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THE GHOST BREAKER

CHARLES W. GODDARD
AND PAUL DICKEY

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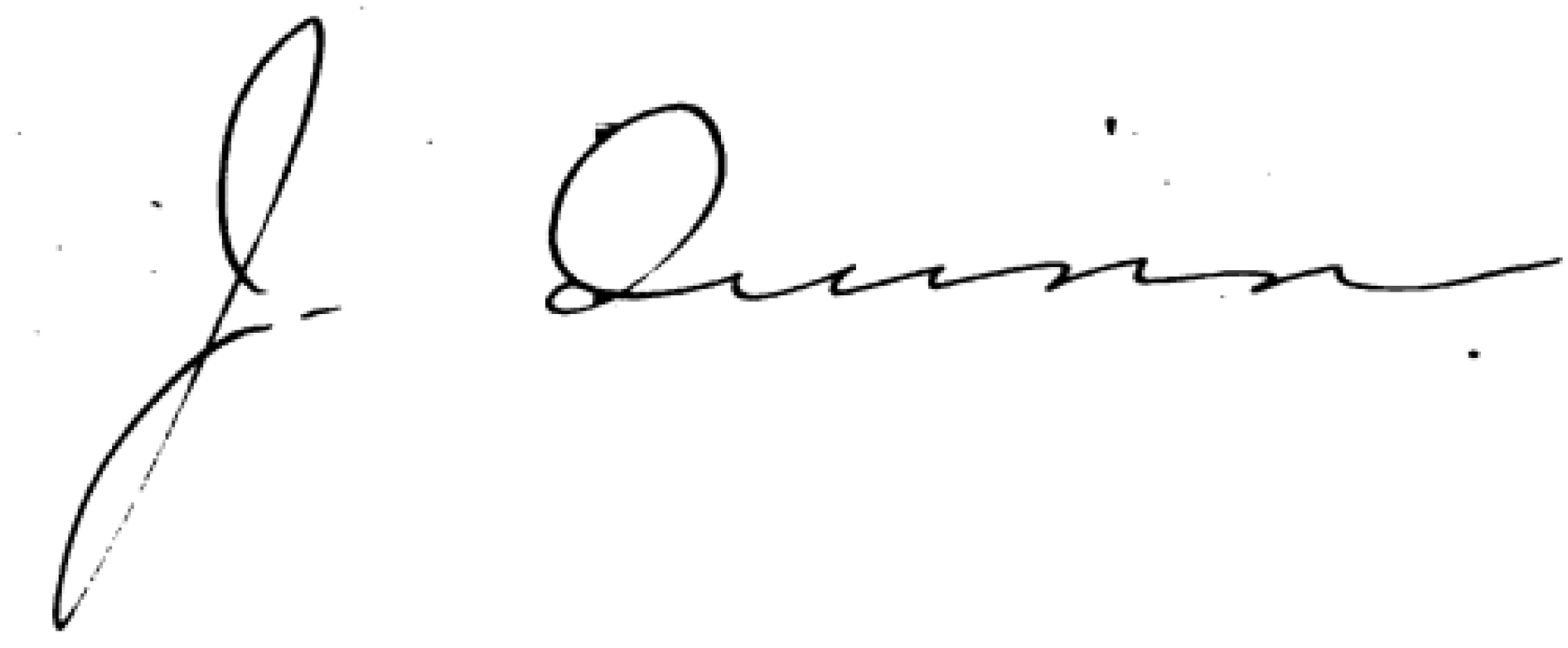

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"Warren—don't call me Highness! . . . my name is Maria"

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The GHOST BREAKER

A NOVEL BASED
UPON THE PLAY

By
CHARLES GODDARD
AND
PAUL DICKEY

HEARST'S INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY COMPANY
NEW YORK - - - - 1915

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I

JARVIS OF KENTUCKY

DOWN the winding roadway came the thunder of hoofbeats!

As the two horsemen approached through the deepening twilight a sobbing negro woman peered timidly through the doorway of the old Southern manor house. There was a call from within.

"Put out this light, Mandy," were the words of the weak voice. "Hurry, Mandy. Maybe it's the Marcums coming back."

"Yas, Cunnel; yassir." She obediently retreated, and the dim light within was suddenly extinguished.

The two riders turned in from the thoroughfare, speeding past the half-swung gate up the drive toward the broad portico. The foremost

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slid from his saddle before his horse had come to a stop.

"Hold her, Rusty!" And then he leaped up the steps, to dash into the dark entry.

"Who is it? Stop!"

There was no weakness of spirit in the tremulous tones from the room within.

"Dad! dad! I've come!"

"Oh, my boy! You're just in time," and the speech ended in a sigh which sent a thrill of horror through the newcomer. "Just . . . in . . . time!"

"Lawd be praised, Marse Warren," sobbed the negress, as she sank to her knees before the table, where she fumbled with the lamp.

"Light the lamp . . . why, it's Mandy!" and the young man ran a nervous hand across his forehead as the wick caught the flame. "Dad! What's the trouble? Where's mother? Why were the lights all out?"

In the corner of the room, on an antique "settle," was stretched the form of old Colonel Jarvis of Meadow Green.

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"It's the end, Warren. I stood off Yankee charges and artillery, but a sneaking hound from the hills has put the finish on it all—and sent it in a bullet through my back, without giving me the chance to fight back, as the Yanks did."

Warren Jarvis dropped to his knees beside his father. His pleasant, youthful face was drawn to mummy-like wanness. His eyes glowed with curious intensity, as they devoured the beloved features of the old man. The rays from the oil lamp cast a melancholy glow over the furniture of a bygone society, in this characteristic parlor of an old Southern mansion. But their effect upon the ghastly features of Colonel Henderson Jarvis presaged only too well the tragedy which was to come.

