

all. They uttered no word for many minutes—not, indeed, until one of the iron doors suddenly swung open and Alban himself came in among them. He was drenched to the skin, for he had carried no umbrella, and wore but a light travelling-suit—the identical one in which he had returned from Poland. Very pale and worn and thin, this, they said, was the ghost of the Alban who had left them in the early summer. And his manner was as odd as his appearance. You might almost have said that he had thrown the last shred of the aristocratic rags to the winds, and put on old habits so long discarded that they were almost forgotten. When he crossed the stage to them, it was with his former air of dogged indifference and cynical self-content. Explanations were neither offered nor asked. He flung his hat aside and sat upon the corner of a crazy sofa despised by the rest of the company. A hungry look, cast upon the inviting delicacies, betrayed the fact that he was famished. Be sure it was not lost upon the watchful Sarah.

“Good Gawd, to see him walk in amongst us like that! Why, Mr. Kennedy, whatever’s up? Whatever brings you here on a night like this?”

Alban had always admired the Lady Sarah; he admired her more than ever to-night.

“Wind and rain, Sarah,” he said shortly; “they brought me here, to say nothing of Master Betty cutting across the street as though the cops were at his heels. How are you all? How’s his reverence? Speak up, my lord—how are the affairs of your extensive diocese?”