

The moment I uttered the words Ridley bent forward in his chair; he stared at Kort, then he said, in a low tone of intense astonishment:—

"Is your wife here?"

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

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

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

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

Ridley tapped his foot impatiently.

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

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

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

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

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

His question evidently annoyed Chetwynd.

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

Ridley lay back in his chair.



"RIDLEY LAY BACK IN HIS CHAIR."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

information which I can depend on as reliable, and I am making a heavy plunge."

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

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

"Dr. Cato," he said, suddenly, "I saw that I annoyed you and Dr. Chetwynd last night when I spoke as I did to your partner, Kort. I wish to assure you now, however, that I did so with intention. The fact is I have been a good deal exercised in my mind lately as to whether or not I am justified in making a communication to you of a serious nature. It relates to your partner. I was considerably amazed to find him here, and still more astonished to hear that his wife is

an inmate of this house."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Plunges pretty heavily, eh?" he said.

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

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

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

Kort laughed.

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

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

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

"I will see," I answered; "if Chetwynd stays here I can go with you." I rose as I spoke and went indoors. I felt considerably disturbed, and the more so as I could not confide my suspicions to anyone. It was evident that Ridley did know something to Kort's discredit — something upon which the man's position, perhaps even his liberty, depended. The

whole thing was mysterious and unsatisfactory, and the most trying part of it was that, beyond doubt, Kort's young wife was involved in the affair. There was something queer about Mrs. Kort, something enigmatical, impossible to define. Her illness was unlike any which I had ever come across. She was ill and she was not ill. In the Davos suite of rooms she looked like a person in bounding health; and yet out of that suite she was nervous, depressed, uncertain in her words, and troubled with the strangest, most fleeting memory. In fact, she hardly possessed a memory at all.

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

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

I replied that that could easily be managed, but his words and restlessness impressed me a good deal, and towards evening I resolved to go up and see Mrs. Kort on my own account. I found her in the sitting-room which



"I FOUND HER IN THE SITTING-ROOM."

was attached to her bedroom, and in a state of extreme agitation. She knew me quite well, and a look of momentary pleasure filled her eyes when I appeared, but then she said, in a distressed and yet restrained voice :—

"You ought not to visit me, Dr. Cato. My husband is prescribing for me and does not wish any other doctor to interfere, and," she added, "my head aches too frightfully for me to bear any ordinary conversation just now. Go away, please, leave me."

The maid Susan bustled into the room.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

horse in the paddock, and was in the highest possible favour. He was a beautifully built chestnut of six years, and in the pink of condition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was perfectly true. A babel of shouts came from the ring, for the Dolphin had left the course and was galloping wildly across



“‘STEADY, MR. KORT,’ CRIED FISHER.”

the ground. In a few moments he was pulled up and Fisher had dismounted, as half-a-dozen men rushed up to him. What were they doing? One of them had caught the Dolphin and another, for some inexplicable reason, was leading the jockey by the arm towards the paddock.

Ridley remained dazed by the fearful catastrophe, while Kort and I leapt down and hurried across the inclosure. We had not even seen what horse had won. In a few moments Kort, who knew some of the stewards, led me to the room where Fisher was seated. We quickly learned what had happened. Just after the start the jockey had been seized with some strange affection of his sight, and could no longer steer his horse.

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

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

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

It was certainly the most extraordinary case I had ever seen, and I failed to account for it in any way; but as we left the jockey

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

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

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

The next morning, though evidently still much shaken, Ridley seemed more himself. I met him about eleven o’clock going out with his camera to take some stereoscopic



views of the grounds. I applauded him for his intention, and told him I was glad he was pulling himself together. I then went to my own private sitting-room. I happened to be rather busy that morning, and was soon absorbed in accounts, forgetting everything else in this employment. I had not been long busy before Kort knocked and entered. He looked peculiarly grave.

"Have you seen Ridley anywhere about?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered; "I met him going out with his camera some time ago."

"How was he? How did he look?"

"I thought more cheerful; why do you ask?"

"Because I do not feel easy about him. He came to me early this morning, and there was a nasty look on his face. I disliked his manner and the way he spoke."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I have already mentioned my fears with regard to him. The shock of yesterday has thoroughly unhinged him, and I do not know what may happen. I have tried to cheer him up, and recommended him to do some photography. If he broods over his loss he may lose his reason. By the way, I see you are doing accounts. There are several things I want to talk to you about with reference to them. Let me see, what is the time?" He glanced at the clock. "Five minutes to twelve—shall we go into them now?"

