

"It was I who took it away (as, by the bye, Molly, with unusual acumen, always suspected), and for two reasons. First I wanted to have the stone tested, as I had a notion that it might prove more valuable than we thought. But in this I was wrong: the stone was intrinsically worthless. Secondly, I knew that its disappearance would perplex and, perhaps, distress you, for the family superstition had never been eradicated from your mind. In this I was right.

"I am quite willing now, however, that you should have the stone, if you can find it. In a fit of unreasonable vexation at its worthlessness, I flung it out of a window in the Tower, into the midst of a thickly growing bed of bracken. It may be there yet, for aught I know. If you can find it, you are welcome to it, and to all the luck that it may bring.

"I have now told you the whole truth, and I think that you can afford to let me pass from your notice and from your memory. You are not likely to hear of me again.

"R. K."

Moncrieff read this letter with a feeling of rage and shame of which he found it difficult to rid himself. All Stella's persuasions were needed before he could resolve to send Kingscott the assurance that he would take no steps to make the matter public; but he did so at last, under the conviction that for Molly's sake it had better remain unknown. The robberies he could forgive: but it was hard to pardon the man's vile plotting against the characters of Stella and of Molly; or his cold blooded murder of John Hannington. These he could never pardon, but he refrained from vengeance, and was content to leave his enemy to the inevitable disappointment and remorse which Time alone could bring.

A search was made for the stone, but proved unavailing. It must have become embedded in the earth and overgrown with vegetation, and probably, Moncrieff said, rather regretfully, would never be found at all. He declared that he had no superstitious feeling about it in the very least, but Stella fancied that she could read a little regret in his honest eyes.

Molly mourned her husband bitterly, but she was young still, and her heart had, after all, not been broken. There came a day when Captain Rutherford, after two years of