

for Santoine which stirred sympathy, almost pity.

"I believe with the doctors that Basil Santoine is to be spared," the tall man continued. "The nation is to be congratulated. He is certainly one of the most useful men in America. The President—much as he is to be admired for unusual qualities—cannot compare in service. Suppose the President were assassinated; instantly the Vice-President would take his place; the visible government of the country would go on; there would be no chaos, scarcely any confusion. But suppose Basil Santoine had died—particularly at this juncture!"

Eaton finished his breakfast, but remained at the table while Blatchford, who scarcely touched his food, continued to boast, in his queer humility, of the blind man and of the blind man's friendship for him. He checked himself only when Harriet Santoine appeared in the doorway. He and Eaton at once were on their feet.

"My dear! He wants to see me now?" the tall man almost pleaded. "He wants me to be with him this morning?"

"Of course, Cousin Wallace," the girl said, gently, almost with compassion.

"You will excuse me then, sir," Blatchford said hastily to Eaton and hurried off. The girl gazed after him, and when she turned the next instant to Eaton her eyes were wet.

"Good morning!"

"Good morning, Miss Santoine. You are coming to breakfast?"

"Oh, no; I've had my breakfast; I was going out to see that things outside the house have been going on well since we have been away."

"May I go with you while you do that?" Eaton tried to ask casually. Important to him as was the plan of the house, it was scarcely less essential for him to know the grounds.

She hesitated.

"I understand it's my duty at present to stay wherever I may be put; but I'd hardly run away from you while inside your own grounds."

This did not seem to be the question troubling her. "Very well," she said, at last. The renewed friendliness—or the reservation of judgment of him—

which she had let him see again after the interview with her father in the morning before, was not absent; it seemed only covered over with responsibilities which came upon her now that she was at home. She was abstracted as they passed through the hall and a man brought Eaton's overcoat and hat and a maid her coat.

Harriet led the way out to the terrace. The day was crisp, but the breeze had not the chill it had had earlier in the morning; the lake was free from ice; only along the little projecting breakwaters which guarded the bluff against the washing of the waves, some ice still clung, and this was rapidly melting. A gravelled path led them around the south end of the house.

"Your father is still better this morning?" Eaton asked.

"What did you say?" she asked. He repeated his question. Was her feeling, he wondered, due to her time in their short acquaintance he was consciously "using" her, if only for the purpose of gaining an immediate view of the grounds? He felt that; but he told himself he was not doing the sort of thing he had refused to do when, on the train, he had avoided her invitation to present him to her father. Circumstances now were entirely different. And as he thought off the reproach to himself, she came from her abstraction.

"Yes; Father's improving steadily and—Dr. Sinclair says—much more rapidly than it would have been right to expect. Dr. Sinclair is going to remain only to-day; then he is to turn over to the village doctor, who is very good. We will keep the same nurses at present."

"Mr. Blatchford told me that might be the arrangement."

"Oh, you had some talk with Mr. Blatchford, then?"

"We introduced ourselves."

HARRIET was silent for a moment, evidently expecting some comment from him; when he offered none, she said, "Father would not like you to accept the estimate of him which Mr. Blatchford must have given you."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't Mr. Blatchford argue with you that Father must be the greatest man living?"

"He certainly expressed great admiration for your father," Eaton said. "He is your cousin?"

"I call him that; he's Father cousin. They were very close friends when they were boys, though Cousin Wallace is a few years older. They entered preparation school together and were together all through college and ever since. I suppose Cousin Wallace told you that it was he—Those are the garages and stables over there to the north, Mr. Eaton. This road leads to them. And over there are the tool-houses and gardeners' quarters; you can only just see them through the trees."

She had interrupted herself suddenly, as though she realized that his attention had not been upon what she was saying but given to the plan of the grounds. He recalled himself quickly.

"Yes; what was it you were saying about Mr. Blatchford?"

