

Loria had stood listening with the rest, a sneer on his lips, though his eyes burned with a deep fire. If he had taken a step, hands would have been thrust out to stop him. But he did not move except, in the midst of Liane Devereux's story, to play nervously with an old-fashioned ring of twisted, jewel-headed serpents on the third finger of his left hand.

Suddenly, as the woman finished, he raised the hand to his lips and seemed to bite the finger with the ring. Then he dropped his hand and looked at his accomplice with a strained smile. But the smile froze; the lips quivered into a slight grimace. His eyes, glittering with agony, turned to Virginia.

"I loved you," he said, and fell forward on his face.

"He has taken poison!" exclaimed Chandler, the United States Consul. "It must have been in that queer ring."

He, and Roger Broom, and George Trent, and the German doctor pressed round the prostrate figure, but the woman who had denounced him was before them all. With a cry she rushed to the fallen man, and, flinging herself down, caught