

XXXIV

PATIENT LADY

THE fool-man started round.

In the door of the billiard-room behind him stood one, tall and slim and maidenly.

"Shoot who?" asked this one, looking with large eyes.

"What!" stuttered the fool-man, "what! Joliff'll tell you what!"

"Joliff has gone," said the lady.

"Has he?" said the other—"what? Well, I must be going too," and was withdrawing hastily.

"One minute, Tony," said the lady.

"What?" said Tony testily. "What—what?"

"Don't quack so," reproved the lady. "Just answer nicely. Shoot who?"

"What!" said the other nervously, "shoot—what? Only shoot some rubbish."

"What's Joliff got to do with rubbish?" asked the lady.

"What!" said Tony, "who said he had—what?"

"You did," said the lady.

"Me!" said Tony. "Never!"

"Don't equivocate, Tony," said the lady gravely. "It was Joliff you were talking to. He slunk through the swing door when I came."

"Was that Joliff?" said Tony—"what?"

"You know it was," said the lady.

"Well, what about him if it was?" said Tony—"what?"

"What were you talking to him about?" asked the lady.

"What!" said Tony. "Can't tell you; can't reelly!"

"Why not?"

"I've forgotten," said Tony weakly; "my memory's so blame rocky."

She looked at him with large eyes. "Tony," she said, gravely, "don't lie."