

Marsh Richard

The Coward Behind the Curtain



Richard Marsh

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CHAPTER I

DOROTHY SETS OFF WITH HER GUARDIAN

The girls were in the convent garden, when word came that Dorothy Gilbert was wanted. Dorothy was walking with Frances Vernon. Ever since she could remember her world had been that garden, with its shaded walks and its high walls; never before had a visitor come to her. The moment she was told that someone desired her presence she turned to Frances, exclaiming:

"It is he!"

With characteristic impetuosity Frances threw her arms about her, remarking as she did so:

"Just as we were speaking of him!"

As if there were anything strange in that. The strangeness would have been if he had come when they had not been speaking of him; for, of late, they had spoken of little else. Elsie Farquhar, who had brought the message, pressed it home.

"You had better be quick, Dorothy. Sister Celestine said you were to hurry."

So Dorothy hurried, her tall slender figure held very straight, her pretty head a little in the air, in her eyes a gleaming light. She believed herself to be passing from a world she knew into one of which she had dreamed. But she was mistaken; she was going into a world of which she had not dreamed. Sister Celestine met her at the door.

"It is Mr Emmett?" she inquired.

"Yes," replied the Sister, "it is Mr Emmett."

Something in her tone; on her face; in her glance; struck quick-witted Dorothy.

"What is the matter? Why do you look at me like that? What is he like?"

"Who am I that I should be able to tell you what he is like, when I have seen him for scarcely five minutes?"

The Sister smiled, it seemed to Dorothy, not with that brightness which she knew so well. The young lady's mental processes were rapid. She divined, on the instant, that Sister Celestine was disappointed with Mr Emmett. As she went with the Sister from the garden to the guest-room she wondered why. Would she be disappointed also? – after all her talks with Frances? – her communings with herself? She had fashioned the unknown Mr Emmett in so many shapes that she could not have told which of them she expected to see; certainly it was not the person she actually saw. Her knowledge of men had practically been restricted to the personages in the storybooks which found their way into the convent precincts. These had to undergo a severe examination before being admitted, as one bad character was enough to damn them; and, as the conventual standard of masculine morals was peculiar, even if the individuals who figured in the tales were not drawn from imagination they certainly were not taken from life. One requirement all the men in the books had to satisfy: they all had to be gentlemen, or what the convent censor took to be gentlemen. Dorothy Gilbert might have had more or less vague doubts, but it never had been brought clearly home to her that a man could be anything but a gentleman till she entered that guest-room and was introduced to Mr Emmett. When she saw him, any illusions she may have had upon that point were shattered at once and for ever.

A big, burly man was sitting on the edge of the table. One foot rested on the floor, the other dangled in the air. He did not move when she entered; he merely looked round at her and stared. His great bald head had a narrow fringe of sandy hair which was just turning grey. He wore a huge sandy moustache, whose hue was more than matched by his head and face. A large, angry-looking

spot was on the left of his big nose, a smaller one was on his right cheek near the ear. His eyes were so bloodshot that it was not easy to tell what colour they really were; they reminded her of the eyes of a wicked giant who had played a prominent, and disreputable, part in a fairy tale she had once read. Indeed, the whole man recalled that giant; she had an uncomfortable feeling that he might, at any moment, set about the-to him-agreeable business of devouring her. Sister Celestine performed the ceremony of introduction.

"This, Mr Emmett, is Dorothy Gilbert."

Still he kept his seat on the edge of the table, and his hands in the pockets of the huge overcoat which he wore, although the weather was so warm. Only he stared at Dorothy a little harder.

"No! You don't say! Well I'm damned!"

There was that in his voice, his words, and his manner which affected Dorothy almost as if he had struck her. Sister Celestine was shocked nearly into speechlessness.

"Sir!" was all she could say.

"Beg pardon, I'm sure, forgetting where I was; I suppose you ladies don't do much of that sort of thing in here." He addressed himself to Dorothy, with what apparently was meant to be jocosity. "So you're Bully Gilbert's girl? I shouldn't have thought it; it only shows that you never can tell. I don't know where you get your looks from-not from him. Why, you really are- Do you know who I am?"

"Sister Celestine says you are Mr Emmett."

"Georgie Emmett, your father's best friend-in fact, his only friend, because he was not the kind of person who gathers them round. When, some nine months ago, he departed this life, he left it owing me a hatful of money; and I'm damned-beg pardon, I'm blessed if he hadn't the cheek and impudence, by way of wiping off his owings, to appoint me your one and only guardian; as if you were a little bit of something which could be turned into cash. I'd have come and looked at you before if I'd known you were so well worth looking at; but who would have guessed that your father would have had a girl with a face like yours. However, here I am at last; and I daresay you won't be sorry to say good-bye to this queer old shanty, and to come with me to have a peep at what the world looks like outside. I rather think there aren't many men who can show you more of it than I can. Anyhow, I've come to take you along; so run upstairs and put your hat and jacket on, and your things in your box. My car's outside, a 60 F.I.A.T. – if there's anything on earth can move it's her: but that's no reason why she should be kept waiting, so if you can manage to do your packing inside ten minutes I'll be obliged."

Sister Celestine and Dorothy looked at each other, as if both were at a loss for words; as, indeed, they were. It seemed incredible that Dorothy should be expected to quit, at a moment's notice, the place which had sheltered her her whole life long; to go, with this uncouth stranger, she knew not where. The Sister asked where he proposed so take her; his reply could scarcely have been vaguer. "Oh, for a bit of a run round; just now I'm rather at a loose end; my future movements depend upon circs."

