

BORROWING STRANLEIGH'S NAME. 9

Mackeller, "to cease work at a moment's notice, as you suggest. Very large interests are involved, and any neglect of them might be ruinous."

"That's what every business man says," replied the doctor. "In your case, keep on as you are doing, and you have less than six months to live."

Peter Mackeller listened to this sentence of death with bowed head and furrowed brow, still incredulous; nevertheless, being an intensely practical man, his mind at once took up a search for an alternative. Perhaps, after all, this gruff medico might know what he was talking about. Never during his strenuous life had Peter experienced a single day's illness. The strong physique which his Highland ancestry had transmitted to him could surely not break down thus completely before he reached middle life. Most of his forefathers had died young at a hundred. Peter muttered to himself, rather than addressed the doctor—

"Perhaps Stranleigh would take charge of my affairs for a while."

"Do you refer to Lord Stranleigh?" asked the expert.

"Yes; he's an old friend of mine. He has got me out of trouble several times; I mean, of course, financial trouble."