

The Cryptogram

"No? Nevertheless, Breckenridge, my son, there lies your best chance of making the fourth in the list of sacrifices. You are a Kentuckian; an ardent and chivalric Southerner. If the Fates really wish to interpose in contravention of the Arcadian scheme, they will once more bait the deadfall with the eternal feminine—always presuming, of course, that there are any Fates, and that they have ordinary intelligence."

Ballard shook his head as if he took the prophecy seriously.

"I am in no danger on that score. Bromley—he was Sanderson's assistant, and afterward Macpherson's, you know—wrote me that the Scotchman's first general order was an edict banishing every woman from the construction camps."

"Now, if he had only banished the derricks at the same time," commented Gardiner reflectively. Then he added: "You may be sure the Fates will find you an enchantress, Breckenridge; the oracles have spoken. What would the most peerless Arcadia be without its shepherdess? But we are jesting when Lassley appears to be very much in earnest. Could there be anything more than coincidence in these fatalities?"

"How could there be?" demanded Ballard. "Two sheer accidents and one commonplace trag-