To the Sister's orderly mind the prospect seemed uncomfortably nebulous; yet there seemed nothing to do but to let the girl go. The man was her lawful guardian. In his method of paying the convent dues the late Mr Gilbert had been erratic. Quite a considerable sum had been owing when he died. During the intervening months that sum had become still larger. Taking out a fat pocket-book, Mr Emmett paid all demands with bank-notes: in that respect nothing could have been more satisfactory. The convent, which could ill afford to lose the money, had become anxious; the sight of those bank-notes removed a burden from the Sister's mind and Dorothy was sent upstairs, to put her hat and jacket on, and her things into her box. The process was not a lengthy one. She still had the small wooden box which she had brought to the convent as a tiny child. But her stock of clothes had not grown much larger; those which would not go into the box were wrapped in a sheet of brown paper. As, theoretically, Frances Vernon assisted in the business of packing, she plied Dorothy with

questions. The answers she received were very short; gradually Frances became conscious that some subtle change had taken place in her friend during the last few minutes.

"What is he like?" she demanded; as Dorothy had done of Sister Celestine. In her answer Dorothy paraphrased the Sister.

"How can I tell you, when I have been acquainted with him only ten minutes?"

Frances leaped to conclusions as she herself had done.

"I know what that means-it means that he's horrid. Is he very horrid?"

"I didn't say he was horrid."

"No, but you didn't say he wasn't. You might at least tell me what he looks like. Dolly, do!"

And Dolly did. She painted Mr Emmett exactly as he had appeared to her. She had a pretty knack of description; by the time the portrait was finished Miss Vernon was gazing with wide-open eyes.

"Why," she cried, "he must be perfectly hideous!"

"He is not," admitted Dorothy, "what some people would call good-looking."

"Fancy going you don't know where with such a man as that! – you who have always said that in a man you must have beauty of mind, and soul, and form!"

Dorothy bent over the frock she was folding.

"We have been taught that a plain casket may contain a priceless jewel."

She might have been taught it; yet she doubted if Mr Emmett was a casket of that kind. Before long she was sure that he was not. Her box, whose appearance produced uncomplimentary remarks from her guardian, was fastened on the top of the car; presently she had quitted the convent, with all her worldly possessions. Mr Emmett was his own driver. She sat beside him, on the front seat, while the chauffeur sat behind. She would have preferred to have had it the other way round, but it was settled for her without her having a voice in the matter. A big coat was slipped over her shoulders; she was on the seat; a rug was wrapped round her knees; they were off; before she clearly realised what had happened; certainly before she had said all the adieux she would have liked to say. It was all like some strange dream; whose strangeness was accentuated by the subsequent flight of the throbbing monster through the air.

What was the name of the town at which they stayed that first night she never knew. She had not curiosity enough to ask; no one volunteered the information. After dinner, which was to her a wholly unaccustomed feast, at which she ate scarcely anything, in spite of Mr Emmett's well-meant gibes and jeers, she stole up to bed as soon as she could; to a big bed; in a big room, in the old inn, there she lay, a lonely, forlorn maiden; thinking, puzzling, doubting, wishing, with all her heart, that she was back again in the safe shelter of the convent. She wished it often during the days and weeks which followed. She was a young girl, and, like a young girl, all agog to stand on tiptoe, if needs be, and open the windows which would enable her to look into the house of life. Under normal circumstances, that motor cruise might have been to her one long delight; but the circumstances were abnormal; so that for long afterwards a motor car stood for her as a sort of synonym for a nightmare.

Everything was spoilt by Mr Emmett's presence. From the first moment he had impressed her disagreeably; that impression grew with each hour that she spent in his near neighbourhood. The trouble was that it was so hard to get away from him. He would have her sit beside him on that front seat; ignoring utterly her reiterated requests to be allowed to sit behind. During the first days they motored continually; stopping in the daytime only to eat and drink-principally, so it seemed to Dorothy, where Mr Emmett was concerned, for the latter. The quantity he drank amazed and frightened her; always, when night fell, he had drunk too much. During the day the liquor he consumed had an unhappy effect upon his driving. He was quick enough to perceive that he had not inspired the girl with sentiments of affection; and this he resented. But, instead of setting himself to get the better of any distaste she might have for him, he seemed to take a malicious pleasure in paying her out for entertaining a feeling of the kind. Discovering that she felt a not unnatural girlish timidity in

her new position as passenger on a motor car, he went out of his way to increase instead of lessen it, so that, before long, her timidity became actual terror. Nearly always he took the car along at what appeared to her to be a dangerous speed; as the day advanced, and the drinks multiplied, the speed grew more. At first she remonstrated, feebly enough; but he only laughed, and pressed the car still faster. Afterwards she sat silent; but she could not prevent her cheeks from turning white, or her mouth from shutting tighter. When he saw these signs he delighted in taking risks which made her heart stand still. One afternoon he knocked down a child in a village street on the other side of Blois. At first, in her agony, she thought it was killed; but it appeared that only its arm was broken. When the people came flocking round he gave the parents two thousand francs in bank-notes; one could not but feel that they would have been willing to have their own arms broken on those terms. He was lavish enough with his money. They spent that night in Tours. The next day he offered her a wad of notes, and suggested that she should go into the town and provide herself with a sufficient wardrobe. She had not realised till lately how scanty it really was; continual travelling made drains on her resources which she found it hard to meet. But he offered her cash in a way which jarred on her every nerve; she would not buy herself clothes with money which came from him. When she made this clear to him he called her an adjectived fool; and broke into a torrent of language from which she fled in terror.

