

minutes how she feels. I've persuaded him to go to his room, and I think it might do him good if you went and had a bit o' talk with him.'

I mounted at once to the second-floor sitting-room, and found Christopherson sunk upon a chair, his head falling forwards, the image of despairing misery. As I approached he staggered to his feet. He took my hand in a shrinking, shamefaced way, and could not raise his eyes. I uttered a few words of encouragement, but they had the opposite effect to that designed.

'Don't tell me that,' he moaned, half resentfully. 'She's dying—she's dying—say what they will, I know it.'

'Have you a good doctor?'

'I think so—but it's too late—it's too late.'

As he dropped to his chair again I sat down by him. The silence of a minute or two was broken by a thunderous rat-tat at the house-door. Christopherson leapt to his feet, rushed from the room; I, half fearing that he had gone mad, followed to the head of the stairs.

In a moment he came up again, limp and wretched as before.

'It was the postman,' he muttered. 'I am expecting a letter.'

Conversation seeming impossible, I shaped a phrase preliminary to withdrawal; but Christopherson would not let me go.

'I should like to tell you,' he began, looking at me like a dog under punishment, 'that I have done all I could. As soon as my wife fell ill, and when I saw—I had only begun to think of it in that way—how she felt the disappointment, I went at once to Mrs. Keeting's house to tell her that I would sell the books. But she was out of town. I wrote to her—I said I regretted my folly—I entreated her to forgive me and to renew her kind offer. There has been plenty of time for a reply, but she doesn't answer.'

He had in his hand what I saw was a bookseller's catalogue, just delivered by the postman. Mechanically he tore off the wrapper and even glanced over the first