

"Well," said Brown, reflectively, "there is something I could suggest, but I would like to ask another question." He stopped a moment, and tapped the palm of one hand with his glasses. "Why did you go out to Africa?"

"Wouldn't the chance of winning £5,000, which was what Jefferson estimated my share would be, appear a sufficient reason?"

"No," said Brown drily. "Not to me. When he first made you the offer you wouldn't go."

"I went, however, when I heard that he was sick. It was then a very natural thing. That ought to satisfy you."

"I scarcely think it does."

"Then, if I had any other reasons, though I am not exactly admitting it, they concern myself alone."

Brown made a little gesture. "Well," he said, "I don't suppose it matters in the meanwhile. You have once or twice asked my advice, and now you have some £7,000, and, I understand, don't know how to lay it out to the best advantage."

"Exactly. I don't feel the least desire to undertake the heaving off of any more steamers."

Brown leaned forward, and tapped his hand with the glasses. "An enterprising man could do a good deal with £7,000. It would, for example, buy him, we'll call it, a third share in a certain rather profitable fruit and wine business in Las Palmas. That is, of course, on the understanding that he devoted his whole time and energy to it."

Austin gazed at him in blank astonishment for a moment or two, and then a red flush crept into his face.

"I fancy a third share in the business you are evidently alluding to would be worth a good deal more than that," he said.

"Probably," said Brown, with a trace of dryness. "That