

acted as nurse was squared, too, and her evidence is available—the actual date of death was concealed and the Comtesse d'Albreville had time to present her authority and receive the money. After paying her accomplices their price, she left Russia with the bulk of it immediately.”

Harry glanced at Neeld; the old man's face was full of excitement and his hand trembled as it lay on the leaves of Josiah Cholderton's Journal.

“My mother was married to my father on the 23rd,” said Harry slowly.

“My brother died on the 22nd,” said Wilmot Edge. “He was dead before the Comtesse started for Petersburg.”

Harry made no comment. He sat still and thoughtful.

“Of course I was put on the track of the affair,” Edge pursued, “by the disappearance of the money. I had little difficulty in guessing that there had been something queer, but what it was did not cross my mind for a long while. Even after I had a clue, I found Migratz a tough customer, and for a long time I totally failed to identify Madame Valfier. When, thanks to a series of chances, I did so, it was a shock to me. She was the wife of a man of high position and high reputation. She had contrived—she was a remarkable woman—to carry out this expedition of hers without rousing any suspicion; she had returned to her husband and children. Finding herself in danger, she took the bold course of throwing herself on my mercy, and sent for me to Paris. It was not my desire to rake up the story, to injure my brother's memory, or to break up the woman's home. I pocketed the loss as far as I was concerned. As for you, I didn't know you were concerned. I had never gone into the details; I accepted the view which your own conduct, and Lady Tristram's, suggested. I promised silence, guarding myself by a proviso that I must speak if the interests of third persons were ever affected. Your interests are affected now, and I have spoken, Mr. Tristram—or Lord Tristram as I undoubtedly ought to say.”

Harry turned to Mr. Neeld with a smile and pointed at the leaves of the Journal.