

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, touching his cap, "but I'm looking for a gentleman named Matthias —"

"I am Mr. Matthias."

"Thank you, sir. I've been sent to fetch you. It's — er — important, I fancy," the man added, eyeing Matthias curiously.

"You've been sent to fetch me? But who sent you?"

"My employer, sir — Mr. Marbridge."

"Marbridge!" Matthias echoed, startled. Without definite decision, he turned and ran down the steps in company with the chauffeur: Venetia in need of him, perhaps . . . "What's happened?" he demanded. "Is Mrs. Marbridge —?"

"If you'll just get in, sir," the man replied, "I'll tell you — as much as I know — on the way. It'll save time."

He opened the door of the tonneau, but Matthias turned from it, walked round the car, and climbed into the seat beside the driver's. With a nod of satisfaction, the chauffeur joined him, threw in the power, and deftly swung the ponderous vehicle about.

"Well?" Matthias asked as the machine shot across-town.

"Beg pardon, sir," the man replied after a moment — "but I'd rather not say anything, if it's all the same to you."

"It isn't," Matthias insisted curtly. "I'm not on sufficiently friendly terms with Mr. Marbridge for him to send for me without explanation."

"Yes, sir; but you see, part of my job is to keep my mouth shut."

"I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to forget that duty to some extent, or else stop the car and let me out."

"Very good, sir. I don't suppose I can do any harm telling what little I know. After supper tonight, Mr. Marbridge told me to take the car to the garage and not