At Lyons he tried to kiss her; whereat she burst into a frenzy of rage which surprised herself, and startled him. It was in the hall of the hotel after dinner, just as she was going up to bed; always, so soon as dinner was over, she went straight to her room. Billson, the chauffeur, happened to enter at the moment, to get orders for the morrow. Emmett, turning, saw him grinning at his discomfiture.

"By-!" he cried, eager to vent his fury on someone. "If you don't take care I'll kill you!"

But Billson never flinched; and he continued to grin. He was a shortish, youngish man, with a white, clean-shaven face, and black hair, which he wore parted in the middle. He seemed to have a gift for silence; Dorothy had hardly heard him speak a dozen times. She had a feeling that, for some cause, his master stood in awe of him. Although he went on grinning, Mr Emmett made no attempt to carry out his threat—at least, while she was flying up the stairs.

They spent some days at Aix-les-Bains. There he made to her his first proposal of marriage; he was in his cups at the time. To say that she refused him is to say little. When she gained the sanctum of her own apartment she was in an agony of shame and distress. Her dilemma was not a pleasant one. It seemed to her that it was just as impossible to remain in this man's company as it was to escape from it. She was penniless, friendless. How was she to get away from him? To whom was she to turn? Her ignorance was pitiable. For all she knew, his position as her guardian gave him powers over her against which it was vain to struggle. If she ran away from him, she thought it very probable that he could compel her to return; in which case her last plight would be worse than her first. Besides, with no money in her pocket, where could she run? Despite her horror of the man, to her, in her childlike ignorance, it seemed as if he had gripped her to him with bonds of steel.

CHAPTER II

THE CURTAIN

When they landed in England it was to her as if she had been for years with Mr Emmett, and Billson, and the car; though, in reality, they had only been associated for a very few weeks. She felt as if, during those interminable weeks, the best of her life had gone from her, and already she had grown old, before she was eighteen. She had forgotten how to smile; at night she could not sleep; her head was always aching; her nerves were in such a state of tension that she was beginning to be afraid of the sound of her own voice; the world had become to her a prison from which there was no way out. She had not been to England since she was a small child; returning to it was like coming a strange country. She would have forgotten her own tongue had not so many of the girls in the convent been English. They went up to town on the inevitable motor; on the way she kept looking about her with eyes which, in spite of herself, would grow dim. She had often dreamed of the journey she would make, one day, to London; she had never dreamed that it would be like this. They put up that night in a huge railway station hotel. On the morrow, for once, they parted company with the motor; Mr Emmett took her with him to a midland town by rail. Some race meeting was on; Dorothy had a hazy notion that her guardian had something to do with horses and with racing: it was a subject of which she had heard him speaking more than once. Some horsey acquaintances travelled with him in the same compartment; they played bridge all the way, to Dorothy's relief; she was glad that they should do anything which would keep them from speaking to her.

Mr Emmett took apartments at the principal hotel. There, in the private sitting-room, after a *tête-à-tête* dinner, he proposed to her again. He was more sober than he sometimes was at that hour; perhaps, on that account, he expressed himself with a clearness which she found appalling. In various fashions he had asked her again and again to marry him since that first time at Aix-les-Bains. She had begun to understand that not only was he a man who would not take No for an answer, but also that he was not likely to stick at anything which would enable him to gain an end he had in view. If she had had any doubts upon that latter point they were dissipated then. He did not so much ask her to be his wife, as tell her that she would have to be his wife; informing her, with complete candour, that if she was not an utter fool she would grasp that fact without any further fuss and nonsense. He added that, when she was his wife, he would give her a good time-an A1 time. There wasn't a better-natured fellow going, if you rubbed him the right way, nor a more generous one-he would give his wife all she wanted, and more, if she was only nice to him-that was all he wanted her to be-nice to him. He had sacks full of money-ask anyone who knew George Emmett if he was a poor man. Why, he thought nothing of lending anyone twenty or thirty thousand pounds, if the security was decent-that was all he asked, decent security; and, he went on with a grin, a chance of making cent. per cent. He might tell her, in confidence, that he had his fingers round the throats of more people than anyone had an idea of-all sorts of people, some of them the highest in the land. He never talked; even when he was drunk he kept his tongue off delicate subjects; but if he were to talk he could mention names, male and female, which would make her sit up straight. There was scarcely a man or woman who had anything to do with horses who did not sometimes find himself, or herself, in a tight corner about settling day. Those were the times they came to him. The number of services he had rendered of that kind-well, they'd fill a book. Everybody knew Georgie Emmett was a friend in need when a bad settlement had to be faced. He winked, and Dorothy shuddered.

Knocking off the ash from his cigar he filled himself another glass of champagne. If she had only had the courage she would have sprung from her chair and rushed from the room; but just then all her courage seemed to have deserted her. This man seemed to have for her the fascination which a snake is said to have for the victim it proposes to swallow. The worst of it was that, despite herself,

his influence over her seemed to be momentarily increasing, as if he were weaving a spell which, as it proceeded, placed her more and more at his mercy.