The aged man raised a weak arm, to encircle the shoulders of his son. His eyes closed in exhaustion, and for a full moment the lips moved without the emanation of a word.

Warren Jarvis turned toward the panic-stricken Mandy.

"Quick! What is the trouble? Where is

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mother? Speak up, Mandy. . . . I've come all the way from New York in answer to father's telegram. What's the trouble?"

Mandy became more disconsolate, and, with the hysterical sorrow of a Southern family servant, the more incapable of expression.

"Warren . . . Warren, my boy!" were the words which at last came from the white lips of his father. "I am going to leave you soon. . . . I kept up until you arrived, for I must give the honor of the family into your keeping, before it is all over. . . . Are you prepared to take it up where I stand now?"

The young man nodded He beckoned to the servant woman, with an eloquent pantomimic command, to bring his sire a drink. The girl silently obeyed, leaving the room for the moment.

"Father, I've come back from the East to do anything, everything. Tell me—what happened, and where is mother? I am frantic!" His shoulders shook as though from a chill. His face was close to his father's, as the colonel's gray eyes opened upon him.

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"Your mother passed away last night—it was too much for her poor weak, aching heart, Warren," and his voice sank again to a whisper, as he added, "Your first duty will be to lay us away together, and then to avenge this double murder."

Warren Jarvis lost his worldly-wise self-control, acquired through the adventurous years since he had journeyed forth from the quaint old Kentucky home. A sob broke from his lips, and his face sank on the arm of the old aristocrat,—he was instinctively boyish in his grief, returning once more to the shelter of that paternal shoulder.

Mandy had returned with a glass of stimulant, which she held to the colonel's lips. The draught refreshed him immensely. He gently patted the shoulders of his son, and continued with firmer tones:

"There, Warren boy, pull yourself together. The doctor will be along in his buggy soon. He dressed my wound, two days ago, and he sat with your dear mother ever since she received

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the shock of the shooting. I sent the Marlowe girls back to their house just an hour ago to rest, because they were worn out. . . . Everyone has been good and tried to help, but it is no use. . . . Leave us alone, Mandy,"

The woman stepped unsteadily through the door, her hands covering her twitching face. There she bumped into a fat, coal-black darky, he who had accompanied the son on the long ride. She drew him into the shelter of the corridor, leaving father and son together for the final confidences.

"But, father, it was all so sudden? Are you comfortable now? Where is your wound?"

Warren rose more upright on his knees. He now observed the swathings about the elder's breast, beneath the crumpled soft shirt. He caressed the shattered frame with affectionate simplicity.

"I must speak quickly, Warren, for although I suffer no more pain, Dr. Grayson told me the truth—my strength is going every hour. Your mother had been in poor health, and I had rid-

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den down to the village to see the doctor, for a tonic for her. On the way out again, I passed Henley's poolroom, where the cheap gamblers are still running their crooked betting on the Louisville and Lexington races. Jim Marcum crossed from the front of the saloon, and I had to rein in quickly to keep from running him down. He looked up at me, with his hand on his hip. 'Trying the same old trick on me that you did with my brother Ed?' he called. I had nothing to say to Jim Marcum—you know, Warren, that old feud was over these thirty years, as far as I was concerned. I looked him in the eye, and he dropped his gaze, like a wolf which daren't stare back at you. Then I rode on. As I turned the corner, past the little church, I heard a shot and tumbled forward in the saddle."

Warren's hands clenched until the nails cut his palms.

"The cowardly hound!" he muttered.

"Just as my father was shot by Marcum's father, right after the War—in the back, Warren. The horse knew enough to stop, and I rolled

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down to the ground. Dr. Grayson ran down the street, carried me into the church vestibule, and dressed my back. They wanted to keep me in the parson's house—but I told them to bring me on home, for I wanted to be near your mother. It was a mistake . . . a grave mistake. For when they brought me back in the doctor's buggy and called her to the portico, she fainted, and never regained consciousness. That's all, Warren. The end came last night for her—to-night I will join her."

He opened his eyes with ghastly intensity of expression. Then, to the surprise of the younger man, he half raised himself on his elbow.

"Warren!" and the tones were almost shrill, "you must *get* Jim Marcum if it's the last act of your life. He broke the feud law when he killed a woman, as he did with the death of your mother. My dying command is that you end this old fight between our families: he is the last of his line, and you the last of yours. The feud began nearly eighty years ago. It is a different world then in that old Kentucky. I have tried to live upright,

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God-fearing, and had supposed that time would efface the old hatred. At least I ignored it. But Jim Marcum never forgot that your Uncle Warren had killed his father in that stand-up battle in the old tobacco warehouse; it is the curse of the Blue Grass State, this feud law. But you must carry out the vengeance, Warren. When you scotch that snake, there will be no more."

"Didn't they try to get Marcum, dad?" asked Warren slowly, trying to realize it all.

"No. He disappeared—helped by some of those touts and gamblers. They say he has gone to the mountains. But you follow him, after . . . after I . . ." He sank back again, groaning. "God bless you, boy. When you end this bitter debt, you will have done everything in the world I ever wanted,—what a fine son you have been through all the years!"

Warren rose to his feet, and with hands clasped tensely behind him walked to the window. He heard a sound of buggy wheels and the trotting of a horse; it neared the house.

"It must be the doctor, dad. I'm glad he is

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here again." He turned about to look at the clear-cut face. He was horror-stricken: the eyes were closed, the hand had dropped limply, and already the fine firm mouth had opened weakly, with a piteous weakness. He rushed forward, dropping again by the side of the couch.

