

himself in explosives when excited. "Side room—here—lead him in—drunk—by Jove—drunk!"

"Never," I returned passionately. I knew both Hamilton and his wife too well to tolerate either insinuation. But we led him like a dazed being into a side office, where Mr. Jack MacKenzie promptly turned the key and took up a posture with his back against the door.

"Now, Sir," he broke out sternly, "if it's neither drink, nor a scandal——" There, he stopped; for Hamilton, utterly unconscious of us, moved, rather than walked, automatically across the room. Throwing his hat down, he bowed his head over both arms above the mantel-piece.

My uncle and I looked from the silent man to each other. Raising his brows in question, Mr. Jack MacKenzie touched his forehead and whispered across to me—"Mad?"

At that, though the word was spoken barely above a breath, Eric turned slowly round and faced us with blood-shot, gleaming eyes. He made as though he would speak, sank into the armchair before the grate and pressed both hands against his forehead.

"Mad," he repeated in a voice low as a moan, framing his words slowly and with great effort. "By Jove, men, you should know me better than to mouth such rot under your breath. To-night, I'd sell my soul, sell my soul to be mad, really mad, to know that all I think has happened, hadn't happened at all——" and his speech was broken by a sharp intake of breath.