

CHAPTER III

IN the late afternoon preceding the evening on which happened the gathering at the "One Tun," Sir John Dering paced up and down the great drawing-room of his house in Bloomsbury Square.

He walked slowly backwards and forwards, a man evidently deep in thought with many undesirable preoccupations on his mind. Occasionally he paused in his restless tramp along the carpeted room to gaze through the windows upon the square outside. A prospect, wholly desirable, met his eyes. The trees in Bloomsbury Square were bursting into life, and, swayed by the fresh breeze, their waving branches, shot with tender young green, seemed to dance with joy at the coming of summer. The late gleams of the sun lit the western sky, turning it into a golden dream, gilding the tops of grim Georgian houses, reflecting its own glory in their burnished-glass windows, lighting the few early spring flowers which bloomed in the gardens of the Square, or wasted their fragrance in fading bunches in the street-sellers' baskets.

For the charming indications outside of the coming of summer heralded by the early spring, Sir John Dering had no thought. Fair as was the prospect, dark shadows were hanging over his mind. Resuming his restless promenade, he stopped at the end of a minute or two and turned slowly on his

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