A step behind him did not interrupt the soft pleadings of the tearful voice.

"Dad, dad! Won't you speak to me? You *must* hold out. The doctor has come. Dad, old daddie mine. Speak! Speak!"

The eyes opened, but there was no expression in them. The mouth closed convulsively, and as he leaned close he heard the last message: "God bless you, boy! . . . Take . . . care . . . of . . . yourself."

Warren's face was buried on the bosom as it ceased to breathe. A kindly touch on his shoulder brought him to a knowledge of the doctor's presence.

"It's so good that you arrived in time, Warren," was the soft-voiced comment. "Your father passed away happy, I know—he had held

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himself to this life by a marvelous will-power until you came. Steady yourself now."

The doctor knelt by the couch and, with the manly tenderness of an old family friend, crossed the tired patrician hands above that valiant heart.

Warren Jarvis answered not. He walked toward the window again. He peered out into the great, black, miserable, lonely void stretching away toward the southeast. In those distant hills, beyond his vision but familiar as the landmarks of his boyhood, he knew the cowardly assassin of his parents was exulting over the cruel success.

Not a tear came to his relief. His pleasant face hardened to the rigidity of a stone image. The sinews of his athletic frame thrilled with a new emotion—the feud hatred inherited through generations of Kentucky fighters. He would have gladly given his own life for the sublime pleasure of throttling with his bare hands the scoundrel who had wiped out all that was fine and sweet in his life.

Behind him the doctor gave whispered orders to Mandy and two tearful women neighbors who

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had quietly slipped into the house. Warren did not notice them in his abstraction; they respected his suffering by leaving the room without a greeting.

As he stood there the soft spring breeze fluttered the curtains of the broad parlor windows, bearing in the fragrance of the vines on the portico outside. It was all so silent and different from the brilliant social life he had left behind in New York. Warren's whole life seemed to flit past him, as he stood there now, with the impersonality of a kaleidoscope.

He remembered the early years on this beautiful Blue Grass estate of his father's . . . the romantic boyhood of the South, enlivened by horseback rides, hunting trips, boating, fishing—those elemental country sports so sadly lacking in the life of the city youth, . . . the faithful, admiring negro servants to whom young "Marse Warren" had been a veritable Sir Galahad—the flower of the neighborhood chivalry. Indeed, in this portion of the States still glows the tradition of the ancient knighthood: the gallantry to women, the

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reverence for family honor, the bravery in men, the loyalty to neighborhood, commonwealth, and nation,—in verity, the spirit of ideal citizenship.

Warren saw saw once more the gentle face of his mother, as she worked in her old-fashioned garden of rosemary, hollyhocks, larkspur, iris, rue . . . heard the soft dialect of quaint old ladies gossiping on the broad, shaded portico . . . listened again to the laughter of neighboring judges, colonels, majors—his father's old cronies—as they good-naturedly wrangled and bantered over the battles of the War, the merits of their respective thoroughbreds, or the correct manner in which to concoct that nectarian classic of the Southland, the mint julep!

To Warren's retrospection came the vision of his departure for the famous college in the East, the joyful vacation times, and finally his decision to seek adventure far, far to the south—in Brazil, Guatemala, Panama, where he had developed his own executive caliber as a commander of men, in the great construction work on the Big Ditch. . . . Then came the sorrowful day when he had

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returned from his travels, to behold the ravages of time on his mother's aging face and his father's stooping shoulders. Even the servants were changed, and it had been to keep a closer bond with the dear old estate that he had taken faithful Rusty Snow as his manservant when he went on to New York again to pursue his profession.

Warren's mind burrowed in the memories of the feudism of the countryside, the sole blot on its simple yet aristocratic modes. He remembered the fragmentary stories of the ancient Marcum-Jarvis quarrel . . . this had cost the lives of men for three generations, in an equity of vengeful settlement based strictly on the Mosaic law of "an eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth." The Marcum family fortunes had been dissipated, those of the Jarvis clan ascending—yet still the feud continued, until the men of both families had paid for the bitterness with their lives. Now his father had been the last Jarvis to go—after a lull of many years.

The sweetness of the old memories was swept by the maelstrom of hate which surged through

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his heart. As a boy he hardly knew the meaning of the word—the grim looks of the kinsmen, the tear-stained face of his mother, had been little explanation—little had been said. But *now* the iron of vengeance had entered his soul; and he turned about suddenly, facing the body of the colonel.

Advancing toward the settle, he knelt by the body, even as a knight of old, to take his vows. He raised his clenched right hand.

"Father! I swear by my love for you and my mother that I will wipe out the Marcums, cost what it may. I will devote my life to settling the score Jim Marcum has made. I swear it to you, father!"

It seemed to him as though a faint smile of approbation flitted across the face despite the seal of the Great Calm. Even as he knelt there, his quick brain began to lay the plans—and then . . . then he remembered what he must see upstairs! His brief moments in the old home had been so absorbed by the dying words of his sire, by the engulfing flame of hate which had burned away

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all the sweetness of the environment, that he had selfishly forgotten everything but his own grief.

He staggered to his feet and walked slowly from the room.

Outside the door, on an old-fashioned chair in the long corridor running from portico to kitchen, he found faithful Rusty, sobbing with his face in his hands.

"Oh, Marse Warren! Oh, Marse Warren!"

"Rusty, call Mandy," was the simple answer.

Rusty hastened to obey. The woman was assisting the two neighbors in some preparations on the floor above. She came down the stairs tremulously, catching his outstretched hand and kissing it impetuously.

"Where is *she*, Mandy?" he asked, in a stifled voice.

Mandy spoke not, but ascended the stairway, as Warren followed with bowed head. Each broad step seemed steeper than the one below. At last he raised his eyes before the doorway of his parents' bedroom. Mandy stepped aside.

