

frowned, and reflected. 'Please let me hear of your visit beforehand,' he repeated to himself, as if the request had been, in some incomprehensible way, offensive to him. He opened the drawer of his desk, and threw the letter into it. When business was over for the day, he went to his club at the tavern, and made himself unusually disagreeable to everybody.

A week passed. In the interval, he wrote briefly to his wife. 'I'm all right, and the shop goes on as usual.' He also forwarded one or two letters which came for Mrs. Ronald. No more news reached him from Ramsgate. 'I suppose they're enjoying themselves,' he reflected. The house looks queer without them; I'll go to the club.'

He stayed later than usual, and drank more than usual, that night. It was nearly one in the morning, when he let himself in with his latch-key, and went up-stairs to bed.

Approaching the toilette-table, he found a letter lying on it, addressed to 'Mr. Ronald—private.' It was not in his wife's handwriting; not in any handwriting known to him. The characters sloped the wrong way, and the envelope bore no postmark. He eyed it over and over suspiciously. At last he opened it, and read these lines:

'You are advised by a true friend to lose no time in looking after your wife. There are strange doings at the seaside. If you don't believe me, ask Mrs. Turner, Number 1, Slain's-row, Ramsgate.'

No address, no date, no signature—an anonymous letter, the first he had ever received in the long course of his life.

His hard brain was in no way affected by the liquor that he had drunk. He sat down on his bed, mechanically folding and refolding the letter. The reference to 'Mrs. Turner' produced no impression on him of any sort: no person of that name, common as it was, happened to be numbered on the list of his friends or his customers. But

for one circumstance, he would have thrown the letter aside, in contempt. His memory reverted to his wife's incomprehensible behaviour at parting. Addressing him through that remembrance, the anonymous warning assumed a certain importance to his mind. He went down to his desk, in the back office, and took his wife's letter out of the drawer, and read it through slowly. 'Ha!' he said, pausing as he came across the sentence which requested him to write beforehand, in the unlikely event of his deciding to go to Ramsgate. He thought again of the strangely persistent way in which his wife had dwelt on his trusting her; he recalled her nervous anxious looks, her deepening colour, her agitation at one moment, and then her sudden silence and sudden retreat to the cab. Fed by these irritating influences, the inbred suspicion in his nature began to take fire slowly. She might be innocent enough in asking him to give her notice before he joined her at the seaside—she might naturally be anxious to omit no needful preparation for his comfort. Still, he didn't like it; no, he didn't like it. An appearance as of a slow collapse passed little by little over his rugged wrinkled face. He looked many years older than his age, as he sat at the desk, with the flaring candlelight close in front of him, thinking. The anonymous letter lay before him, side by side with his wife's letter. On a sudden, he lifted his grey head, and clenched his fist, and struck the venomous written warning as if it had been a living thing that could feel. 'Whoever you are,' he said, 'I'll take your advice.'

He never even made the attempt to go to bed that night. His pipe helped him through the comfortless and dreary hours. . . Once or twice he thought of his daughter. Why had her mother been so anxious about her? Why had her mother taken her to Ramsgate? Perhaps, as a blind—ah, yes, perhaps as a blind! More for the sake of