

CHAPTER IV

AN END AND A BEGINNING

At the moment when the baby worshippers at 1620 Brook Street were hushing their voices while Ada sang the new little Christine Brown to sleep, there was fresh dismay in the Torrance home in Amberley Avenue. Just what had happened the frightened servants hardly knew, but the mistress of the mansion had passed from hysterical weeping into death-like stupor and back again into hysterics, and the master had come downstairs with a face so ghastly that they dared not question him. He was now shut up in the library with a detective, and so far not one of them had plucked up courage to listen at the door.

Indeed, the detective himself was startled out of his usual placidity by the sight of his client's face. Adam Torrance, the distinguished, the debonair, looked like an old man. His shoulders stooped. The hand he offered shook like an aspen. "What is it?" asked the detective anxiously. "Have you news at last?"

"News? Yes. All the news that there ever will be. The search is ended, Johnson. My child is dead!"

"Nonsense! What possible purpose——"

Adam Torrance raised his hand. "You know that I have always been afraid that this was not a case of kidnapping for money," he said quietly. "I had no reasons to give you, but I felt that it was so."