Within, on a little mahogany sewing-table,

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burned a dozen candles in his great-grandmother's Colonial candelabra. He turned unsteadily to the right, and saw her!

"O mother, mother! . . ."

That was all.

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II

THE BLIND PURSUIT

THE sad days immediately following the double funeral were so filled with visits from relatives and old friends, legal transactions necessary for the transfer of the estate of the old colonel, a successful tobacco factor in his time, and a hundred and one other engrossments, that in the months afterward they were hazy as an unpleasant dream.

With the newly acquired calm which surprised him, Warren Jarvis left no stone unturned to ascertain, with quiet inquiries, the location of Jim Marcum.

There was no clew. The man had mounted a horse on the day of the shooting, to disappear down the dusty Kentucky road, leaving the village far behind and ignoring the possible escape by railroad. His simplicity was cunning, for the

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blue hills offered more avenues of disappearance than the iron roadbed of the local transportation.

Equally cunning, however, was his determined pursuer. Warren Jarvis, after burying his parents, and making the conventional round of respectful ceremonies, started again for his neglected business in New York. Here he planned to adjust his affairs, then to return to the mountain country, by a roundabout route, to begin his man-hunt, *incognito* and unsuspected.

"I'll cover every mountain trail, every valley path until I find Jim Marcum," he confided to Major Selby, his father's closest friend, as they stood on the train platform waiting for the final minute of departure. "When it happens I will let you know, Major. Until that time, good-by, and God bless you."

The train had come, and unaccompanied by Rusty Snow this time, Jarvis clambered up the steps to wave to the old Kentuckian. As the major turned away, he stroked his snowy mustache with a shrewd twinkle in his blue eyes, to soliloquize:

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"I calculate the boy will make his father proud. The old feud blood runs in the Jarvis veins, and even the North can't spoil him. I wonder why Rusty didn't go along—that darky will be broken-hearted to be left behind on the old place."

But Rusty knew very well why he had been left behind!

And with all his jolly laughter, plump complacency, and characteristic African simplicity, Rusty Snow possessed an inherent faculty of subtle concentration which had served the family of Jarvis since the days when he had been a slave pickanninny.

A week or more he spent in the peaceful Southern hamlet of Meadow Green, imbibing gin and ginger "pop" in the saloons frequented by those walking bureaus of information, the negro barbers. He consorted with darky jockeys and horse-trainers—this was the center of the great thoroughbred breeding district—and everywhere he went, with glistening smiles, laughing eyes, and infectious amiability, he bore one query in his mind. Where was Jim Marcum?

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The query seemed unanswerable.

Rusty confided his failure to Major Selby, who in turn sent a letter to Warren Jarvis at his New York club. There the latter was hastening his preparations for the great *trek* through the mountains. Warren had closed his office, where, profiting by his experiences in South and Central America, he had maintained a successful exporting agency: all his affairs were in hand, and that hand closed. All his outstanding investments had been hypothecated, with shrewd advantage. At last he was ready, certain that should he lose his life in the vengeful venture, his kinsfolk would be taken care of, without legal complications: with all his inherited romanticism, Jarvis of Kentucky was a man of astuteness.

He was sitting in the grill of his club, brooding over a solitary glass, unmindful of the friendly chatter of the members about him, when a uniformed page brought him a yellow envelope. He tore open the telegram, sensing important news. It was only from Meadow Green that he received his club mail. And it was from Louisville that the

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message came. It was simple, and yet it left him bewildered.

"WARREN JARVIS,
Export Club, N. Y.
Coming with Marcum. Buy supplies.
RUSTY."

At first Warren smiled, then he swore, as only a chivalrous Southron can! Why should Rusty be coming with Marcum? He could not have arrested or imprisoned him. What were the supplies? Evidently this was some attempt at code which was beyond his ability to guess.

He spent the night and the next day in a perplexed mood.

A wire sent to Major Selby, inquiring as to the whereabouts of the negro, brought back the simple reply, "Missing—no one knows."

Toward evening, after much perturbation, Warren decided upon a measure of preparedness for whatever might happen. He had given up his bachelor quarters on Madison Avenue two mornings previous, in expectation of the long trip

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through Kentucky. One night he had spent at his club. Yet, if Marcum were coming to New York, it were best to be located in some place where he could cover his own identity without attracting attention. Such a place would naturally be a large hotel. Accordingly he registered at the Hotel Belmont under an alias. This was close to the Grand Central Station—handy for a quick departure from town, if such were necessary.

Jarvis packed two suitcases with his modest needs for the Southern trip, and donned his evening clothes for dinner at the club. Several telephone calls convinced him that Rusty had not made an appearance as yet.

When he reached the club, the big building was swarming with men of his acquaintance, yet he seemed curiously apart from them. Since his father's murder and the death of his mother, he had proceeded under what engineers call " forced draught." His nerves, like iron, had been drawn tight—to the snapping point: only some great climax of relief would disentangle the tense feel-

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ings which he now controlled with external calmness, and sub-surface tremors which warned him of an approaching catastrophe.

For an hour he sat brooding in the quiet library of the club. He had tried to eat; but all the artistry of the famous French *chef* could not conjure up an appetite. Men passed by him, glancing curiously at the usually jovial companion; the twisted, drawn expression surprised them. He tried to read a magazine; the printed lines "pied" themselves before his twitching eyes, blurring into a vision of that last bitter scene in the room with his dying father. And even the vision had faded now, to dissolve into one dull mass of color—a wavering, throbbing field of *red!*

"Mr. Warren Jarvis! Mr. Warren Jarvis!"

