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"Undoubtedly." "Then we must arrange for her to come to Brussels this afternoon on some pretext. If she only had some friends in the city—"

"The American minister, monsieur!" exclaimed Lablanche suddenly. "He recommended her to Dr. Hartmann. It appears that he was at one time acquainted with your wife's people. Perhaps he would undertake to telephone to her. That would be entirely safe. But I beg of you, monsieur, do not let the minister know what your wife's object in going to Dr. Hartmann's was. He knows her only as Miss Ellicott. He vouched for her to Hartmann. If he knew that he had been used, it would make him extremely angry."

For a few moments Duvall stood in silent thought, then picking up his hat, went toward the door.

"I will see the American minister at once," he said as he went out. "Wait for me here, gentlemen. I will be back within an hour."

Mr. Phelps, the United States minister, was busy in his cabinet when Duvall was announced. He took the card from his secretary and glanced at it carelessly. The detective's name caused him to start.

"Richard Duvall," he said aloud to his secretary. "Surely it can't be the well-known detective? Yet the name"—he regarded the card, his forehead wrinkled with thought. Duvall's distinguished position as the author of several works on the science of criminology was well known to him.

"Show him in," he said at length, and began to relight his cigar.

Duvall was ushered in, and in a few moments had explained the object of his visit.

A young lady—a Miss Ellicott—he told the minister, had come to Brussels the night before, and had gone to Dr. Hartmann's as a patient. Mr. Phelps nodded, and added that he had met Miss Ellicott, and had used his influence to enable her to obtain Dr. Hartmann's services.

"The doctor is a great friend of mine," the minister remarked. "I regard him as one of the leading scientists of Europe."

"Undoubtedly," the detective assented gravely. "I am not acquainted with him myself. My business is with Miss Ellicott."

"Then why have you come here?" asked Mr. Phelps with some asperity. "The doctor's house is but a few moments' drive."

"I know that. But, unfortunately, I am not acquainted with Miss Ellicott. She might resent my calling on her so unceremoniously. I had hoped that you might ask her to come here, so that I might be properly introduced to her."

The minister considered the matter carefully. Evidently he did not altogether like it.

"You forget, Mr. Duvall," he said finally, "that I myself do not know you. Furthermore, I certainly have no desire to involve Miss Ellicott in any difficulties. I trust," he concluded uneasily, "that she is not already so involved."

"No." The detective shook his head. "Not yet. But unless I can have a few words with her in private she soon may be. I am working in her interests. I am here to protect her from a grave danger."

He went toward the minister, and, taking a package of papers from his pocket, placed them in the latter's hand.

"Here are my credentials. From them you will see that I am what I represent myself to be. I cannot undertake to explain to you the reasons which prevent me from going to Miss Ellicott where she is. The mere fact that I am unknown to her will, I trust, prove sufficient. I wish to say but a few words to her. She will be very glad to hear them, I know."

The minister returned the papers to Duvall and glanced at the clock upon his desk. "We are having a few friends for dinner to-night, Mr. Duvall. I shall ask Miss Ellicott to join us."

"If you care to be one of the party—" he paused, looking at the other questioningly.

"I shall be very glad indeed to accept, Mr. Phelps. I assure you that I would under no circumstances force myself upon you in this way were it not for Miss Ellicott's good. And, in order

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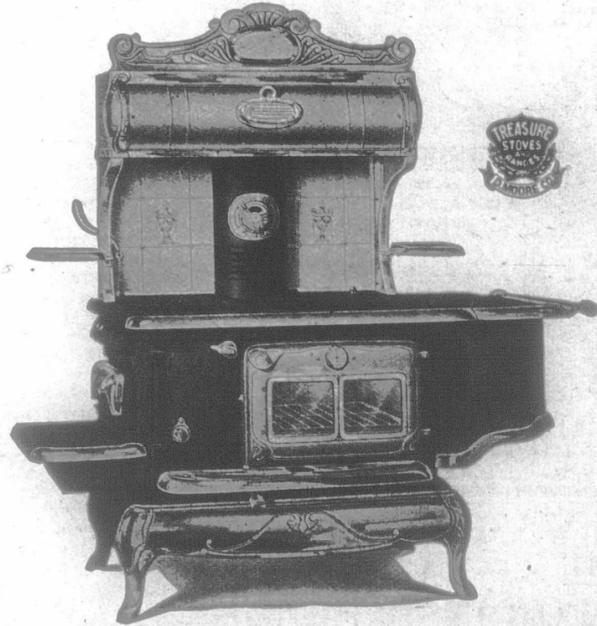


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