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Comply with my demands, or your ar-rest will follow in a couple of hours." "And after that?" "You will pay the penalty of your crime," said the young man grimly. "Ah, but pardon-men are not hanged so easily in your free England; their guilt has to be first proved; and in try-ing to do this-who knows-you might chance to put a noose round your own neck."

neck." "What do you mean?" asked Dick threateningly, his fists clenched, his

chance to put a hoose found your own neck."
"What do you mean?" asked Dick threateningly, his fists clenched, his eyes flashing fire.
The doctor raised an arresting hand.
"Quietly, my good sir," he said,
"quietly! If you have come, as you announced—the flag of truce in your hand—to treat of terms, there is no occasion, at this stage or our interview, for violence—the essential is that we should understand each other. I am sorry for you. I wish you well, although fate has pitted us against each other. In all good faith I am about to show you the cards I hold in my hand—they are strong ones. Self-preservation is the first law of nature; and, if I am arrested, I shall be forced to inform the police that shortly before the outbreak of fire at Ardwell Court—to be quite precise, between the hours of twelve and one, Mr. Richard Emberson had been observed issuing stealthily from the stables of Ardwell Court, a can of petrol in each hand."
Dick's brows knit into a savage frown, and he caught his underlip between his teeth; but his eyes met those of the man unflinchingly, and he made no attempt to deny the accusation. "Observed by whom?" he asked curtly. "By you—perhaps?"
"Weill you not have to explain your own presence on the scene at such an

"Will you not have to explain your own presence on the scene at such an hour?"

own presence on the scene at such an "My explanation is ready. I had visited at the Hall that afternoon, and having had the misfortune to miss my train back to town, had put up for the night at the village inn. On returning to my room, I discovered that I had lost a small article of jewellery which I valued; and slipped out, therefore, when all was quiet, to go over the ground I had traversed during the day, in the hope of finding my property." "The article you lost I found two days later; it was entangled in the branches of the ivy growing under my father's window—showing clearly by its presence there that the latter had been used as a means of access to the room above." As Dick spoke—all unconsciously the

above." As Dick spoke—all unconsciously the fingers of his right hand pressed the out-side of the pocket in which the incrim-inating piece of evidence was lodged. Aram Kalfian's eyes narrowed into mere slits, whilst an ugly sneer passed over his face, as this one unwary move-ment proved how little fitted his an-tagonist was by nature to measure his strength in a war of wits with a clever and unscrupulous man like himself. Leaning forward, so that the upper part strength in a war of wits with a chever and unscrupulous man like himself. Leaning forward, so that the upper part of his body was across the table, the doctor struck Dick lightly on the chest. "And you carry it there?" he said. "Imprudent, my young friend—im-prudent!" "I carry something else besides," was the grim retort, and before he could draw back sufficiently to reach his own weapon, Aram Kalfan found himself confronting the muzzle of a revolver. "Now, you will either hand over to me at once what has been feloniously removed, or take the consequences," said the young man in a low, tense voice.

said the young man in a low, tense voice. The doctor's body seemed to stiffen into rigidity, and his sallow face turned literally green with fear; he was prov-ing in his own person the truth of the well-worn axiom that it is dangerous to underrate the strength of your foe. "It is impossible—impossible for me to comply with your demand!" he stammered. "What you seek is not here; and if it were—to give it up to you would be to sign my own death-warrant. You can shoot me now if you like, but what will it avail you to shed my blood? You know full well that I am but a humble instrument in the hands of those more powerful than you or I." Dick hesitated, uncertain how to act;

you or 1." Dick hesitated, uncertain how to act; he had threatened; but when ;, came to the point he knew that it would be im-possible for him to kill this man 'y cold blood, however much he deserved i⁺; he knew also that in calling himself the



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