

Calvert, but half re-assured still eyed the girl who sat impassive.

"But," said he at length, "can you not arouse him immediately, doctor? There are matters of the last importance awaiting the instant of my father's waking for him to be made acquainted with."

"One can but try;" was the answer: "Yet I am not very sanguine of success. The symptoms are peculiar, and certainly not like an ordinary case of one over-dosed with anodynes."

"Strange!" resumed he, after an interval spent in attempts by powerful stimulants, and otherwise, to recall consciousness. "Strange! The pulse is strong; the life functions seem unusually vigorous for one in such a condition. But there appears to be a complete torpor of the mind; or rather, a total severance between the intellect and its ordinary channels of communication through the senses. This may continue for an indefinite period. There is something inexplicable about the case. Perhaps the young lady can throw a little light on it."

Thus appealed to, Marie approached with an air of timid anxiety, the most natural in the world for a young person who feared she had unwittingly done mischief.

"Ah, monsieur!" said she, with swimming eyes and clasped hands, to the physician. "Is it that there is danger? But our poor uncle, he was suffering so. I could not refuse his solicitations for the anodyne."

"How much did you administer?" said the good doctor, gently, pitying her evident distress.

The girl picked up the narrow phial, and shewed with the tip of her finger-nail from point to point what had been abstracted.

"Good Heavens!" said he "that would be enough to kill three men."

Marie uttered a shriek. Calvert, with one bound leaped upon the miserable woman, and pinned her hands as in a vice.

"Stay, stay! The girl is certainly mistaken," cried the doctor. "With such a dose the inexplicable thing is that he is not dead long before this. To all appearance the animal functions, and even the nervous sensibilities are as active and acute as ever, see!—"

Calvert, releasing his hold and half-turning, saw at the doctor's touch on the sole of the foot, a spasmodic shrinking instantly respond. So, when the eyelid was lifted, the contraction of the iris round the pupil, and the nervous twitching of the muscles of the lid proved the doctor's word true.