"Very well," I answered, and we plunged into a quantity of miscellaneous matters. We had been engaged about half an hour when Chetwynd quickly entered.

"The most awful thing has happened," he cried. "Ridley has shot himself through the head with a revolver—his body has just been found in the grounds. It could not have been more than half an hour ago."

Kort and I sprang to our feet. "What?" I exclaimed, "is he dead?"

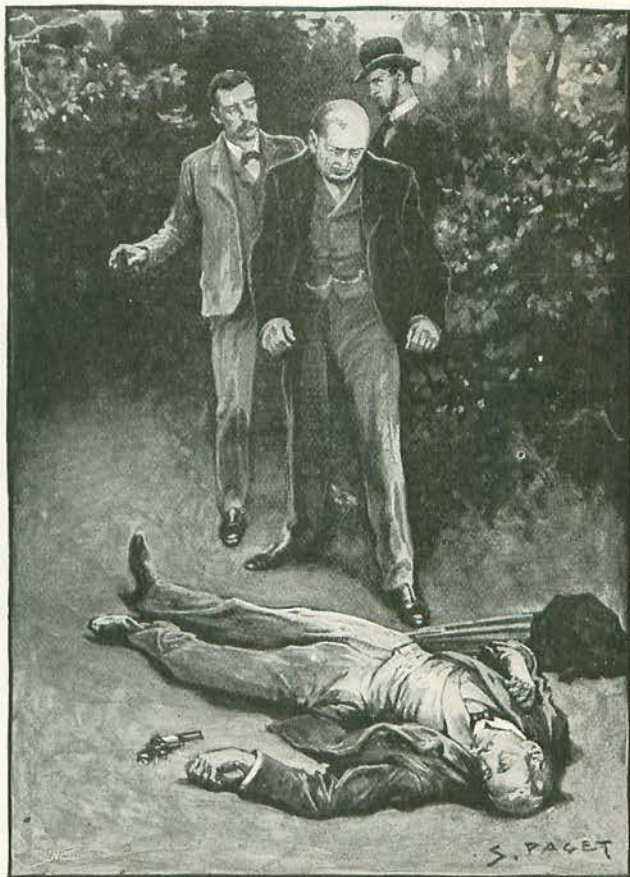
"Quite dead. He was found by one of the gardeners, who came running to tell me."

"Poor fellow," said Kort, "that accursed racing. Fool

that I was to let him go alone! I feared it, Cato, and told you so. It is too dreadful."

"I have sent for the police," said Chetwynd; "you had both better come down with me, the inspector will want to see us all."

We left the room, and Chetwynd leading the way we soon reached the spot. Yes, there lay the poor fellow among the low bushes in the plantation about a quarter of a mile from the house. His camera was beside him, and a revolver lay beneath his right hand. As we looked at the body an indescribable feeling of the utmost horror assailed me. The vague events of the last few weeks seemed to have culminated in this awful tragedy. Of course there would be an inquest, and at that inquest I should have to give evidence. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on my oath—the evidence I should be bound to give in the interests of justice would include what I had overheard pass between Kort and the man whose dead body now lay before me.



"THERE LAY THE POOR FELLOW."

As these thoughts passed through my brain I took a step forward.

"Don't touch him," cried Kort. "Leave him exactly as he is for the police to see. Ah, here is the inspector coming now." He spoke quietly, not like a man who had anything to fear.

The inspector of police made his examination carefully and quickly, asked a few questions, and then, taking possession of the camera and the revolver, had the body placed on the ambulance, which was led away to the mortuary. We then returned to the house.

That night I slept badly. The next day the inquest was held. The court was crowded, all the available seats provided for the public being full. Chetwynd and I were provided with seats beneath the coroner's desk, and just before the coroner entered Kort sauntered in and took a place by my side. With all his apparent nonchalance I could see that he was agitated, though scarcely more so than myself.

The jury were quickly sworn, and, having viewed the body, returned to their seats. The first witness called was the gardener who had found the dead man at 12.20; then a Mr. Henry Sharples, who had come from town, and who was a personal friend of the deceased. He gave evidence of identification, but could assign no cause for suicide beyond the fact that Ridley had lately sustained heavy losses.

The constable now called for Mr. Kort, who stepped into the witness-box and took the oath. The coroner began immediately to question him.

"You have, I believe, Mr. Kort, some knowledge of the very heavy speculation in which the deceased was engaged?"

