

"Oh!" she replied mildly. "That was for something else. When he came out of prison the first time they arrested him again instantly—so I was told. It was in Scotland."

"I see."

There was a rattle as of hailstones on the window. They both started.

"That must be Charlie!" she exclaimed, suddenly losing her excitement under this pretext. "He doesn't want to ring and wake the house."

Edwin ran out of the room, sliding and slipping down the deserted stairs that waited patiently through the night for human feet.

"Forgot to take a key," said Charlie, appearing, breathless, just as the door opened. "I meant to take the big key, and then I forgot." He had a little round box in his hand. He mounted the stairs two and three at a time.

Edwin slowly closed the door. He could not bring himself to follow Charlie and, after a moment's vacillation, he went back into the breakfast-room.

#### IV

Amazing, incalculable woman, wrapped within fold after fold of mystery! He understood better now, but even now there were things that he did not understand; and the greatest enigma of all remained unsolved, the original enigma of her treachery to himself. . . . And she had chosen just that moment, just that crisis, to reveal to him that sinister secret which by some unguessed means she had been able to hide from her acquaintance. Naturally, if she wished to succeed with a boarding-house in Brighton she would be compelled to conceal somehow the fact that she was the victim of a bigamist and her child without a lawful name! The merest prudence would urge her to concealment so long as concealment was possible; yes, even from Janet! Her other friends deemed her a widow; Janet thought her the wife of a convict; he alone knew that she was neither wife nor widow. Through what scathing experience she must have passed! An unfamiliar and disconcerting mood gradually took complete possession of him. At first he did not