

"In a circle!" she continued.

"Well," said I, "the ring of a circus is not essentially one of the circles in Dante's Inferno."

"Of course, my dear Simon," she said, with some impatience, "if you defend him——"

I hastened to interrupt her. "I don't. I think he is an egregious young idiot; but before taking action it's well to get a clear idea of the facts. By the way, how do you know she's not painted?"

"I've seen her—seen her with my own eyes in Dale's company—at the Savoy. He's there supping with her every night. General Lamont told me. I wouldn't believe it—Dale flaunting about in public with her. The General offered to take me there after the inaugural meeting of the International Aid Society at Grosvenor House. I went, and saw them together. I shall never forget the look in the boy's eyes till my dying day. She has got him body and soul. One reads of such things in the poets, one sees it in pictures; but I've never come across it in real life—never, never. It's dreadful, horrible, revolting. To think that a son of mine, brought up from babyhood to calculate all his actions with mathematical precision, should be guilty of this profligacy! It's driving me mad, Simon; it really is. I don't know what to do. I've come to the end of my resources. It's your turn now. The boy worships you."

A wild appeal burned in her eyes and was refracted oddly through her near-sighted spectacles. I had never seen her betray emotion before during all the years of our friendship. The look and the tone of her voice moved me. I expressed my sympathy and my readiness to do anything in my power to snatch the infatuated boy from the claw and fang of the syren and hale him to the forgiving feet of Maisie Ellerton. Indeed, such a chivalrous adventure had vaguely passed through my mind