

speech died away. She staggered. The Marquis still made no movement. It was David who caught her in his arms and carried her to the couch. He turned and faced them. In the background, Sylvia was clinging to Grantham's arm.

"You gibbering fools!" he cried. "What if an accursed chance has brought me here! Isn't she Lady Letitia, your daughter, Marquis? Isn't she your betrothed, Grantham? Your niece, Duchess? Do you think that anything but the rankest and most accursed accident could ever have brought me within reach even of her fingers?"

No one spoke. The faces into which he looked seemed to David like a hideous accusation. Suddenly Gossett's voice was heard from behind.

"The fire is nothing, your lordship. It is already extinguished. Some one seems to have brought some blazing brambles and thrown them into the courtyard."

"Get some water, you fools!" Thain shouted. "Can't you see that she is faint?"

The Duchess began to collect herself. She advanced further into the room in search of restoratives. The Marquis came a step nearer to Thain.

"Tell me how you found your way into this room, sir?" he demanded.

"By the foulest means on God's earth," Thain answered. "I came through the secret passage from Vont's cottage."

"Without Lady Letitia's knowledge, I presume?" Grantham interposed hoarsely.

"No one but a cad would have asked such a question," David thundered. "I broke into her room, meaning to deliver one brief message and to go back again. Vont followed me and fastened the door.—Can't you read the story?" he added, turning appealingly to the