

and the authority she held should thereby lose its legal validity."

"You mean that they determined to carry out a fraud if necessary?"

"Precisely. I must remind you that my brother knew nothing of this. He was altogether past understanding anything about it. I may be very brief now, but I am still anxious that you should fully understand. All that I'm saying to you is beyond question and can be proved at any time by taking evidence on the spot; it is easily available."

Harry had sat down by now and was listening intently.

"On the morning of the 22nd," Edge pursued in his level, methodical way, "the Comtesse went to the station escorted by Dr. Migratz; that was his name—rather that is his name; he is still alive. On the way they met the British Vice-Consul, and in reply to inquiries from him said that my brother had had another attack but had rallied again. Dr. Migratz expressed the opinion that he would live another two days, while Madame Valfier (the Vice-Consul knew her by that name) was sanguine enough to talk of the possibility of a recovery. She impressed him very much by her courage and hopefulness; she was, I may remark, a handsome and attractive woman. Leaving the Vice-Consul, they reached the station and there parted. Migratz returned immediately to my brother's house and remained there, the case being declared to be so critical as to require unremitting attention. Madame Valfier—the Comtesse—took the train to Petersburg, reached it that evening, presented the authority early next morning and was back about midnight—that being the 23rd. The next day my brother's death was announced, certified by Migratz, and duly registered as the law of the place required." He drew a paper from his pocket. "This is a copy of the entry, showing death on the 24th.

"That document is very familiar to me, Colonel Edge. It gives both styles, doesn't it?"

"Yes, both styles, but—well, you see for yourself. My story is done. With Migratz's connivance—a woman who