

"It is a gentleman in a great hurry, your honour," Timothy explained.

Crawshay, dour and threatening, came a little further into the room. Behind him in the hall was a vision of his escort. Sir Denis looked up from the hearth with a poker in his hand.

"My friend," he observed, "it seems to be your unfortunate destiny to be always five minutes too late in life."

Crawshay's outstretched hand pointed denouncingly through the window towards the bay.

"If I am too late this time," he declared, "then an act of treason has been committed. You know what it means, I suppose, to communicate with the enemy?"

Denis shook his head.

"As yet," he said, "we have held no communication with our visitors. If you doubt my word, come down on your knees with me and examine these ashes."

Crawshay, with a little exclamation, crossed the floor and crouched down by the other's side. A word or two in the topmost document stared at him. The seal of the envelope had melted, and a little thread of green wax had made a strange pattern upon the stones.

"Is this the end, then?" he demanded in bewilderment.

"It is the end," was the solemn reply. "Perhaps if you take the ashes away with you, you will be able to consider that honours are divided."

"You burnt them — yourself?" Crawshay muttered, still wondering.