

THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN

Other messages to hand in the morning rescued our journey to London from the misery which must have attended it otherwise. The Italian count saw us off from Como. I did not grudge him that happiness. It was his parting glimpse of his divinity — and her fortune.

Slow as the mail train seemed to us in its scurry through Italy, Switzerland, and France, we passed many a weary hour in England before Karl recovered his five senses, to say nothing of the sixth. During four days he lay prone at the gate of death, his breathing slow, labored, and stertorous, the pupils of his eyes dilated unequally.

But splendid surgery saved him. The injury was so serious that a prompt operation, carried out before his parents were even aware of his condition, alone pulled him back from the void. Steindal's blow, delivered on the side rather than the back of the head, caused a depressed fracture of the skull, a tiny bit of bone being driven into the temporo-sphenoidal lobe. The resultant concussion, too, passed rapidly into a compression of the brain arising from effusion of blood. It was the breaking of the bottle which delivered Karl from instant death. Had such a heavy implement retained its solidity, the shock must necessarily have been fatal.

The expert surgeon who carried out the requi-