It was not, he went on, as if her father was anything, or anyone. He was not one to say a word to a child against her father, but she had only to think of how he had treated her to know what sort he was. What kind of a parent had he been to her? How often had he written to her? How many times had he been to see her? What had he ever given her? What had he ever done for her? He dare bet that the bills he had paid for her keep in the convent had been paid with other people's money. There was no disguising the fact that Bully Gilbert was a regular rip-and there it was. Not only had she not got a penny of her own, but she had no right to the clothes she stood up in-and pretty things they were to call clothes. Let her say the word, and she should have the run of the Rue de la Paix; then she'd know what clothes were. Why, as things stood, there wasn't a chambermaid in that hotel who wasn't in a better position than she was ever likely to be, if she was left to herself. And yet here he was, ready and willing to marry her. He'd get a special licence tomorrow; or, if she liked, he'd have the banns put up in church-any church she chose to name; though, for his part, he never could see what was the pull in going to church to be married. She might take a long day's walk without meeting one woman who wouldn't snatch at the chance of getting him; women of birth, and with money in their pockets too. What he saw in her, hanged if he knew himself; but he did see something. The first moment he set eyes on her he'd made up his mind he'd marry her-that's why he took her away from that adjectived convent-and marry her he would. So what was the use of talking? Men and women were curious creatures. The sooner she said Yes the more comfortable it would be for everyone. So she wasn't to be silly, but was to come and kiss him, and sit on his knee, and he'd put a prettier ring on her finger than she had ever dreamed of seeing there. Here it was-what did she think of it?

From a small leather case he took a ring which was set with diamonds; holding it out, moving it so that as the lights fell on it from different angles the stones sparkled and gleamed; luring her with it as an angler tries to lure a fish with the bait which hides the hooks. She sat, her slender body pressed against the back of her chair, gripping the sides of it with both hands, looking at him with staring, hopeless eyes. All the strength seemed to have gone from her, as if this man had drawn it all out of her, as out of a well, and left her dry. His vitality was crushing hers; in the fight to hold her own she was beaten; she knew it, and the knowledge was agony. She felt that presently he would only have to hold up his finger, and what he bade her do, that she would have to do. He continued to twiddle the diamond ring between his great fingers; dilating on its various beauties; dwelling on all that it would mean when it was in its place upon her hand; and each moment she expected that he would order her to go to him, and let him brand her with it as with a stigma which might never be effaced. What would happen if such an order were given she could not, dared not, think. While she still awaited it there came a tapping at the door; a waiter entered.

"A gentleman, sir, to see you."

Mr Emmett turned towards him angrily.

"A gentleman? What gentleman? I'm not going to see anyone to-night-whoever it is, tell him to go to the devil."

The waiter held out to him an envelope which was on a silver tray.

"Gentleman told me to give you that, sir."

Tearing the envelope open Mr Emmett read what was on a half-sheet of paper which was within; then he crumpled it up, and swore.

"Confound him! What's the hurry? Why won't the morning do? Tell him I'm coming down to him."

The waiter went. Mr Emmett looked again at Dorothy, still sitting as if she were glued to the back of her chair; replacing the ring in its leather case, he made as if to return it to his waistcoat pocket; then, suddenly changing his mind, he called out: "Come here!" She did not move; but clung tighter to her seat. He laughed, as if amused by her obvious fear of him. "You little idiot! Of what

are you afraid? There'll come a time when you'll not need any calling; and you'll come uninvited, and perhaps when I don't want you. I know you women; you're like badly trained dogs. When you're whistled to heel you'll not come; but when you're not whistled you keep messing about a man till he feels like giving you a dose of prussic acid. Very well, don't come; I'll come to you." He went to her, at the other end of the table. "Give me your hand!" He took it, her left; she offering no resistance, but looking up at him with a great terror in her eyes. On the third finger he slipped the ring. "There! – that's in token that you're mine; you're as much my property now as if we'd been together to church; and don't you forget it. There's a fool downstairs who wants to see me; and, as he is a fool, he shall; but I'm not going to let him keep me; I shall probably be back inside ten minutes, and mind I find you here when I do come back. None of your games-going to bed, or any of that rot; if you do I'll fetch you down again. There are all sorts of things I want to talk to you about, before you think of bed; I want you to show that you can be nice to me; and that you can treat me as a girl ought to treat the man who's going to be her husband-especially a husband who's going to give her the best time a girl ever did have. So you understand? – I'm to find you here when I return." He moved a step or two away; then halted. "I ought to have a kiss-a man ought to have a kiss from his girl, when he gives her the ring; but that sort of thing won't spoil with keeping-there'll be interest to collect-I'll take a couple when I come back."

He went. She sat staring at the door through which he had passed, his last horrid threat ringing in her ears. He would take a couple when he came back; and she was to stay there till he came to take them, with that dreadful ring scarring the flesh on her finger. She felt sure that it was being scarred; it certainly burned. Yet she did not dare to take it off; although he was gone she was still afraid of him. A curious paralysis seemed to have attacked her limbs. She remained motionless for some seconds after he had left her, her hand stretched out, staring at his ring. When she moved it was with an effort; when she gained her feet she had to hold on to the back of the chair, to aid her to stand.

What was she to do? She tried to think; as she had tried so often of late; her brain, like her muscles, played her false; clear thought was beyond her. One thing she realised-that she must not be there when he came back; in spite-because-of what he had said. Yet how was she to avoid being there? He had told her that if she went to bed he would fetch her back again; and she believed him. Once, at a hotel in France, he had made a great clatter at her room door; and was only prevented by practically the entire staff of the establishment from breaking it down. Somehow she felt that that night nothing would keep him from having her out of her room again, if she disobeyed his command, and fled to it. But, if she did not, what was she to do, where was she to go, so that she might not be there when he came back? Again and again, in France, had she meditated flight; only the conviction that the result would be fiasco had restrained her. Was she more likely to succeed, here, in England? Even through her mental haze a feeling was borne in upon her that in that direction lay her only hope. If she could only put a descent distance between herself and him she might escape him altogether. The point was, could she? An idea occurred to her-the railway. The first time in her life, so far as she remembered, she had, that day, been in a train. She had, of course, read about trains; she had even seen them; the probability was that she had been brought in one to the convent. But, in those days, she was a toddling child; she had certainly not been in one since. Mr Emmett had brought her in one from London. Then why should she not go alone in one, if not back to London, then at least to some place, a long way off, where she would be beyond his reach.

