

to compel me to give him anything he wanted? Frederick Verlan—that was his real name—was steeped in wickedness. As sure as I am I'm talking to you so sure am I that it was he who attacked you at Uxbridge. I know what would have happened if I had refused him money—he would have revenged himself on me through you, Eric. Didn't I tell you over and over again that you were in danger? Wasn't it that which made me so anxious that we should part?"

Eric Graydon was silent. He was beginning to understand Alicia.

"Ah, you didn't know Verlan, you don't know him now. Only one person in the world could gauge the depth of his crimes and that person was his unhappy wife. Come nearer to me Eric. I have to tell you something, but it must be whispered. Hold my hand—tight. I want to feel you near me."

He obeyed, and she went on in low tremulous accents:

"The photograph that was found on that dreadful night was taken by Verlan, who was clever in all kinds of trick photography. He pretended to be crazy over my eyes——"

"I should doubt whether it was a pretence," put in Eric. "Why should he not have been sincere?"

"He may have been. It doesn't matter. He made the photograph about two months before we were secretly married. Do you recollect that on the back was written "To F. V.?" The writing was mine. I thought I recognised my husband in the man who was sitting in the compart-