The page stood by the library door, calling. He sprang to his feet, brought back to a consciousness of the present with galvanic suddenness. He turned, bewildered for an instant, and then walked slowly toward the boy.

"What is it?" he asked.

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"A man wants to see you, sir, down at the front door. A colored man. . . ."

Jarvis waited for no more. He hurried down the oaken stairway, out through the vestibule, and hatless, breathless—relieved to a great extent from his tension—he caught the hand of faithful Rusty Snow.

"Lawd be praised!" murmured that jubilant henchman. "I done thought he might beat me to it!"

"What do you mean, Rusty? Why didn't you come inside?"

"Dat cop at de door wouldn't let no darky come in. I want to talk to you right away, Marse Warren. Right away quick."

Jarvis turned about, with a direction to await him.

He hurried to the coat-room, caught up his light overcoat and hat, and rushed out through the door. Rusty helped him into the garment, with fingers tremulous with joy at the renewal of this familiar and loving task.

"Come, we'll go down the side street. I've

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given up my apartment, and there's no place to talk but the sidewalk. What did your telegram mean, Rusty?"

"Well, sah, jest what it said. I done followed dat man all de way from Meadow Green to de Manhattan Hotel, dat's what it mean."

Jarvis stopped and, with eyes dilating, looked Rusty full in the face.

"Jim Marcum in New York? What can he be doing here?"

Rusty chuckled.

"Me—oh—my, boss, but dat's jest what I thought at fust. But now I knows. I spent all my time an' all de money I could beg offen de major tryin' to snoop aroun' dem gin-mills down home to l'arn. An' it wasn't ontel yestiddy afternoon dat I seen dis yere Marcum come galloping down on hossback, wid some poh white trash moonshiner ridin' wid 'im. Dey goes right to de depoh an' jumps offen de hosses. I wuz in Eph Black's saloon, but dar ain't nuffin missin' me. I walks over to de station agent's winder an' I sees dis Marcum wid a roll o' bills dat would

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choke a hoss. He buys a ticket, an' den he goes down de patform. I axes Hen Barrows, de agent, where dat man goin'. He says Noo York. Den I is satisfied. I jest walks down de track to de junction, by de water tank."

"Hurry up, Rusty. What about Marcum?" was Warren's impatient interjection.

"Wall, I sees dis yere man with 'im watchin' de platform—an' wen de train pull in, inter it Marcum goes. She alluz slows up at de sidin'—cause dere's a junction, an' so I jumps 'er, at de hind platform. Well, Marse Warren, dat man he's on de train. It's only day coaches ontel we gets to Lueyville, an' I walks from de Jim Crow car through de train just onct. Dis Marcum he don't recollect me,—I'm just a darky to him. But I sees 'im a-workin' in his seat wid som'pin dat shows he recollects you, sah."

"What was that, Rusty?"

"He was a-oilin' a gun—an' you know who dat gun is for. He'll be a-lookin' for you, Marse Warren."

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"What did you do then? How did you manage to stay on the train?"

"Oh, I jest stuck dere, Marse Warren. Dis nigger has had enough 'sperience in dis world to know dat he spends all he has w'en he has it. So de day you left I takes de money you gives me for a railroad ticket, an' buys one an' puts it inside my pocket. So, I was ready for dis Marcum. I follows 'im to Lueyville, whar I telegram to you, and keeps right on 'is trail w'en he changes cars for Cincinnati. He keeps on comin' to Noo York, an' I am in de day coach all dat time. Den I follows right to de Manhattan Hotel. He ain't nebber been in Noo York befoh, because he walks all de way to de hotel instid o' takin' a taxicab. Dat man ain't no *quality!*"

Warren was lost in thought. He stopped at the next corner.

"Listen, Rusty. You did good work. I wanted to have you find him, and instead he came right to me. Now, we must end this whole thing to-night." For an instant the Kentuckian was

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nonplused, and instinctively turned to the old family servant with that curious trust which the native Southerner instinctively places in the "family" negro. "What shall I do now, Rusty?"

Rusty's usually big eyes narrowed to slits in which the whites were hardly visible.

"Marse Warren, jest wait for dat man. He's here, you knows it, for your life. Ef you cain't git him, *I can*. I got mah razor an' dat's a better weepon dan any ole gun. You jest wait—an' let me do de rest."

Warren turned and started back toward the club.

"I'll be waiting at the Export Club, Rusty. If he hunts up my address on Madison Avenue, the hall boy will send him there. If he wants to see me, he already has my address—and everyone in Meadow Green knows the club as my address. Now, you go up to the rooms I have taken in the Belmont Hotel. The room number is 417—you just wait there until you hear from me. What did you mean by 'supplies' in that telegram, Rusty?"

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The darky chuckled.

"Lawsee, Marse Warren, I knows dat you is a reg'lar Noo Yorker by dis time and don't carry de supplies of a gentlemen. I mean a .38-caliber! Has you got one?"

Warren smiled for the first time since their surprising meeting.

"No, I guess I have become a victim of New York. The worst weapon I have on me, Rusty, is a fountain pen—and I'm afraid Jim Marcum couldn't read the ammunition!"

Rusty looked slyly about him. They were in a dark spot on Fifth Avenue, the shop fronts deserted and not a pedestrian within a block. The darky slipped his hand into his pocket, and surreptitiously handed his master a heavy, portentous automatic which would have sent joy into the heart of a Texas Ranger. There was a vibration of honest pride in his voice as he explained:

"Dere, Marse Warren. I went widout po'k chops an' chicken all de way to Noo York jest to lay in supplies while I was waitin' betwixt trains at Lueyville! I 'lowed you all 'd be too wrapped

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up in yoh troubles ter bother about dis, an' I recomembered dis here Noo York Sullivan Law w'ich makes it a crime fer a decent citerzen ter carry a gun, so dat the burglars kin work in peace. Take it, Marse Warren, an' plant every seed in de right place!"

