

## THE DREADFUL SECRET

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surely the doctor, come at last to see the sick man lying upstairs. The sick man was Henry Leek, and Henry Leek was Priam Farll's bad habit. While somewhat of a rascal (as his master guessed), Leek was a very perfect valet. Like you and me, he was never shy. He always did the natural thing naturally. He had become, little by little, indispensable to Priam Farll, the sole means of living communication between Priam Farll and the universe of men. The master's shyness, resembling a deer's, kept the pair almost entirely out of England, and, on their continuous travels, the servant invariably stood between that sensitive diffidence and the world. Leek saw every one who had to be seen, and did everything that involved personal contacts. And, being a bad habit, he had, of course, grown on Priam Farll, and thus, year after year, for a quarter of a century, Farll's shyness, with his riches and his gloom, had increased. Happily Leek was never ill. That is to say, he never had been ill, until this day of their sudden incognito arrival in London for a brief sojourn. He could hardly have chosen a more inconvenient moment; for in London of all places, in that inherited house in Selwood Terrace which he so seldom used, Priam Farll could not carry on daily life without him. It really was unpleasant and disturbing in the highest degree, this illness of Leek's. The fellow had apparently caught cold on the night-boat. He had fought the approaches of insidious disease for several hours, going forth to