

expression came over his face. "Listen, Mac," he said quietly, putting his hand on his friend's arm, "I'm afraid you have come up from Buffalo to-day to no purpose. Old Lloyd is unwell. I rang up Ethel Lloyd an hour ago, but she wasn't sure whether they were coming. It *will* be bad luck if they don't."

"Well, the interview need not necessarily come off to-day," said Allan, disguising his disappointment.

"In any case I shall hang on to his heels, Mac! He shall have no peace! And now good-bye for the present." And Hobby vanished, reappearing next moment in a neighbouring box occupied by three red-haired young ladies and their mother.

The conductor with the vulture beak was back in his place now and a crescendo thundering from the drums filled the hall. The bassoons gave out a questioning and plaintive strain, which they repeated at a higher pitch and which the violins then took up from them and translated into their own tones.

Maud abandoned herself again to the music.

Allan sat beside her, a victim to anxiety and suspense. He regretted now that he had come at all. Lloyd's proposal that they should meet in the box of a concert hall was not in any way surprising, in view of the remarkable character of the man and of the fact that he very seldom received anyone in his house; and Allan had not hesitated to fall in with it. He was quite ready to accept the explanation, if Lloyd was really ill, but he demanded the utmost respect for this great project of his, the colossal nature of which sometimes almost overwhelmed him. Until now he had confided the secret of this enterprise, over which he had laboured day and night for five years, to two men only: Hobby, who knew as well how to keep silent when necessary as how to talk when free so to do; and now to Lloyd. He had not told even Maud about it. He felt that Lloyd *ought* to make his way to the concert hall, if it were in any way possible. At the least he ought to send a message making some other appointment. If Lloyd did not do this, well, he would have nothing more to do with the moody old man.