The tears came into the eyes of the Kentuckian.

"Rusty, you're a jewel!"

"Yassir, in a ebony settin'! But, now, please git back to dat club place, an' wait fer Jim Marcum. Dat man's mind was on his bizness when I seen him in de smokin' cyar, an' he ain't thinkin' of nothin' else!"

They strolled down toward the club again. Warren gave a few parting directions and handed Rusty a roll of bills for emergency.

"Remember, Rusty, when you hear from me by any message at all, you're to come at once,—I'll just mention my first name. I'm registered at the Belmont as John Kelly of New Orleans—I couldn't hide my Southern accent. Tell them you're my valet, and show the key—I can trust

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you to get up to the room. If I call for you, pay the bill from that change, and don't let the grass grow under those number twelves!"

Rusty smirked happily.

"Hallelujah, Marse Warren, you'se jokin' agin—de fightin' blood of de Jarvises is bilin'—I knows de signs. Why, Marse Warren, I recollects yoh father when . . ."

But his master's face changed.

"Not now, Rusty. I'm thinking too much about my father. No more talk for either of us. Just action."

He turned into the side street toward the Export Club. Rusty—fresh from Kentucky psychology—doffed his cap and disappeared as Warren entered the Grecian portal.

Inside the clubhouse he found a letter awaiting him. It was scrawled in the bold, ungrammared style which might have been expected. He read it standing tensely by the doorway, as dozens of men walked in and out, little dreaming of the tragedy attached to that casual fragment of white note-paper. It was written on the stationery of

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the Hotel Manhattan—diagonally across the street from the hostelry where Warren had inadvertently registered for his brief stay in the city.

He read the words again and again.

"DEAR JARVIS; export Club, new York.

am visiting in New York and would like to see you and call off our kwarrel youre fathers death was misunderstandin and were last of our families will be at Above hotel all evenin and tomorrow come Around when you get chance and shake hands i Will prove I aint meant no harm.

Friend JIM MARCUM."

The Kentuckian crumpled the note in his hand, and then walked toward the fireplace of the grill. It had been weeks since any logs had been burned there, but the flakes of soot still clung to the stone casement. Warren struck a match, and a curious smile illumined his face as he ignited the paper, holding its flaming fabric between his fingers until the last half-inch had burned. He dropped the tiny fragment after lighting his cigar with its flame.

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One of his friends, a Brazilian coffee merchant, adressed him in the native tongue, which Warren spoke as fluently as English.

"Ah, *señor*, you care not for your letter?"

"Oh, it's just a little invitation to a party to-night," laughed Jarvis of Kentucky. "If anyone found it on my person, he might think I kept late hours and associated with bad company. Let us have a drink to our friendship in the club, for I may take a long journey to-night, and never see you again!"

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III

IN THE ROYAL SUITE

A BEAUTIFUL young woman stirred uneasily in the early slumber of the evening. Eleven floors below her, in the foyer of the Hotel Manhattan, the after-theater crowd of visitors thronged and buzzed happily. But the girl, after an unusual day of anxiety in a strange land, was ill at ease, with fitful dreams.

The Paris clock of her Highness delicately struck two musical notes upon the chimes, to indicate the half-hour; at the same instant, as though by echo and vehement confirmation, two revolver shots resounded in the corridor.

The girl shuddered as she opened her large dark eyes, sitting bolt upright in bed. She heard a slamming of doors, a growing hubbub in the usually decorous hallway outside, and her feminine curiosity almost conquered the artistocratic

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reserve, to impel her to rise and discover the origin of the hubbub.

She was spared the trouble, for suddenly the door of her boudoir received a vigorous thump. The lock crashed and it swung open, admitting the rays of a red electric lamp in the corridor outside. The portal swung shut with even greater promptitude, as a dark body leaped over the threshold.

"*Madre de Dios!*" she screamed. Then, after a gasp, "Who's there!"

The intruder backed against the door, working with the top bolt, which was still intact. She could see the vague outline by the dim glow of the moonlight which streamed into her room.

Then, as she seemed preparing for another cry, he turned toward her.

"Ssssh! Don't make any noise," he whispered vibrantly, audaciously.

The girl slipped from her bed and drew a flimsy dressing-gown about her.

"What do you want?"

"Silence!"

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Shé had reached the lamp on the small boudoir table near the bed. She switched on the electric light. They stared at each other wide-eyed—but stirred by different feelings. Hers was the fright of a woman finding herself in the power of a strange and desperate man; his the battling alertness of a man fighting for his own life against odds.

It was Jarvis of Kentucky!

Despite his immaculate evening clothes, the blanched face, drawn mouth, and the revolver in his hand made him appear to her as the personification of that vague terror of the unfamiliar dark which all women and children know so well. He crouched there, reading the character in her haughtily tossed head and imperious eyes. The details of her beauty he ignored, rememebring only three important facts: "She is young, she is frightened but has not lost control of herself." He reached forward and touched the switch of the lamp. Again the moon was the sole illumination of the room!

A voiċe outside in the corridor came to them.

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"What's the row?"

"Somebody's shooting up the hotel!" was the reply, from another throat.

"Not a sound . . . do you understand?" whispered Jarvis, as he backed toward the door again.

"What right. . .?" she began.

"Quiet!"

The voices in the corridor were closer now.

"Where'd he go? Look on the fire-escape."

"No use—he's on this floor, I tell you."

The girl advanced toward him, her own spirit asserting itself, as she realized that help was within calling distance. Yet she did not call!

