

THE SAILOR

"Otto met him coming in as he went out."

"Well?"

"Well, as I say, Mary and Mr. Harper were together a long time and somehow—I'm sorry to tell you this—she has seemed quite ill ever since."

Edward expressed regret.

"And Dr. Claughton strongly advised a change."

"I am very sorry," he said gravely.

"She is so overstrung that she has had to have sleeping drafts. It is by Dr. Claughton's advice she has gone down to Woking."

"But what reason have you to connect all this with Mr. Harper?"

"The evening he saw her she didn't come down to dinner. Now I would like you to tell me a little more about—about Mr. Harper. You brought him here, you know. Otto says he is not altogether . . . Do you think that?"

"Had I thought for a moment that he was not a desirable acquaintance I should not have brought him here." This was a shameless begging of the question; it was not he who had brought the young man there.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Lady Pridmore with feeling. "That is exactly what I said to Otto. I wish you would tell me all you know about this Mr. Harper."

"I am afraid I can only tell you one thing about him."

"Yes," said Lady Pridmore encouragingly.

"At the present moment he is very dangerously ill. The doctors take a very grave view of his case."

Lady Pridmore was grieved to hear that, but it fully confirmed what she had surmised.

What had she surmised?

"I am quite sure that something rather dreadful took place here a week ago."

Ambrose felt that was most probable.