

We had stopped on the second landing to listen, but the voices below were unintelligible.

"Let us descend," I said, grasping the old man's arm.

"We can soon ascertain who the intruders are."

"Yes, yes," he answered wearily, bowing his head once more. "What can it matter now?"

As we went down the stairs the voices were hushed. The strangers had probably heard our footsteps and were silently awaiting us.

When we reached the first landing we saw that a lamp was alight on a table in the great wide hall; and the draught, which struck chilly upon us, warned us that the hall door stood open.

There were three men in the hall: Mr. Brabazon's servant, who had evidently returned to the house only a few minutes previously, for he was trimming the lamp which had so often lighted me up the staircase, and his hat was still on his head; a young man in a gray tweed suit and a billycock hat; and a powerfully-built man whom I recognised at a glance.

"Anthony Bletsoe!" burst from my lips—the memory of everything connected with the man rushing like a torrent upon me. Had he come here, I asked myself, to seek me out, to revenge himself upon me for the failure of my mission? Or had he come to denounce the man lying up stairs in the calm untroubled majesty of death?

He started as I uttered his name. We were now at the foot of the staircase, and he advanced a few paces to see who