

England.' Then he murmured to himself once or twice, 'Owen Cazalet! Owen Cazalet!'

After that, he rose from his desk and moved calmly across the room, with his soldier-like tread, to the large bureau opposite, filled with drawers and pigeon-holes. Into one drawer he thrust the letter, and re-locked it securely, holding the key in his hand—a little brass key very daintily finished. Next, he walked back again, undismayed, to the seat by the desk. He sat down in it coldly, and fixed his steely eye once more on his expected victim.

But, even while he crossed the room, Madame Mireff, on her part, had not been idle. Her chance had come; with woman's instinct she seized it. Noiseless, but quick as lightning, with a strange gleam in her eye, she rose up as the General rose, and took a step or two, unperceived, across the floor towards Ruric Brassoﬀ. She drew her hand from her bosom and held it out in front of her. Something bright passed hastily with a meaning glance between them. Ruric Brassoﬀ hid the toy for a minute in the side pocket of his coat. Then, noiseless again, and quick as lightning once more, while Alexis Selistoff was still unlocking and relocking the drawer, Olga Mireff slipped back, unperceived, to her seat. She sat down like a mouse. The whole little manoeuvre, all unseen and unnoted, occupied but a second or two. For stealthiness and silence it was catlike in its dexterity. Ruric Brassoﬀ felt proud of his disciple's cleverness. On that soft Turkey carpet her light footfall went unheeded. When Alexis Selistoff turned again, Madame was sitting there as motionless and as deeply interested as before, still toying with some imaginary object in her heaving bosom. Alexis Selistoff never suspected for a moment she had moved. But the pretty little revolver of the delicate workmanship lay snugly ensconced now in Ruric Brassoﬀ's pocket.