

by; but No. 19 had evidently no eye for the beautiful—and no time to waste on the care of plants. The necessary privacy was ensured by closely-drawn muslin curtains, whose smoke-coloured hue betrayed a proud scorn of the humble wash tub. Unlike the other houses, too, the windows giving on the front were all hermetically closed, although the day was a warm one. A brass plate upon the door informed all interested in the fact that Dr. Aram Kalfian lived within.

The door was opened to Dick by a dark, ill-favoured-looking individual in rolled-up shirt sleeves, who scowled at him under bent brows as if his very presence was an insult and an injury to him. He was the type of man you would expect to find spouting Socialism in a corner of Hyde Park; one who sees in every well-dressed man or woman his natural enemy, and would go out of his way to kick an animal if it looked sleek and well fed. When Dick inquired of this worthy if Dr. Kalfian were within, he answered neither yea nor nay; nor did he condescend on his side to ask any question as to the name or business of the visitor, but with an inarticulate grunt turned on his heel and stalked along the passage—leaving the other to follow or not, as he chose; threw open the door of the back room, and thrusting his head inside called out, in a gruff voice to its occupant: "Someone to see you"; then, evidently considering he had done all that could be expected of him, wheeled round again and slouched out of sight, and into some mysterious back region, whither we will not attempt to follow him.

At another time the man's surly manner would have amused or irritated Dick, according to the mood of the moment; but now absorbed in one dominant thought, one steadfast purpose, he scarcely observed it. Passing through the open door, he closed it carefully behind him—and then stood for a moment, his eyes fixed piercingly upon the man who rose to his feet as he entered and stood in an attitude of polite attention. Anyone with mind less preoccupied than our hero would have inevitably remarked two things: firstly, the smell of stale smoke with which the atmosphere was poisoned; secondly, the darkness of the room; for the green venetian blinds had been let down to keep out the afternoon sun. When their eyes had gradually accustomed themselves to the semi-obscurity, they would probably have noted that the walls were of a bilious green, and with the exception of two small maps affixed with drawing-pins, perfectly bare; that the splendours or dilapidations of the carpet were hidden by a dirty drugget; that the whole of the furniture consisted of two big leather armchairs, whose backs were greasy from the friction of countless generations of heads, of a sofa to match, of a small, mahogany cheffonier, of the sort mostly affected by small lodging-house-keepers, and of a writing-table heaped with an untidy litter of books and papers. Dick, however, as we have said before, saw but one object, the man whose name had rung in his ears day and night since he first came across it amongst his father's papers.

Dr. Aram Kalfian's appearance and attire savoured as little of his supposed profession as did his room, for he was dressed in a suit of shabby grey tweeds, whilst his feet were cased in a pair of monstrous carpet slippers. In person, he was an under-sized, squarely-built man of about forty, with arms of an ape-like length; his hands were white and well-cared for, the finger-nails inordinately long and hooked like the beak of a bird of prey, but in their sinuous strength suggested cruelty; and the face above them intensified the impression. His complexion was olive, and he wore his bushy, black hair in foreign fashion, straight on end; his eyes, black also, were overshadowed by thick, straggling eyebrows—one of which stood at least a quarter of an inch higher than its fellow; his nose and lips were thin—the former aquiline in shape, the latter, with the chin, sparsely covered with a stubby growth of black hair.

He was the first to break the silence. "Good afternoon, Mr. Emberson," he said coolly; "to what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?"

At the sound of his own name falling from the lips of one who was to him an absolute stranger, Dick started vio-



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