

THE AMBUSH

Pathetically trivial it may seem. Nothing but a well-gnawed stub of a pencil and a few soiled sheets of pink and highly perfumed note paper. They had become too soiled and shabby for the housemaid, who had occupied the room before me, to think it worth while to take them away with her.

I did not have to cast about to find a use to which this unexpected treasure-trove could be put; it came to me complete in the half second between the opening and shutting of that drawer. But I went back to bed, and for an hour I tested my plan by every contingency I could think of.

When they knocked at the door with my breakfast, I was ready. I did not answer the knock. When the man entered with my tray, I glowered at him and roughly ordered him to be off.

"Take that stuff away," said I, "if you don't want me to pitch it out of the window."

He seemed rather nonplused at this development, but after a moment of hesitation, obeyed me. I heard him tramping off down the corridor, and knew with perfect certainty that inside of five minutes I should hear Dr. Berry's quiet, catlike tread coming to take up his post of observation outside my keyhole. That was what I wanted.

I let him wait a while. Then furtively, and as silently as possible, I went over to my table, took