

England, but for her and him. Yet just an instant, as Hiram Blake's strident tones rang out, Althea thought she must be dreaming. It could not be that this meant death.

But the commonplace words were significant.

"Sorry to disturb you, ma'am, only we don't like darned interference of this sort. May I trouble you to put down that plaything, and step across here."

Althea looked at the infuriated man quickly and looked away again. Her nostrils were dilating, her breath came in broken gasps.

"Ladislav!" There was womanish terror in her voice. "You won't let them touch me?"

He was already at her side.

"Give me the box, Althea. It's all they want. Then they won't harm you, dear."

For answer Althea turned to the water. She stooped over it. There was a swift, sidling movement, and the case, released from her hands, fell clear of the barge, straight down into the river.

As it disappeared O'Neill uttered a fierce imprecation, answered by curses from the landing-stage. Led by Hiram Blake, the three jumped upon the barge. It rocked beneath their weight.

Quick as thought, Althea darted back—on to the little boat. "There is still a chance if you can cut this rope," she cried. "Save yourself and me, Ladislav."

He sprang after her, but the tiny craft, built for speed, could ill sustain such movements. Its rowlocks dipped to the water's rim. Close behind came the avenging Three, their gleaming daggers raised. Deep below the sluggish river rolled.