No sooner had the notion occurred to her than she started to put it into practice; and was already moving towards the door when a second reflection held her back. Mr Emmett had bought a ticket, with money. She was not so ignorant as not to be aware that railways were not public highways; that one could not travel in a train without a ticket; which had to be paid for, in advance with cash. She had seen Mr Emmett pay for two tickets-one for her, and one for himself. They would not let her get into a train without a ticket; how was she to pay for it? She was confronted, as before, in the midst of her wild desire to flee, by her eternal lack of pence-that insuperable barrier. She had had no

regular pocket-money at the convent like the other girls; their parents either sent them cash direct, or made arrangements with the Sisters. Occasionally, on saints' days, she was given a sou to put into the box; but, as a rule, she was without even that humble coin. Never having known what it was to have money she did not miss it; there were no temptations to spend; her modest wants were supplied. It was only when she set out through the world with her guardian that it began to dawn upon her what an important part money played in the affairs of men, and women. She had no idea how much cash would be required to purchase a ticket; she took it for granted that the more she paid the farther the ticket would take her; the mischief was that she had no money at all-not even a paltry *sou*.

How was she to get money? From where? She looked about her. Dessert was still upon the table; there were knives and forks; other articles which were possibly of silver; but they were not coin of the realm; though she had a vague idea that they might be turned into it. How the transformation might be effected was a problem which was beyond her altogether. She had sense enough to know that it would be no use proffering a handful of silver ware in exchange for a ticket.

In that moment of her desperation, if she had only known where money was to be had, she would have made free with it, if the thing were possible, even without the owner's sanction, oblivious of any consequences which her action might entail; being persuaded that no worse fate could befall her than that that man should find her still in the room when he came back. Spurred by this conviction she was about to rush forth and seek for money, she knew not where nor how; already her fingers were near the handle, when she heard footsteps approaching on the other side. He was coming back. In the frenzy of her terror it was all she could do to keep herself from screaming. She glanced behind her, as a mouse might do which is caught in a trap, and knows that its doom is approaching. There was a recessed window on one side of the room. She had watched the waiter draw the heavy curtains across the recess as he lit the lights. She went flying towards it; gained it; had just slipped behind the curtain as the door of the room was opened.

CHAPTER III

THE COWARD

The curtains were so thick, and were drawn so close, that in the recess it was nearly pitch dark. Only in one place did the lights of the room shine through. That was where the stuff had worn so thin that only a few threads remained. But for some seconds Dorothy was unconscious both of the darkness and the light; she was conscious of nothing. She scarcely dared to breathe; she did not dare to move; though she trembled so that she had to lean against the side of the recess to keep herself from collapsing in a heap upon the floor. Each moment she expected that the curtains would be drawn aside and her hiding-place discovered. She felt sure that Mr Emmett's sharp eyes must have seen them moving as he entered the room. As the moments passed and the curtains remained untouched, she began to wonder. Was he playing with her? Knowing well where she was, had he seated himself at the table; proposing to sit there drinking, till she was tired of pretending to hide, or till it pleased him to drag her out? She was sufficiently acquainted with his disposition to be aware that that kind of sport amused him. If he thought that she was shivering behind those curtains, he would let her go on shivering, ever more and more, until it suited him to play some sudden trick which might cause her to tumble in a nerveless heap on the floor. If he could succeed in bringing her to that pitch, his sense of humour would be tickled; he would enjoy the joke.

Thinking that might be the meaning of his non-interference she had half made up her mind to reveal herself, and so spoil his sport, when, on a sudden, she became conscious that a voice was speaking—a strange voice, which was not Mr Emmett's. Then Mr Emmett spoke. Then the voice again. What did it mean? She listened. It is a sufficient commentary upon her mental and physical condition to state that until that instant she had heard nothing. Yet, so soon as she began to listen, it became obvious that the speakers must have been talking together for, at anyrate, some little time; and that in tones which, to say the least, were audible.

Dorothy presumed that, after all, Mr Emmett had not noticed the quivering curtains, and had taken her disappearance for granted. If he had made a remark on it, it had been a passing one; clearly she was not the subject of the conversation which he was carrying on with the stranger. What they were talking about she did not know, but it became each second plainer that it was a matter on which they were both of them very much in earnest. If they were not actually quarrelling they were very near to it. The language which was being used on both sides was warm; the stranger was addressing Mr Emmett in terms which were the reverse of complimentary, and which Mr Emmett was vigorously resenting. His resentment seemed to add flame to the stranger's anger.

All at once there came something into his tone which struck the unseen listener's ear. She had become conscious of the ray of light which penetrated her hiding-place. Moving gingerly, so as to avoid coming into contact with the hangings, she approached her face to the worn place in the curtains. It was worn so bare that the few threads which remained formed scarcely any obstruction to the view; she could see through quite easily. The scene on the other side was clearly revealed; she saw the two actors in it as well as if the curtain had not been there. The stranger was a young man, possibly a year or two on the shady side of forty. He was tall, and held himself straighter than some tall men are apt to do. His chest was broad; he held his shoulders well back; about the whole man there was a suggestion of strength. His head was square, and was poised easily upon a rounded throat. He had an odd, clever-looking face, a fine, open brow. His eyes, which were rather small, were wide apart. His mouth was large, but his lips were thin, and shut so closely that when, in silence, he looked at Mr Emmett, only a slender red line was visible to show that a mouth was there. His black hair, parted on one side, was a little in disorder, some of it straggled over his forehead. Disorder, indeed, was the dominant note of the man. As she watched him the girl had a feeling that he was too much

moved by some inward excitement to be over-particular about the small niceties of his attire. His tie was a little crooked; his jacket had a lopsided air.

