

table. A revolving wooden rosette concealed a keyhole in the carved front of the oak book-case facing the window, and the false front opened to reveal a small steel safe with a combination lock, within which lay bundles large and small, tied with tape and neatly docketed, envelopes sealed and open, half sheets of note paper and leaves torn from a pocket book. The top strata, newest in date, shewed the scattered flashes of a brain which no longer burned with steady light. There were notes on "Housing Reform and Politics," "The Mechanism of a Subsidised Press" and "Public Health," unequal in design and all of them unfinished, starting as elaborate essays and ending in phrases, quotations and chapter headings. Below them lay a fuller study of "Free Libraries and the Control of Opinion," "The International Power of a Creditor Nation" and "Powder and Shot." Sir Aylmer turned hurriedly over this last; it was while he tested the power of a man or group of men to set their money in opposition to the destructive will of a bellicose nation that his health broke down; he was curbing democracy by withholding supplies, as formerly the bankers had curbed their kings, and he had never been given time to apply his test. Now he was unequal to trying again. The yellow manuscript pages of "Powder and Shot" always recalled an unsought holiday in the South Pacific, followed by a premature return to New York, followed in turn by aching weeks in a darkened house on Riverside Drive, wherein he tried with lips puckered at one side to explain that all would be well with him if the doctor would only put back the top of his skull instead of leaving the brain pulsing in agonised exposure. . . . He rapidly turned over the ragged-edged essays, seeking to drive that one memory away. "The Development of the Mississippi Valley" was ancient history by now and had never been anything but a commercial enterprise; in the latter days of his power he had come to regard commerce and finance as a means of political ascendancy, it was in this light that he would have Deryk regard them. . . .