

CHAPTER XXXIII

HER fingers seemingly all thumbs, her heart swelling with misery and loneliness, wanting to go to him but fearing she would be misunderstood, Kitty scooped up the dazzling stones and poured them hastily into the tobacco pouch, which she thrust into Cutty's hands. What she had heard was not the cry of a disordered brain. There was some clear reason for the horror in Hawksley's tones. What tragedy lay behind these wonderful prisms of colour that the legitimate owner could not look upon them without being stirred in this manner?

"Take them into the study," urged Kitty.

"Wait!" interposed Hawksley. "I give one of the emeralds to you, Cutty. They came out of hell—if you want to risk it! The other is for Miss Conover, with Mister Hawksley's compliments." He was looking at Kitty now, his face drawn, his eyes bloodshot. "Don't be apprehensive. They bring evil only to men. With one in your possession you will be happy ever after, as the saying goes. Oh, they are mine to give; mine by right of inheritance. God knows I paid for them!"

"If I said Mister——" began Kitty, her brain confused, her tongue clumsy.