Ordinarily the expression of his queer-looking face was probably a pleasant one; there was that about it which hinted that, in a general way, the man's outlook on to life was that of a humorist. But there was little pleasant about it then, or humorous either. It was not likely that his complexion ever was his strongest feature-at that moment it had a peculiar pallor which was singularly unattractive. Like many dark men, evidently nature had meant him to have a strong beard. His cheeks and chin and upper lip were shaven, but apparently that day they had not known the razor. In consequence they were of a bluish tint, which was in ghastly harmony with the almost unnatural colour of his skin. The appearance of the man fascinated the girl who was peeping at him from behind the curtain, as if he realised some picture which, in some occult fashion, had unwittingly been present in her mind, of a man in a rage. His pose; his attitude; his disordered attire; something which looked out of his eyes; the obvious mental agitation which caused his countenance to wear that singular hue; the gleam of scarlet which was all that marked his tightly closed mouth; the ominous fashion in which, while standing perfectly still, he never took his glance from off the man in front of him-although she might not have been able to put the thing into words, everything about him spoke to the sensitive imagination of the girl of one who, for a very little, would throw everything aside in the fullness of his desire to gratify the lust of his rage.

The man in front of him was angry too; but with him anger took a different form: his was rather bad temper than genuine passion. It had about it a suggestion of bluster, of effort; as if he would have liked to be more angry than he actually was. Beyond doubt he was sufficiently annoyed with the stranger; so annoyed that he was quite willing to do him a mischief; to knock him down, for instance; even to throw him from the room. Yet, disposed as he evidently was to be as disagreeable as he could be, his rage altogether lacked that quality of intensity, of white heat, which marked the other; the something which caused the girl, when she appreciated, though only vaguely, the scene which was being enacted before her, to feel that it would be well that, at the earliest possible moment, she should make her presence known, for Mr Emmett's protection.

There, in those last four words, was the barrier which held her back. Had it been borne in upon her, in even the faintest degree, that, for the stranger's sake, it would be well that she should step out from behind that screen, she might have done it on the instant. But for Mr Emmett-no! In some odd way the stranger's rage communicated itself to her. The terror with which her guardian had imbued her began to change into resentment. As she observed the stranger his fury fired hers. As surely as she believed herself to have a just cause for anger, so surely was she persuaded of the justice of the stranger's anger also. She was convinced that Emmett was in the wrong. That she arrived at this conclusion from very inadequate premises was nothing; from what she had seen of Mr Emmett she was prepared to assert, offhand, without knowing anything of the facts, that in nine disputes out of ten he was in the wrong-that this was one of those nine she did not for an instant doubt.

What they were talking about she did not understand. When she began really to listen there was nothing in their conversation to give her a definite clue; they had reached that stage when, like two dogs, they were disposed to do little but bark at each other. The stranger informed Mr Emmett, after a brief pause, as if for reflection, that he was a thief. Mr Emmett paused, in his turn; then assailed the stranger with a flood of vituperation which was characteristic of the man-there was such a redundancy of offensive suggestions. Dorothy felt as if each one of them had been aimed at her; with each her choler rose; just, as she was sure, the stranger's rose also. An uncanny desire came to the tips of her fingers to grip the speaker by the throat and choke an apology out of him. She would have liked to see the stranger do it; with all her might she longed to inspire him with her feeling. Presently she realised that he had it on his own account, without any urging from her. When Emmett had finished he remained still, motionless; never once removing his eyes from the other's inflamed

features. Then he said, more quietly than he had spoken before—there was something in his lowered tone which pleased the girl behind the curtain—

"Would you mind repeating those observations? — or, if that is not convenient, the substance of them?"

Dorothy heard the threat which the words conveyed more clearly than if he had yelled it out. It is possible, since he was not dull-witted, that Mr Emmett heard it too. If such was the case then it seemed that, at least, he was no coward; for, with complete sincerity, he treated the other with contempt which was even more galling than his words. Thrusting his hands into his trouser pockets; holding his great head a little on one side; looking at the other as if he were something altogether beneath his notice; laughing that brutal laugh of his, which had hurt the girl more than speech could do; he began at him again. He poured forth on him a stream of abusive epithets, with a lavish copiousness which showed how truly great was the wealth of his resources; he surpassed himself. There was not a vice which he did not attribute both to him and to his progenitors; if the tenth of what he said was true then this man was a wretch indeed. When he had finished, at least for the moment, he laughed—a second time. The laugh did what his insults had failed to do—it moved the other to action. He remained quiescent before the opprobrious torrent; but that laughter surpassed the limit of his endurance. Still with his eyes fixed on the other's face he reached out towards the champagne bottle which stood beside him on the table. Mr Emmett, perceiving his intention, made haste to intercept it. He too moved towards the table.

"No, you don't!" he cried. But already the other's fingers were round the bottle's neck. "By-, you'll be sorry if you try that, you-!"

