

I retired, not exactly comforted, but still hoping that nothing desperate would happen. I listened anxiously for several hours, but heard no sound of strife, and finally fell into a deep slumber until the birds awoke me in the early morning. Then the terrors of the day flashed upon me.

Jack was to be poisoned at five. Was it now five or half-past? I was uncertain in which. Proximately it was only ten minutes to five. I made up my mind to go down and see Bribeon. He would probably be awake and on the watch with his deadly foil.

What were my feelings as I stole down the stairs? Could Mrs. Tuckett have an old sweetheart of the name of Jack? Could the brute or the beast (for by each name he was known) have got to feel a jealous hatred that nothing but blood could quench? Should I be the means of securing a fellow-creature from a violent death impending?

I stole sily downstairs. As softly I knocked at Bribeon's door, and was rewarded by the appearance of that warrior armed and ready.

We waited. In fact, we waited hours. We heard the "boots" come up and collect the boots. We heard him bring them back again. We listened and waited. No signs of bloodshed, no poison. At last the breakfast bell rang. Then we agreed to go and dress. We descended to the breakfast room looking hurt and gloomy.

Mr. and Mrs. Tuckett were in their usual places, looking—as always—beauty and beast.

Bribeon was calmly silent—watching, but I know now what a fearful volcano lay smouldering beneath.

Jack, apparently, had not been killed. At least, if so, his death had been noiseless. We had no facts to go upon hitherto.

Then a brilliant idea struck me. What if I confronted Tuckett with that letter which I felt sure was endorsed on the back in his own handwriting? I determined to do so.

In my blindest manner I addressed the man whose life I felt was at my mercy.

Bribeon like a man, as he was, edged up and stood steady for any emergency, with the foil of his grandfather in waiting.

"Mr. Tuckett," I said, "is this your envelope, and do you know the meaning of this memo thereon?"

He looked at it, this man of iron nerve. Then he laughed.

"Of course I do. I dropped it on the stairs the other day, and have been rather put out by missing it. I was wondering who could have found it."

"Sir," I said—and I trust in that supreme moment I preserved the dignity of manhood—"can you dare to acknowledge the sinful weight of crime conveyed by the notice on the back of that envelope?"

"Certainly," he replied. "What in the name of fortune do you mean?"

I stared at him in awful horror at his guilt. He glanced at the envelope.

"Jack dines at five," he said.

Then he turned to me again.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked. "My old friend, Jack Manning, asks me to dinner. I pencil a memo on the back of the envelope and you find it, and calmly accuse me of some awful crime. What do you understand?"

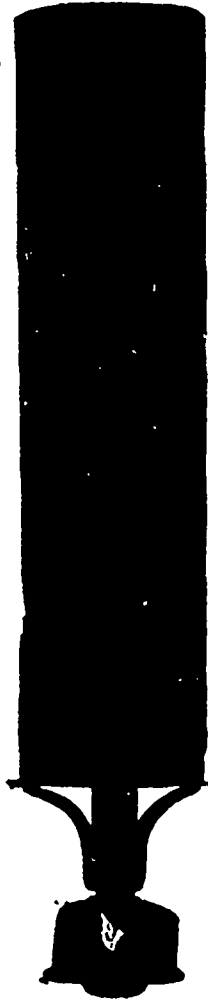
I think I'll draw a veil over the rest of this story, but I wish people would write a little plainer.

OUR COSY CORNER.

No material enjoys greater favor this year than cloth, both for the smartest of walking costumes and in combination with velvet, faille, sicilienne and poplin for the most dressy of demi-toilets; and now it is reported that one of the leading dressmakers is about to bring out some decoileté cloth confections for dinner and opera wear. It seems that this fabric lends itself very kindly to Renaissance decorations of velvet applique and needlework, and besides we must have something now under the sun. Fancy a dress of sieux rose colored cloth of such exquisite quality as to be almost as soft and glossy as velvet, with a decoration of leaves and flowers in shaded silk with veinings of gold and panels of crimson velvet. A sleeveless bodice, arranged to fit the figure by means of side seams and a few flutes only, has a V shaped decoration of the embroidery and a puff of velvet at the shoulder. Pale-t heliotrope cloth is wrought with silver, willow green with black in the Empire style, and cream white, tea-rose, petal tinted, orange, or apricot cloth is bordered with Russian sable or perhaps feather trimming of the same color. Cloth is also made up in combination with striped plush, black and white plush with white cloth, black and scarlet with black, and, more striking still, plush of two shades or ruby red in combination with fir green. The two fluted breadths at the back and the tablier in front are of the plush, and a tight bodice of plush is laced down the front with inch-wide crimson laces finished with oxidized silver tags and worn under a Figaro jacket of green cloth. These bright, broad laces with their fanciful tags are quite the thing for lacing bodices and sleeves as well, and are tied on the outside in little bows. All sorts of innovations and novelties are now being introduced, not merely in the decoration and arrangement of material, but in the cut and fashioning of the waist. Seams are shortened and changed in shape, those of the shoulders especially being curtailed until the sleeve is half way up from the curve of the shoulder to the throat. Side seams are brought so far forward that they almost displace the darts, and the latter are frequently dispensed with altogether by leaving the extra fullness pleated in at the waist. When the dress fabric drapes scarfwise over the shoulder, there is no shoulder seam at all in the material, and the most complicated and puzzling arrangements for fastening characterize all new gowns. Some bodices fasten at the back, some at the side, and others in a most mysterious way by a multitude of concealed hooks and loops in front.

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