"Yes," answered Kort, "it was a large bet, or series of bets. He lost a bet that would have brought him in £50,000 on the Dolphin at Kempton Park the day before yesterday."

"The horse lost, I understand, by some accident occurring to the jockey?" continued the coroner; "with this, however, we have nothing to do. Did the deceased say anything to you, Mr. Kort, which would lead you to suspect that in the event of his losing he might take his life?"

"He told me," answered Kort, "that he was in a desperate condition, and that if he lost he was ruined. His manner certainly did lead me to suspect that such an action was possible, and I mentioned my fears to Dr. Cato."

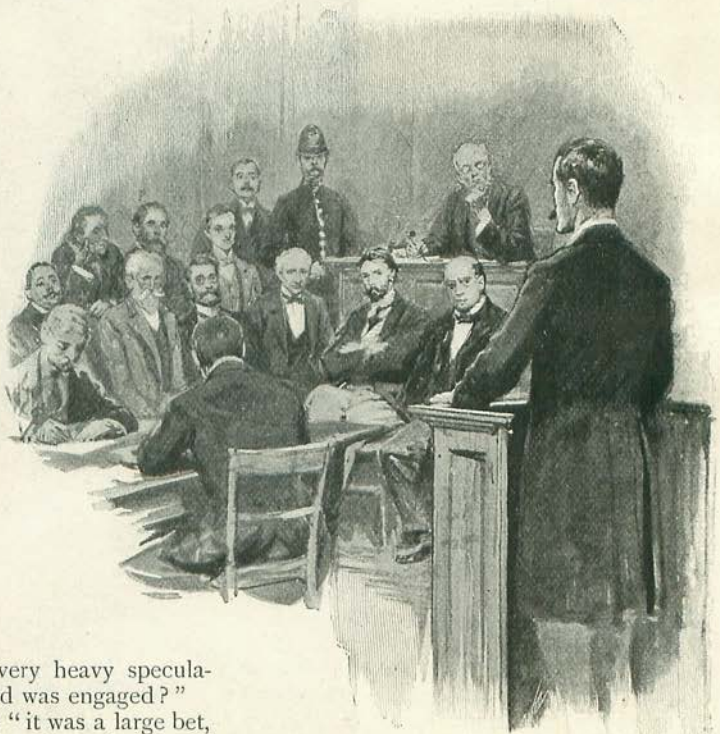
"How long have you known the deceased?" asked the coroner.

I was watching Kort sharply, and saw that at this moment he gave an uneasy gesture. His words, however, were perfectly quiet.

"I met Mr. Ridley five years ago in Vienna, but had not seen him since till he became a member of the Sanctuary Club."

"You think," said the coroner, "that the wound on the head was self-inflicted?"

"Certainly," answered Kort, "and," he added, "of such a nature that death would be quite instantaneous."



"I WAS THEN CALLED."

This ended Kort's evidence, and I was then called. In the first few answers to the questions put to me I merely corroborated Kort's evidence as to Ridley's heavy loss, and then I added that in all probability the wound was self-inflicted.

"Why do you say 'probability,' Dr. Cato? Do you mean that there is a possibility of such a wound being given by someone else?"

"A possibility, certainly," I replied.

"Have you any reason to suppose that the deceased had an enemy?"

"I am not aware that he had one," I answered.

"Do you know of anyone to whom his death would be an advantage?"

At this question I hesitated—a wild tumult of thoughts was racing through my brain. The coroner quietly repeated his remark.

"From something he mentioned to me, and also from subsequent remarks which I happened to overhear, I have such a suspicion," I replied, slowly. Then I added, "Do you demand this as evidence from me?"

"Certainly; you must tell us everything you know."

I glanced at Kort, and saw that his eyes were fixed on my face. I then quietly repeated the remarks I had overheard pass between him and Ridley. The sensation that followed my words was profound—a hush fell all over the room. Then the coroner turned to me again.

"When did you first hear the news of the deceased's death?" he asked.

"At half-past twelve, when Dr. Chetwynd came in and told us."

"You say 'us'?"

"Yes, for Mr. Kort was with me at the time."

"How long had he been with you?"

"He came into my room at ten minutes to twelve."

"How is it that you remember the time so accurately?"

"I remember looking at the clock and also at my own watch."

"And Mr. Kort had not left the room until Dr. Chetwynd came in?"

"No."

"When was the deceased last seen alive?"

"I saw Ridley about eleven o'clock."