She glanced at him keenly, then coloured and went on. "I was saying that Father and he went through college together. They both were looked upon as young men of very unusual promise—Mr. Blatchford especially; I suppose because Father, being younger, had not shown so plainly what he might become. Then Father was blinded—he was just sixteen; and—Cousin Wallace never fulfilled the promise he had given."

"I don't quite see the connection," Eaton offered.

"OH, I thought Cousin Wallace must have told you; he tells almost every one as soon as he meets them. It was he who blinded Father. It was a hunting accident, and Father was made totally blind. Father always said it wasn't Cousin Wallace's fault; but Mr. Blatchford was almost beside himself because he believed he had ruined Father's life. But Father went on and did all that he has done, while it stopped poor Cousin Wallace. It's queer how things work out! Cousin Wallace thought it was Father's, but it was his own life that he destroyed. He's happy only when Father wants him with him; and to himself—and to most people—he's only the man that blinded Basil Santoine."

"I think I shall understand him now," Eaton said quietly.

"I like the way you said that. . . . Here, Mr. Eaton, is the best place to see the grounds."

Their path had topped a little rise; they stopped; and Eaton, as she pointed out the different objects, watched carefully and printed the particulars and the general arrangement of the surroundings on his memory.

As he looked about, he could see that further ahead the path they were on paralleled a private drive which two hundred yards away entered what must be the public pike; for he could see motor-cars passing along it. He noted the direction of this and of the other paths, so that he could follow them in the dark, if necessary. The grounds were broken by ravines at right angles to the shore, which were crossed by little bridges; other bridges carried the public pike across them, for he could hear them rumble as the motor-cars crossed them; a man could travel along the bottom of one of those ravines for quite a distance without being seen. To north and south outside of the cared-for grounds there were clumps of rank, wild-growing thicket. To the east, the great house which the trees could not hide stood out against the lake and beyond and below it was the beach; but a man could not travel along the beach by daylight without being visible for miles from the top of the bluff, and even at night, one traveling along the beach would be easily intercepted.

Could Harriet Santoine divine these thoughts in his mind? He turned to her as he felt her watching him; but if she had been observing him as he looked about, she was not regarding him now. He followed her direction and saw at a little distance a powerful, strapping man, half-concealed—though he did not seem to be hiding—behind some bushes. The man might have passed for an undergardener; but he was not working; and once before during their walk Eaton had seen another man, powerfully built as this one, who had looked keenly at him and then away quickly. Harriet flushed slightly as she saw that Eaton observed the man; Eaton understood then that the man was a guard, one of several, probably, who had been put about the house to keep watch of him.

Had Harriet Santoine understood his interest in the grounds, as preparatory to a plan to escape, and had she therefore taken him out to show him the guards who would prevent him? He did not speak of the men, and neither did she; with her, he went on, silently, to the gardeners' cottages, where she gave directions concerning the spring work being done on the grounds. Then they went back to the house, exchanging—for the first time between them—ordinary inanities.

She left him in the hall, saying she was going to visit her father; but part way up the stairs, she paused.

"You'll find books in the library of every conceivable sort, Mr. Eaton," she called down to him.

"Thank you," he answered; and he went into the library, but he did not look for a book. Left alone, he stood listening.

As her footsteps on the stairs died away, no other sound came to him. The lower part of the house seemed deserted. He went out again into the hall and looked about quickly and waited and listened; then he stepped swiftly and silently to a closet where, earlier, he had noticed a telephone. He shut himself in and took up the receiver of the instrument. As he placed it to his ear, he heard the almost imperceptible sound of another receiver on the line being lifted; then the girl at the suburban central said, "Number, please."

Eaton held the receiver to his ear without making reply. The other person on the line—evidently it was an extension in the house—also remained silent. The girl at central repeated the request; neither Eaton nor the other person replied. Eaton hung up the receiver and stepped from the closet. He encountered Donald Avery in the hall.

"You have been telephoning?" Avery asked.

"No."