"What is it? What do you want? What have you done?"

Warren slipped the revolver into his pocket to reassure her.

"It's all right now. I'm not going to harm you, if you will just keep quiet. Is that clear to you?"

"Is it money you want? All the money I have is on that dressing-table. Take it and go."

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It was Jarvis of Kentucky

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He shook his head, now observing the wealth of hair, the healthy, aristocratic poise of shoulders and arms, and the depths of her eyes.

"I'm not a burglar. I don't want your money."

"Well, then, what do you want?" She was beginning to be impatient.

There was a sound of rapid steps down the corridor. Jarvis sprang toward the door, his eyes still intent on hers.

"Listen . . . they're coming! . . . They mustn't search this room—do you understand—you must put them off." He assured himself that the upper bolt was intact and shot tightly. "I'm not what you think I am. . . . Is there no way out that way, through the door over there behind you?"

She shook her head.

"No, that is my maid's room."

"The fire-escape—where is that?"

"In the hall opposite."

Jarvis snapped a finger, angry at his own mistake.

"I thought that red meant it was in this room. Oh, hell! . . . I beg your pardon!"

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A faint smile turned up the corner of the red lips, and she shrugged her shoulders ever so lightly.

"Well, you know where it is now; why don't you go?"

Jarvis shook his head with determination: it was evident that this surprised and surprising young person would be amenable to reason—he had many logical reasons at his command.

"I can't go that way—they'll be waiting in the hall," he declared, as he studied the windows and portals. "The red light in the corridor fooled me —I thought the fire-escape would get me to the floor below, where I could take an elevator down during the hubbub. There they come again."

As the odd pair stood, with bated breath, quick steps and a running fire of conversation could be heard in the hall. It was evident that the chase was getting warm.

The girl studied the pose of her curious visitor —it was not the cringing attitude of a criminal. In the lines of his well-built figure there was the unmistakable grace of a gentleman to the manor

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born—the fearless confidence, despite his predicament, of a man confident of his own justification.

She was puzzled—her curiosity gradually overcoming her outraged feelings and her natural resentment against his assured usurpation of the situation.

This was a new experience for the lady of the lacy filaments and regal poise; yet it was far from unpleasant to meet such calm masculinity. She switched on the light once more, to feel a surprising satisfaction in the impersonal, unabashed honesty of those steady blue eyes.

Jarvis became conscious of a twinge in his hand, and looking down at his left hand, observed a little rivulet of blood dripping down to his finger-tips. He quickly drew his handkerchief from his pocket, as though to cover the wound before she saw it. The action and its motive did not escape the observant dark eyes. Her sex asserted itself; she advanced, nervous once more.

"You are wounded? What has really happened? You must dress that hand . . ."

"I almost stopped one of the bullets—that's

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all. You see it was not one-sided. But I am afraid it will be, if they get me now. I don't see how the devil——" here he ran to the shaded window to peer at the twinkling street lamps far below,——" Oh, damn!"

The girl's manner froze again. She stepped back instinctively; and yet that bandaged hand compelled her eyes. She spoke slowly.

" You have evidently shot someone, and are making me shield you from justice."

Warren Jarvis shook his head, with that straightforward look which was so convincing.

" Not from justice, but from the law?"

" I thought they were the same."

His smile was bitter, as he retorted: " No, not always. There would be no justice for me at the hands of the law: justice was not accomplished by the law in all these years."

She dropped a white hand to the table by which she stood.

" Well, that is not for me to decide. I must only . . ."

" You must only listen—you shall decide. At

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least you shall listen, in order that you may forgive my intrusion, my selfishness in compromising you as I have done." He hesitated, and for the first time color came into the drawn cheeks; a softening echo was observable in her own. "If you find me guilty, when I tell you, I'll—well—I'll take that door or anything you say."

"Your presumption is ridiculous," were her words, and yet she did not call for assistance. Jarvis realized that he had at least won a foothold for his plea. And he had not given up his dogged hope.

"I wouldn't call it ridiculous—a man has a right to argue for his life."

"But," she parried, "could any decision be more unjust than mine must be, when delivered at the point of a pistol?"

Jarvis took the challenge. He laid the weapon upon the dressing-table by her side and crossed the room, leaving her between himself and the door.

"Now, my dear lady, there's nothing to prevent you from covering me, calling for help, and

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solving the riddle as you please. After all, what does it matter, whether the end comes to-day or to-morrow, for it would be impossible to elude the police. You don't understand, I know—but I am not flying from justice: it was a case of shoot or be shot. You will notice that only one cartridge in that revolver has been used. But, listen—they're on the right trail at last."

He noiselessly crossed to the door and listened to the renewed excitement without. There was a triple knock, and the voice of a man, evidently of authority, rang out.

"Open up here. Is there anybody in here? Open, I tell you."

Jarvis turned toward the girl, whose face reflected a dozen curious emotions as she watched him. He made his last appeal.

"It's up to you to do with me as you like," he murmured.

Her mind was made up quickly, and she pointed toward a door to the left—it led to her bath. Jarvis disappeared behind its shelter. At the same instant the door of the maid's room opened, and

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a chic little servant ran out chattering, clinging to her mistress' arm for protection.

"Be silent," was the cool command. The knocking continued, with more voices joining in the exhortations. The girl pointed to the door, and the silent command was obeyed. Trembling like an aspen, the little maid opened it, and the burly form of a house detective appeared at the entrance.

"Are you all right in here?" he asked, and then observing the two white-robed figures he doffed the conventional derby hat without which no professional hotel detective would seem natural. "I beg your pardon, ma'am. I just came to see if you had had any trouble."

"No," replied the mistress calmly. "What is the matter?"