The coroner noted my answers carefully, and then, rising in his seat, said:—

"Gentlemen, I adjourn this inquest until ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

The next instant Kort rose from his seat.

"May I ask you one question, sir?"

"Certainly," replied the coroner.

"The police, I believe, took charge of Mr. Ridley's camera—may I ask whether the photographs have been developed, and, if so, may I see them?"

"The plate has been developed, and I believe a print has been taken from it," replied the coroner; "there is no objection to your seeing it at the police-station."

Why Kort made this request I could not imagine. I only knew that, as a result of my evidence, the inquest had been adjourned for the police to institute further inquiries. I saw Kort go up to the inspector, speak a few words to him, and they went out together.

Chetwynd and I now returned to the Club, which we reached about half-past eleven.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour had passed before Kort, accompanied by the inspector, entered. He came up to me in the friendliest manner, and, without the slightest reference to my startling evidence against him, said:—

"Dr. Cato, will you and Mr. Chetwynd kindly accompany the inspector and myself? I shall value your advice on a certain important point."

Without a word we all went into the garden, and made our way to the spot where we had found Ridley's body. Here the inspector produced a print of the photograph Ridley had last taken, and he and Kort examined it minutely. Then Kort began to move about as if to get certain trees in a line.

"This," he said, "is the exact spot from where that photograph was taken. Do you agree with me?" he added, turning to me.

I examined the print closely, and then assented.

"What is the exact time now?" was his next question.

"Five minutes past twelve," I replied.

"Then we will wait exactly where we are for a few moments. Do you see that little window in the summer-house across there?"

"Yes," I answered.

"May I ask you to stand quite still in this spot and watch it closely?"

"Why?" I asked.

"You will see presently," he replied, and the inspector nodded and smiled.

I did as I was desired, still unable to grasp what they both meant. At the end of some minutes Kort said, quietly:—

"Do you see any change in the window?"

"None," I replied, "except that I can scarcely look at it now because it is reflecting the sun into my eyes."

"Ah, exactly. This was not the case when you first saw it?"

"No."

"Well, look at this print again," he continued. "That bright white spot on the photograph corresponding to the pane of glass over there is quite perceptible, is it not?"

"Quite," I answered; "it makes a feature in the picture."

"Well, when Ridley took that photograph the sun was reflected from that window just as you see it now. It is therefore self-evident that the photograph could not have been taken before the sun shone on that window. It occurred to me just now that by referring to the print we could approximately deduce the time that Ridley shot himself, as it must, since death was instantaneous from the nature of the wound, have been at some period after the exposure of the plate. You can see for yourself that this photograph was taken after midday, for the shadows on the print fall slightly to the *East of North*, showing plainly that it was taken after the sun was at its meridian or midday. The body was found at 12.20: Ridley must, therefore, have shot himself between 12.10 and 12.20. Is that not clear, inspector?"

"Perfectly clear," replied the man; "it is an extremely clever and convincing piece of detection."

I gazed at Kort for a moment in utter and absolute amazement, for I saw in an instant that if he was in my room at 11.50, and did not leave it until we both went with Chetwynd to view the body, he could not have possibly committed the murder.

The rare ingenuity, the very concise reasoning that admitted of no deception, unless indeed the sun himself could lie, rendered me speechless.

"Mr. Kort," I said, "my evidence this morning was in the interests of justice. There was no other course open to me but to tell the truth of what I knew. I am still very much puzzled by a great deal that has occurred, but your innocence at least is proved beyond dispute."

"You were perfectly right in what you did, Dr. Cato," he answered, in a magnanimous tone, "but the fact is, poor Ridley was

labouring under a gross misunderstanding with regard to some conduct of mine which happened many years ago. I will explain, later on, the unworthy suspicion which he harboured against me—but seeing that what you said just now might cast a slur on my innocence, it occurred to me



"IS THAT NOT CLEAR, INSPECTOR?"

to clinch the matter in the way I have done. The result has exceeded my most sanguine expectations. Pray do not think any more about it."

The coroner's verdict next day was what might have been expected, "Suicide during temporary insanity."

"Well," I said to Chetwynd later on that same day, "my lips are silenced for the present, and poor Ridley's have been silenced for ever."

"And yet you still suspect?" said Chetwynd, looking keenly into my face.

"I still suspect," I replied, with emphasis. Little did I guess as I said the words what extraordinary events were soon to occur—events which would make the Sanctuary Club itself a by-word. For when a man is desperate, and has the ingenuity of a devil—to what will he not stoop!