

"I—I saw *that*. It was that that made me think . . . Kissed my handkerchief, you say. Sir James, you swear you saw him?"

"If you like, so will the nurses; they saw it too. They, I may tell you, think the same as I do."

"Thank God, oh, thank God . . . at last."

"Certainly, thank God, but forgive an old man, Lady Violet. I think a kiss from you would be more to the purpose. Why not go down now and give it him?"

"Oh, I will; but—but, Sir James, there is something you must tell me first."

"Another question! Oh, my dear Lady Violet!"

"Could he—could he bear a shock, do you think?"

"Depends on what the shock is. Tell him that you'll have nothing more to do with him, and, well," he shrugged his shoulders: "tell him something else, though, and he'll be walking in a month."

"But supposing I know what this thing on his mind is, and he thinks I do not, and wishes to die to keep it from me, and I tell him, what then?"

Sir James hesitated. "Can you make it clear to him first," he said slowly, "that it will be all right, make no difference to you? That's all important. If—if, I say—you can do that, I think you might."

"I—I believe I can. Shall I go now?"

"The sooner the better. Get it over. Come along," and, followed by curious eyes, together they passed down the deck, through the companion, and made their way below.

At a door they stopped. Sir James looked at Violet, studying her face, then nodded approvingly.

"You'll do," he said; "go in now. I'll be within hail if you want me; but try not to. Fight it out yourself. Good luck." He smiled at her, patted her shoulder, and turned away, leaving Violet to enter alone, and alone to fight her battle with death.