"Mighty sorry to trouble you, but we're looking for a party and we ain't goin' to stop till we find him. We just thought he might have beat it into this room for a getaway. If you want anything, just call us, for we'll be up and down these halls all night now."

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As he shut the door, the unusual young woman waved toward it once more.

"Lock it well, Nita," she said in Spanish. "Control yourself, child. You have a chill. Go to bed again. I will not want you again until six o'clock in the morning."

As Nita retired she hesitated before her doorway. Her sharp black eyes caught the glint of the bulky revolver upon the library table. Those same black eyes dilated, her lips moved as though for another frightened exclamation, but all she said was: "Thank you, madame! I will not bother you again until six o'clock. Good-night, madame!"

Then she closed her door.

Nita was as discreet as she was faithful, in the service of her beloved madame. And she was essentially Spanish in her appreciative grasp of a romantic situation.

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IV

AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

THE bathroom door opened slowly, with the slightest perceptible knock.

"May I come in?" was the low and meek inquiry.

"You may, and then you may go out as soon as possible," was the resolute response.

Warren's countenance was smiling again, and the smile was infectious. So curious had been this burglarizing method of escape, so unusual the imperturbable girl who had assisted him against all conventional expectations, that the horror of the last half-hour was partially dissipated. When a man meets a great crisis of his life and overcomes it, there is a queer relaxation of strained nerves,—with a woman the result would be hysteria; with a man of Warren Jarvis' type it was a self-surprising amiability and calmness.

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"Would you mind bolting the door again? He might return. And thank you very much for delaying the death sentence—now I can explain."

The girl glided to the door and tested the lock. It was secure, and she turned about to return that infectious smile of the eyes, albeit grudgingly.

Warren, finally realizing that he was weak from strain, and aching in every muscle from the ordeal of the past twenty-four hours, looked appealing at the comfortable armchair.

"May I sit down for just a minute?" he pleaded. "I have not slept since the night before last. I have not rested for a fortnight."

The girl nodded. He relaxed, and dropped into a blessed position of comfort. He buried his face in his hands—how many times had he struck this same atitude since the bitter days at Meadow Green, without realizing the repetition!

For two minutes or an hour he sat there—he knew not which. His companion, with sudden renewal of consciousness of the *déshabille* of her dressing-gown, retreated to the corner of the brass bed. She sat down, to scrutinize the better this

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strange intruder. The moonlight which fell in pale green bars across the Bokhara beneath her slippered feet; the melodramatic situation which had brought them together; the unmistakable gentility of this compelling intruder of her maidenly domain; the curious collapse of his aggressiveness —all these things united to cast a sympathetic spell over her. She was foolish—to the extreme of placing herself in a ridiculous situation! She was culpable—in protecting a self-confessed butcher! She was weak—in yielding to girlish sentiment by permitting this man to shatter the conventionalities,—she who had been accustomed, throughout her twenty years of adulation and awe-inspiring respect, to a servile respect from every man, woman, and child! And, worst of all to an essentially feminine mind, she had allowed this presumptuous, calculating stranger to override her better judgment, to subjugate her resistance, without a visible tribute to the charms which had stirred the masculine souls of a continent!

And yet, in spite of—perhaps, *because of*—all these illogical, provoking, equilibrium-shattering

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irritants—she sat there, patiently, eagerly awaiting an explanation. Consistency, thy name is not Maidenhood!

Suddenly he looked at her.

"Do you know what a feud is?" was the curious prologue.

Her answer was apt and surprising.

"Feud? Spain is the garden of feuds."

"So is Kentucky. That's where I'm from. You're Spanish, then?"

"Yes!"

"Then you'll understand and sympathize. . . . Those shots you heard ended a feud which has lived through three or four generations. They brought me back to earth, to life, to a realization of things about me, after the most horrible nightmare through which I've ever passed. I know my own name now,—and I had almost forgotten it since I went back home—so short a time, so many centuries ago!"

Then Warren Jarvis told her the story; his eyes were half closed, and with his fingers clasped and intertwined beneath his square-chiseled chin he re-

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counted the steps of the recent event with the monotone of one who chants a mechanically memorized tale. She understood at last.

"But what did he do when you went to his room in the hotel?"

"Just what I expected—in fact, what I prayed for! As the door opened he fired his revolver—and I carry the witness inside this crimson handkerchief. I had my own weapon in my coat pocket . . . it's a trick I learned in Central American revolutions. I fired from my waist, burned a hole in my overcoat—and burned a hole in the heart of that murderous hound."

Suddenly he sprang to his feet and walked to the window, just as he had done back in Meadow Green so short a time before.

"Dad, dear old dad! I know you're satisfied. I let him take the first chance, and it was his last."

He was silent. The girl twisted the dressing-gown in her slender, nervous fingers. She waited for him to speak. He turned about, and dropped his hands, palm outward, as he quietly ended it

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all with the question: "Now, can you understand why the law would not give me justice?"

"Is he dead—are you sure?"

"I didn't wait—I came . . . to . . . visit you. Now are you going to drive me out? . . . You don't know what it is to fight single-handed against fearful odds. That's how I planned to spend my summer. To fight the endless fight alone. . . ."

She leaned forward eagerly as she answered: "Oh, yes, I do! I know what it means. . . . I, too, have been fighting against fearful odds!"

Jarvis looked at her sharply.

"There is no man to fight for you?"

"No man who dares."

"Oh, God! If there had only been a woman left for me to fight for! . . . But with my mother gone it was simply a hopeless, desperate determination to square the score at any cost, and then cry 'Quits!' and care nothing."

She drew back, studying the outline of his agile body, as he stood silhouetted against the moonlight.

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