

"You believe Mr. Beard's statement, don't you?" the coroner inquired.

"I do."

"Then let us end this harrowing scene. I suppose my first duty is to discharge Mrs. Collins from custody?"

"There is no longer any reason for holding her," said Britz.

"As for Ward, I shall have to hold him for the formal inquest," the coroner announced.

"I don't believe he'll try to evade us," said Britz. "In view of all the circumstances I believe we're justified in permitting him to go on his own recognizance. Since Mr. Beard's story will undoubtedly be substantiated by the others, Ward's acquittal is a foregone conclusion. How soon can you hold the inquest?"

"I can impanel a coroner's jury to-morrow. But why this hurry?"

Britz shot a significant glance at Beard and Miss Burden. The secretary's arm was still about her waist.

"Beard, you'd better take out a marriage license at once," suggested Britz. "We're going to hold the inquest in this case to-morrow. You'll be called as the first witness and we'll finish with you as quickly as we can. There's a boat for Europe at two o'clock—it might be