While he still was vomiting adjectives the bottle swung into the air; Dorothy saw that as it was turned upside down some of its contents went down the stranger's sleeve. Mr Emmett tried to stop it, and did, with his head. As he endeavoured to grab the other's arm, the stranger, swerving, brought the heavy bottle down upon his unprotected head with murderous force. The head and the bottle were smashed together; even then Dorothy was struck by the difference there was between the two sounds, the breaking of the bottle, and the breaking of the head. Mr Emmett and the bottle vanished together, with something of the effect of a conjuring trick. Mr Emmett disappeared behind the table; all that was left of the bottle was an inch or two of splintered glass, which the stranger still gripped. The result appeared to surprise him. He looked down at the floor on the side of the table which was hidden from Dorothy, and continued to look, as if he saw something there which was beyond his comprehension. Then he looked at the splinter of glass, which was all that was left of the bottle; approaching it to his face, as if to enable him to see it better. As he looked at it he smiled; and he said, as if he were speaking to himself, though his words were distinctly audible to Dorothy:

"My word! if it hadn't smashed!" His glance returned to the floor. He spoke again. "Emmett!" None replied. Something in the silence seemed to tickle him, because he both smiled and spoke again. "It seems it held out long enough." He observed the broken splinter with what appeared to be amused curiosity. After seeming to hesitate what to do with it he placed it carefully on the table, splintered end upwards. Then again he spoke. "Emmett!" When there was still no answer he bent over what he saw lying on the floor. Presently he kneeled. Dorothy could not see what he was doing with his hands; she did not need to see; she knew. When he rose it was with difficulty; his arms were about Mr Emmett; he raised him with them. As Mr Emmett did nothing to raise himself, since he was such a heavy man, the stranger had not an easy task. When he had regained his own feet he was holding his burden closer to him than could have been quite convenient. It was with curious sensations that the unseen witness observed how limp her guardian was; his head waggled with the stranger's every movement, as if the muscles of the neck refused to hold it up. Staggering forward, the stranger deposited Mr Emmett on the chair on which he had been seated at dinner. The effect was singular. It was an old wooden arm-chair, with a capacious seat, and a high back. Mr Emmett could not be induced to sit up straight. The stranger made one or two well-meaning efforts; but the results were not so satisfactory as his labours deserved. Mr Emmett would persist in assuming a lop-sided attitude: his chin on his chest, his body

in a variety of curves, his arms hanging anyhow. Realising that it was futile to try to induce him to take up a more dignified position, apparently the stranger decided to let him stop as he was. He drew back a little, as if the better to observe the effect. The spectacle he offered seemed to move him to reflection, and reflection to speech. He said, out loud: "If ever there was a scoundrel-" and then stopped, leaving the sentence unfinished; possibly recalling the old school tag, which recommends us to say objectionable things of our friends only while they are living. A cloth cap, a cane, and a pair of gloves were lying on a side table. Turning away, taking up these three articles, the stranger moved briskly towards the door, and out of the room, never once looking back at what was on the chair.

And Dorothy was left alone with her guardian.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN IN THE CHAIR

It was only then that the full meaning of what had taken place began to dawn upon Dorothy. It was only when the door had been opened and shut, and the stranger was gone, that she commenced to realise what kind of a drama this was which had been enacted before her eyes; that it was not a comedy, but a tragedy; in which the most tragic part was probably still to come. It was odd how silent it was when the stranger had gone. Unconsciously she had found comfort in his neighbourhood, his presence. When that was withdrawn, only the unspeakable remained.

Not the least terrible part of it was that, so soon as it became clear to her that she really was alone, she could not take her eyes off the figure in the chair. She would have given more than she had ever had if Mr Emmett would only have moved; if only he would make some effort to alter what must be a position of such obvious discomfort. Though she had come to regard him almost as if he were the bad ogre of some fairy tale, at that moment she would rather he should do anything than keep so still; she was more afraid of him dead than alive; especially as each instant the feeling oppressed her more and more that he was dead because of her. Actually-practically-it was she who had killed him. If she had only made her presence known; if she had only moved; if she had only uttered a sound-the thing would not have been done which had been done; of that she was assured. That, morally, she was an accomplice in this man's killing, she knew, if no one else did. From the moment in which she had discovered the stranger in the room, and had begun to watch, and to listen, she had seen the coming event casting its shadow before; she knew that now, as she had known it then. Some instinct had told her that the fury which possessed the stranger was of the sort which, to use a phrase, makes a man "see red"; that because of him Mr Emmett was in danger-although Mr Emmett himself had not suspected it, she knew. She had seen it in the stranger's face, in his manner; she had felt it in the air.

Not only had she had, in a sense, the prophetic vision, she had rejoiced to have it. She herself had had such a loathing for the man, had stood in such terror of him, that when that queer instinct began to tell her that it was quite within the range of possibility that the stranger might act as executioner the blood began to run pleurably faster through her veins. Expectation became desire; she waited eagerly for him to strike the blow; knowing, before it came, that it was coming. Was that not to be his accomplice? Her hope had been that he would do what she felt he was about to do; although she might have stayed him with the movement of a finger she had given no sign. It was useless for her to tell herself that she had not expected that he would actually kill him: perhaps the stranger himself had not meant actually to kill him. She had foreseen that he would probably assail him with violence; and had been willing that he should use what violence he chose. A little more-a little less-what did it matter? Only in the event of the stranger getting the worst of it would she have interposed; she would not have cared how much worsted Mr Emmett might have been. The proof that he had been worsted was there before her, in the chair. The result being, so far as she herself was concerned, that, as has been said, she was more afraid of him dead than alive.

