

say," he whispered hoarsely. " You have seen me close the safe on that empty package, after heating the sealing-wax upon the broken end; it is as if it had never been touched. This jewel in my waistcoat I shall hide as soon as you leave this house. I am in much trouble, Mr. Kent, and I seek your help because Mr. Lamont told me all about your great abilities in the detection of crime. He told me of your dangerous encounter with that most dangerous of all—that gentleman thief of thieves. You, at least, understand, and bear with me because you know that it is not possible to be too careful where Alceste is concerned, and I——"

" What!" exclaimed Malabar sharply. " Alceste? Where does he come in?"

" Hush! Hush! Not so loud, Mr. Malabar, I beseech you!"

" But Alceste is dead!"

" That is correct, Professor. He was cornered in England by the police and committed suicide," nodded Kent, as Professor Caron turned to him in surprise. " Rather a tame ending for such a clever international thief; but it is the only sort of finish to the kind of game he played. His capture was bound to come sooner or later. The official record of his death is on file at Police Headquarters. There is no question about it."

" Suicide!" murmured Malabar thoughtfully. " He was not the sort to be taken alive. He would at least have the satisfaction of turning out his own light."

" Well, well," pondered Professor Caron. Then his face renewed its former expression. " Dead he may be—then I am very glad of that—but, gentlemen, his