

were clustered outside the French Embassy, but the traffic of Knightsbridge did not admit of crowds' collecting. A few minutes before eleven they returned to the hotel and stood on the pavement waiting for the hour to strike.

"It's like seeing in the New Year," murmured Idina.

"Or—seeing out the old one," Yolande answered slowly.

"I wish—oh! I *do* wish I knew what was going to happen!"

"I think I'll just have one more try to catch Deryk," said Idina, as she turned into the hotel. "Don't go till you hear whether I've caught him."

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As the tarpaulin gently subsided and flattened, Deryk dusted the palms of his hands, one against the other, and walked downstairs with the teeth of his lower jaw so drawn back over their fellows of the upper that an expression of truculent defiance was unintentionally produced. Only when he reached the hall and began to stalk melodramatically towards the front door did he discover that he was in shirt-sleeves.

The only possible thing was to go upstairs and fetch his bloody coat. It *was* a bloody coat, everything was bloody. Here was he, ready to die of spontaneous combustion like that fellow in Dickens—Tulkinghorn, was he? In the book about the Circumlocution Office and Jarndyce *versus* Jarndyce—*Bleak House*, of course! Charles Dickens at his best mentally, but at a low third-best physically—a tired, depressed Dickens. But all this was a generation old, and he did not want to let fall literary-society criticisms of great works. Yet literary "shop" kept him from watching the progress of his own symptoms. And these absurd artificial discussions kept him away from the major discussion about that bloody coat. The word was not polite; admitted. But at times it was the only word, which bore out his age-old contention that opportunity was the equivalent, no more and no less, of virtue. Deryk put his hands