

tated. "I am not asking these questions idly, Professor Caron. I am tremendously interested and only want to clear the air, as it were, of what appears a little confusing to me. This scarab, now. Are we to understand that it was a part of this ancient, buried treasure, taken from tombs of old by ancient robbers? Or did you purchase it from somebody? If so, what fabulous price did you pay for it? Just how did it come into *your* possession, Professor?"

It was their host's turn to hesitate. He stared at his inquisitor dubiously. He wet his lips, shrugged his shoulders.

"It was part of this treasure, was it?" persisted Malabar. "You found it at this lost tomb?"

"Yes."

"I have been in Egypt, Professor Caron. I know a little about Egyptology—not that I have given it the study you have, of course; but I know a little." Dick Malabar smiled in deprecation. "I know a great deal more, however, about precious stones. You surely are not asking me to believe that this beautiful ruby in its unique golden scarab setting is an antique, Professor!"

"No, no, Mr. Malabar—not an antique, of course. It is a cut gem of a much later period."

"Exactly. Yet you say you found it! Professor, do you realize that that ruby is almost the size of a pigeon's egg? Do you know that such large stones are very scarce? Even a fine, deeply coloured ruby of three carats is a rarity. One of nine carats is worth over £6,000. Do you realize the weight and value of that scarab stone? Rubies of that size are not left lying around carelessly. They are known—and traced!"