

right by the payment of no small sum, but he had known her from childhood, and owed his present eminence solely to her and her family's patronage, begun when he was but a struggling country doctor, and continued unbroken till now. And, knowing her, he was aware that she would decline to be put off by the usual evasive answer; he must do one of two things, refuse, or tell the truth, such as he knew it.

"What is it you wish to know, Lady Violet?" he said.

"If I can tell you, I will; if, I say."

"You can. It is this. Is—is he going to die?"

"Ah!" as he expected. The stereotyped answer came fluently from his lips: "We must hope for the best," he said. "There's always hope. I've seen worse cases than his, much worse."

"Please answer my question, Sir James."

The latter frowned again and hesitated. He then glanced at her, and spoke out in a tone of irritation.

"You ask me a question a doctor always refuses to answer," he said, "but, as you will have it, I will give you my opinion. I don't want to, but . . ."

"What is your opinion?"

"That he will die, but not of his wounds, Lady Violet. They've practically healed, bad as they were; but . . . He's something on his mind, and for that I can do nothing. 'Mind diseased,' you know. He could recover if he wanted to, but he doesn't want. He won't fight, he won't take his medicines, and . . . he'll die. I'm sorry to put it so brutally, but you asked me for the truth, and I've given it you, as far as I know. I may be wrong."

Lady Violet looked at him. Turning away, she stood for a while looking out to sea, then once more faced him.

"Do you—have you any idea what it is that's troubling him?" she said in a strained voice, her eyes fixed intently on his face. "He's never said anything, when—delirious."