"Oh; you could not get your number?"

"I did not ask for it."

Eaton gazed coolly at Avery, knowing now that Avery had been at the other telephone on the line or had had report from the person who had been prepared to overhear.

"So you have had yourself appointed my—warden?"

Avery took a case from his pocket and lighted a cigar without offering Eaton one. Eaton glanced past him; Harriet Santoine was descending the stair. Avery turned and saw her, and again taking out his cigar-case, now offered it to Eaton, who ignored it.

"I found Father asleep," Harriet said to Eaton.

"May I see you alone for a moment?" he asked.

"Of course," she said; and as Avery made no motion, she turned toward the door of the large room in the further end of the south wing. Eaton started to follow.

"Where are you taking him, Harriet?" Avery demanded of her sharply.

SHE had seemed to Eaton to have been herself about to reconsider her action; but Avery decided her. "In here," she replied; and proceeded to open the door which exposed another door just within, which she opened and closed after she had entered and Eaton had followed her in. Her manner was like that of half an

hour before, when she showed him the grounds beyond the house. And Eaton, feeling his muscles tighten, strove to control himself and examine the room with only casual curiosity. It would well excuse any one's interest.

It was very large, perhaps forty feet long and certainly thirty in width. There was a huge stone fire-place on the west wall where the wing connected with the main part of the house; and all about the other wall, and particularly to the east, were high and wide windows; and through those to the south, the sunlight now was flooding in. Bookcases were built between the windows up to the ceiling, and bookcases covered the west wall on both sides of the fireplace. And every case was filled with books; upon a table at one side lay a pile of volumes evidently recently received and awaiting reading and classification. There was a great rack where periodicals of every description—popular, financial, foreign and American—were kept; and there were great presses preserving current newspapers.

At the center of the room was a large table-desk with a chair and a lounge beside it; there were two other lounges in the room, one at the south in the sun and another at the end toward the lake. There were two smaller table-desks on the north side of the room, subordinate to the large desk. There were two "business phonograph" machines with cabinets for records; there was a telephone on the large desk and others on the two smaller tables. A safe, with a combination lock, was built into a wall. The most extraordinary feature of the room was a steep, winding staircase, in the corner beyond the fireplace, evidently connecting with the room above.

THE room in which they were was so plainly Basil Santoine's work-room that the girl did not comment upon that; but as Eaton glanced at the stairs, she volunteered:

"They go to Father's room; that has the same space above."

"I see. This is a rather surprising room."

"You mean the windows?" she asked. "That surprises most people—so very much light. Father can't see even sunlight, but he says he feels it. He likes light, anyway; and it is true that he can tell, without his eyes, whether the day is bright or cloudy, and whether the light is turned on at night. The rooms in this wing, too, are nearly sound-proof. There is not much noise from outside here, of course, except the waves; but there are noises from other parts of the house. Noise does not irritate Father, but his hearing has become very acute because of his blindness, and noises sometimes distract him when he is working. . . . Now, what was it you wished to say to me, Mr. Eaton?"

Eaton, with a start, recollected himself. His gaining a view of that room was of so much more importance than what he had to say that, for a moment, he had forgotten. Then:

"I wanted to ask you exactly what my position here is to be."

"Oh," she said. "I thought that was plain to you from what Father said."

"You mean that I am to be kept here?"

"Yes."

"Indefinitely?"

"Until—as Father indicated to you on the train—he has satisfied himself as to the source of the attack upon him."

"I understand. In the meantime, I am not to be allowed to communicate at all with any one outside?"

"That might depend upon the circumstances."

He gazed at the telephone instrument on the desk. "Miss Santoine, a moment ago I tried to telephone, when I—He described the incident to her. The colour on her cheeks heightened. "Some one was appointed to listen on the wire?" he challenged.

"Yes." She hesitated, and then she added, in the manner in which she had directed him to the guard outside the house: "And besides, I believe there are—or will be—the new phono-