

'Possibly not.'

'Nevertheless, my curiosity is satisfied.'

'And now I shall send the lodgeman for the police.'

'You will do nothing of the kind,' said Dr. Colpus, 'for I am going to kill you.' The Doctor raised his stick in both hands. 'This is only an air-gun,' he continued; 'but it is a very special air-gun, and it will infallibly kill at four yards. Moreover, it doesn't make a noise. Don't stir, sir. I give you ten seconds in which to pray for your idiot soul. One—two—three——'

There was a crash through the trees, and the Doctor was violently dragged backward, by a suddenly appearing figure, into the ditch which bordered the avenue. Both figures dropped out of sight, and Arthur Forrest could hear the sound of a terrible struggle.

When Forrest and the lodgeman came with a lantern they found the Doctor dead—choked, with Arthur Peterson's hands still clasped like a vice round his throat. As for Peterson, he was dying: he had been shot in the neck. They carried him into the house.