

"Voilà!" he exclaimed with the pride of a connoisseur.

Kent and Malabar both started back in astonishment, then bent eagerly forward with subdued cries of admiration. Lying on its satin cushion was a beautiful scarab of pure gold, so exquisitely wrought in delicate design as quite conceivably to belong to an age of lost arts. Neither of the two marvelling guests had ever beheld anything like it before.

With a hand that shook in eagerness while his eyes shone with excitement, Professor Caron picked it carefully from its resting-place and turned the beautiful gold beetle over on its back.

They gasped. Speechless, they stared. Imbedded in a cunning setting lay a magnificent ruby, so large and pure it was breath-taking. It was carmine red with a slight bluish tinge—the colour which the Burmese compare to the blood of a freshly killed pigeon—"pigeon's blood red." The great stone caught the rays of the light; it lay shining and palpitating like a pool of blood! They could not take their eyes off it!

At last Addison Kent freed himself from the spell and stared at the smiling Frenchman with a sober face.

"Priceless!" he murmured. "And it is this which you are proposing to hide in your—upstairs?" He pointed to the ceiling.

"Assuredly. See, I shall remove it now and put back the empty case, re-sealing the outer wrapping. A burning match or two should soften the wax sufficiently."

"Professor Caron, it is not safe," protested Kent. "You must not risk such a gem as that here—not even for a single night." It was Kent's glance now which roved anxiously about the room. "I want you to let