

"You never said he said that!"

"Because he didn't. He only cautioned me particularly against believing the rubbish that got into the newspapers. I am sure that if he had said anything *then* about recovery, I should remember it now."

"I suppose you would."

"And then six weeks after that Gwen came tearing home by herself from Vienna. Then the next thing we heard was that he had recovered his eyesight, and they were to be married in the autumn."

This was at the entrance to the tunnel, on the way to the Hippopotamus. One's voice echoes in this tunnel, and that may have been the reason the conversation paused. Or it may have been that resonance suggests publicity, and this was a private story. Or possibly, no more than mere cogitative silence of the parties. Anyhow, they had emerged into the upper world before either spoke again.

Then said the lady:—"It seems that it comes to the same thing, whichever way we put it. Something happened."

"My dear," replied the gentleman, "you ought to have been on the Bench. You have the summing-up faculty in the highest degree. Something happened that did not, as the phrase is, come out. But what was it?—that's the point! I believe we shall die without knowing."

"We certainly shall," said Mrs. Percival Pellew—for why should the story conceal her identity? "We certainly shall, if we go over and over and over it, and never get an inch nearer. You know, my dear, if we have talked it over once, we have talked it over five hundred times, and no one is a penny the wiser. You are so vague. What was it I began by saying?"

"That that sort of flash-in-the-pan he had . . . when he saw the bust, you know . . ."

"I know. Septimius Severus."

" . . . Was just about the time Sir Coupland Merridew met us at the Kinkajou, and asked for the address in Cavendish Square. That was the end of September. Gwen told you all about it that same evening, and you told me when I came next day."

"I know. The time you spilt the coffee over my poplinette."

"I don't deny it. Well—what was it you meant to say?"

"What about? . . . Oh, I know—the Septimius Severus business! Nothing came of it. I mean it never happened again."