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ard had not made his appearance as yet; but, in the midst of her gay badinage, a loud outcry was suddenly heard up-stairs.

We stared at each other with frightened faces. Then, as if by common consent, we all rose from the table, and rushed in the direction from whence the unusual sounds proceeded.

They led us directly to the ante-room. There stood Mr. Richard beside the escritoire, just outside the door of his chamber, the perfect picture of horrified amazement. He turned, hearing our noisy approach, and threw up his hands.

Then, pointing to the escritoire, which stood wide open, he dropped into the nearest chair, covering his face with his two trembling hands.

For the space of a minute there was a terrible silence in the little room. Then Guy moved forward a few paces.

"Gone!" he ejaculated. "Impossible!"

Nobody answered him. With a cry of dismay Mrs. Dacre stooped to search the escritoire. Eloise touched her arm, and said, in a hard, cold tone of voice:

"You need not look for the jewel. You will not find it."

I glanced at Guy and our eyes met. Was it possible he had made a second attempt, stepping over my body while I lay in that strange, deep slumber? But did not droop beneath my gaze.

"This is a terrible thing," he said, in a hoarse, broken tone.

I was silent. The escritoire was turned upside down, but all to no purpose. The jewel was not there.

"The jewel was not there," she said, in a hoarse, broken tone.

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I'll have the police! I'll search the whole house!"

Mrs. Dacre tried to calm him.

"I am so sorry this has happened," said she, thoughtfully, "and in my house. Everything shall be done that can be. We may get some clue to the missing valuable."

"The police! the police!" shrieked Mr. Richard, like one beside himself.

I attempted to get a word with Eloise, but she turned her back on me with such a forbidding look every time I approached, that the thing was impossible. I was half crazed by the terrible event that had occurred, and loth to take any steps in the matter, lest I should be the means of fastening the guilt upon my own brother.

To my surprise, Guy seemed even eager that an investigation should take place.

"We will telegraph for Detective Saul," said he, naming an old acquaintance of ours. "He is just the man, and could be gotten here by the noon train."

It was he who sent the message. He set about the search with an earnestness that could not have been wholly assumed. In the first place, he took care that the servants should get no inkling of what had happened. Then he thoroughly overhauled the ante-room and Mr. Richard's bed chamber, coming out of the latter very much paler than when he went in.

"Here," a minute fragment of silence which I found on your dress-robe," said he, speaking to Mr. Richard. "Was it there when you went to bed last night?"

"No," replied the host, indignantly.

"I thought not. It exhaled the odor of a chambermaid."

"Chambermaid?" repeated Mr. Richard, in a hoarse, broken tone.

"That is a very curious thing," said he, in a hoarse, broken tone.

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thief's purpose? So it would appear.

Calling Guy to one side, I said to him, with a look of suspicion:

"I am tempted to believe you the very hypocrite living."

The hand he held out to me shook like a leaf.

"Don't say that, Barton. I can't blame you, though. You have had cause enough to distrust me. But, for Heaven's sake, do not condemn me unheard."

"Then you did not take the topaz?"

"No," shutting his lips sharply together.

"Who did?"

"I know not. But you must look elsewhere for the thief. But for you I should have stolen the jewel. As it is, this matter is as much of a mystery to me as to you."

The earnestness of his tone carried conviction with it. I warmly embraced him.

"Oh, Guy, Guy, you don't know what a load you take from my heart!"

He hid his face, shuddering.

"The temptation was terrible," he said. "A fortune under my very nose when I needed it so sorely! Do you wonder that I was led to make an effort for it? But that is all past. I will help you find the real culprit, as a sort of atonement."

Two hours later Detective Saul made his appearance—a small, keen-eyed man, whose eagle glances of themselves were enough to make a guilty person quail. By a few well-directed inquiries, he had soon put himself in possession of all the facts we had to communicate.

"One thing is clear to me," he said, then. "We have not far to go for the thief."

I saw that Eloise turned a shade paler, and stole a furtive glance at me. Pretty Mrs. Dacre looked at the detective with a sudden show of interest.

"Do you mean to say, sir, that the jewel is a member of our own household?" she asked.

"Yes, madam."

"How, then, I can't believe it. There has been some distrust among the servants."

"Very likely."

"But, sir," arching her lovely eyebrows, "but not one of them knew that the topaz was in the house."

He smiled quizzically.

"Servants often know more of what is going on than they are given the credit of knowing."

"In general, perhaps. But I really think mine ought to be excepted."

He seemed surprised at her persistency.

"I am glad, at any rate, that nobody has proclaimed to them your discovery of the theft. I may find somebody off his guard, and so get at the truth in a twinkling."

Then he turned to me.

"I must have a look at everybody employed upon the premises. Can you take me around without letting the servants suspect what it is for?"

I promised to do the best I could. We visited the cook, the maids, the coachman, the gardener, in turn. I represented Detective Saul to be a friend on the outlook for just such model help as Mrs. Dacre employed, and so we met with smooth words and friendly looks everywhere. When we had gone the rounds, I paused in the hall to hear the result.

"Well?" I said.

"My recent assertion must be modified somewhat," he returned, with a puzzled air. "The servants know nothing whatever concerning the topaz."

"Then somebody saw Mr. Richard take it from the bank, and followed him here?"

He shook his head.

"I doubt that."

"How, then, do you account for its disappearance?" I persisted, half angrily.

"Wait."

He took two or three turns in the hall, and finally came back to me again.

"Have any indications been discovered that the house was broken into last night?"

"No," was my reply.

"I saw two dogs in the yard when I came in. Were they chained last night? Would they not have made a