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Dr. Aram Kalfian

(Continued from page 29.)

the purport of my presence here. But first let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for the warning, which came, alas! too late; its futility does not in the least diminish my debt of gratitude."

Ted's uncle was a grey-haired, portly little man; his face was shrewd, but genial; his eyes black and twinkling, his complexion ruddy; his whole appearance that of a comfortable bourgeois; but at Dick's words the colour faded in his cheeks into ghastly streaks, and he raised his fore-finger to his lips with a look of startled apprehension. His next proceedings was to rise and move softly and silently towards the door which he opened with a sudden jerk. There was no one in sight, and closing it again with a sigh of relief, he returned to his seat.

"There are subjects best avoided, Mr. Emberson," he said hurriedly, "and this is one of them; walls sometimes have ears. I am sorry I was not able to be of real service to you. You said just now, however, something about my being able to guess the purport of your presence here. I do not wish to do so; for my own safety, and for yours, it is necessary that I should attach no particular importance to your visit; that I should see in it only the polite attention of a casual acquaintance—my young nephew's friend. You understand?"

"I understand; and yet—forgive me, Monsieur Marcel, if I insist! I have counted on your help; and should you fail me—"

"I cannot help you. It is impossible!" interrupted the little man, with ever-rising agitation. "You don't know what you ask, in what danger you may be placing me."

"No one but yourself need be aware of my identity," replied Dick soothingly. "My name was not given to your servant. I am simply your nephew's friend; there can be nothing surprising or suspicious in the fact of his coming to see you immediately upon his arrival in Paris, nor of his bringing his chum and travelling companion along with him."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Monsieur Marcel, evidently reassured; "perhaps I am alarming myself unnecessarily. Still, you must forgive me if I seem inhospitable, and beg you not to come here again; it can do you no good, and it may seriously imperil me."

"Only answer me a few questions," pleaded Dick, "and I will trouble you no more. Do you know, or can you ascertain for me, if Dr. Aram Kalfian is at present in Paris? I have reason to think he arrived yesterday, and, if so, where I am likely to find him?"

"I have not Dr. Kalfian's personal acquaintance; and I know nothing whatever of his movements," was the curt reply.

"Yet," persisted the young man, "you knew of his being sent to England; you knew the nature of his mission there."

ONE glance at the resolute face of his interlocutor showed Pierre Marcel that it was impossible to avoid the explanation forced upon him; and he resigned himself, albeit with a rather bad grace, to the inevitable. First, however, he took his precautions. Turning to his nephew, he asked—

"Are your ears sharp?"

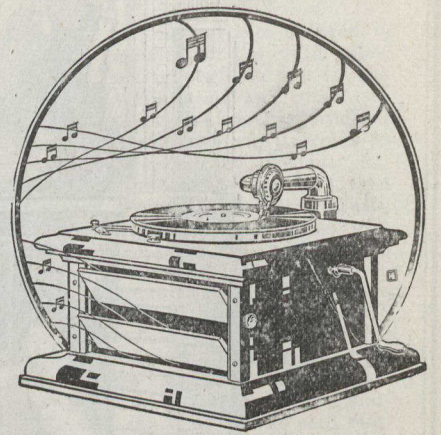
Rather surprised, Ted answered in the affirmative.

"Then stand close by the door," was the curt command, "and keep guard. If you hear the sound of stealthy footsteps outside, say nothing; but move back towards us. I have reason lately to suspect that I have a spy in my household; that is why your friend's presence here so alarms me."

Ted having taken up his post, Monsieur Marcel turned a pale, serious face to his other visitor.

"Now, monsieur," he said, "I am at your service. You say I knew of Kalfian's presence in England—that I knew also the nature of his mission. It is true. I learnt both by chance. I have business transactions with"—he hesitated a moment, as if for a choice of words, then went on hurriedly—"with the Circle to which Kalfian and others belong. I know the rules of the community: the stern justice it metes out to traitors. In my business capacity, I was employed to make certain enquiries

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