How long, after she was left alone with her guardian, she remained motionless behind that curtain, she never knew. Before, while the drama was being acted, she would not have revealed herself on any account, lest she should balk the principal player; now her capacity to do so seemed to have left her. It was so still in the room that she dared not disturb the silence. She kept her eyes fastened to that bare place, looking at what she could not help but look; motionless, scarcely breathing; as if some form of paralysis had riveted her in that one position. But, by degrees, in spite of the horror which held her, there did come to her some dim appreciation of the fact that she could not stay there all night; for ever. She would have to leave her hiding-place some time, and show herself to the figure in the chair. The necessity was a terrible one; but it was a necessity; therefore, the sooner she came

out from behind that curtain the sooner the ordeal would be over; only let her be sure to go as softly as she could; so that, making no noise, none might hear her. With this idea of moving quietly she lifted her hand to part the curtains, and had just insinuated her fingers between them when the door was opened, and her hand fell back.

Her first impression was, as she saw the door swinging back upon its hinges, that it was probably the stranger, who had come back to do she knew not what. But the person who actually entered was the waiter. His appearance made her conscious of a sense of shock; she began to shiver all over; though the strange thing was, not that he should come in when he did, but that he should not have come before.

This was not one of your foreign waiters; plainly he was English to the core-an elderly man, with grey hair, slight side-whiskers, a stoop, and that air of deprecation which comes to some waiters, possibly because they spend so much of their time in considering the wishes of others without reference to their own. A decorous person; possibly one of the institutions of the house. His professional attire was in better condition than it is apt to be; there was a suggestion about him of unusual cleanliness, even his hands seemed decently kept; the napkin which he carried over his arm was spotless. Apparently he had taken it for granted that, since the meal must have been long since over, the diners had departed, and that therefore it was not necessary to knock. He paused at the door for a moment to look about him. Mr Emmett was hidden by the broad high back of the chair on which he was sitting. After his momentary hesitation, seeing no one, the waiter moved forward with the peculiar gait which comes to waiters after performing, for many years, balancing feats with plates and dishes. He had not only reached the table, he had begun to gather together the dessert plates, before he saw Mr Emmett-in his surprise he nearly dropped a plate.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for not noticing you before, but I'd no idea-" He stopped short, as if struck by the singularity of the gentleman's attitude. "I hope, sir, that nothing's happened-" Again he stopped, perceiving that something indeed had happened. His bearing changed, his voice dropped. "I do believe-" Leaving his sentences unfinished appeared, with him, to amount to a habit; he stopped again. Raising his left hand, with his fingers he rubbed his bristly chin, delivering himself of a complete sentence at last: "Well, I never did!" To an outsider the words might not have conveyed much meaning; they seemed to convey enough meaning to him. Then came the half of a query. "Whatever is-"

He got no further; seeming to be in a state of such perturbation that, for the time, he had lost his wits. He stood staring at the man in the chair as an anxious rabbit might look at a fox which it is not sure is dead. Suddenly he seemed to make up his mind what was the best thing for him to do. He went hustling towards the door; when he reached it he checked himself as if seized with an idea. What the idea was was made plain when he took the key out of the lock, opened the door, and, as Dorothy could hear, locked it again on the outside. And again she was left alone with her guardian.

This time her sensations were worse than before: she was being punished for her share in what had been done. She became awake to the fact that with that door locked-and egress, therefore, rendered impossible-her position had become a most unpleasant one. No doubt the waiter, declining, wisely enough, to accept more responsibility than he could help, had gone to tell the news to someone. Soon that someone would come back with the waiter; the news would be passed on, sooner or later, to the police. The girl had, of course, no actual knowledge of the procedure in such cases; she knew more about French methods than English, but she had sufficient intelligence to be aware that, ultimately, the police would appear upon the scene. If she was unable to escape before they came, as, if each time someone went out of the room, the door was locked, would be the case-and the police found her there behind the curtain-what would happen to her then? What conclusions would they draw?

The terror of such a prospect moved her to action-or, at least, to attempted action. Was there no other way of getting out of the room except by the door? She turned to the window which was behind her. Drawing aside the blind she found that it was set with small panes of coloured glass. She

was quick-witted enough to guess that that was probably because it looked out upon a stable or a yard, or something equally agreeable; and therefore a good view was a thing not to be desired. If that were the case then to attempt to escape that way would be to court discovery. Besides, she remembered that the room was on the first floor, that the approach from the hall was up a flight of several stairs; whatever might be on the other side of that window, it was not likely that it would be easy to reach the ground. Was there no other way out of the room? She thrust the curtains aside to look-and heard the key being put into the lock of the door.

She was back again behind the curtain when the door reopened, and the waiter reappeared, with, at his heels, somebody who was evidently a personage. A short, cobby man, middle-aged, wearing a gloire de Dijon rose in the buttonhole of his frock-coat, about him a general air of being well groomed. The waiter moved quickly towards the table, the other following close behind him. When they reached the chair the waiter said nothing; it was unnecessary; the other saw. What he saw seemed to impress him with a sense of having been subjected to a personal affront. He asked pettishly:

"What's the meaning of this?" Receiving no answer-the waiter was again stroking his bristly chin with the fingers of his left hand, with about him still that suggestion of the anxious rabbit-he addressed himself to the figure in the chair. "Mr Emmett! Sir!" No notice being taken he repeated his former futile inquiry: "What the deuce does this mean?" Then he added, as if the notion had all at once occurred to him: "He's dead!"

"I'm afraid he is, sir."

The personage went on from discovery to discovery.

"He couldn't have done it himself-look at his head-he couldn't have smashed it like that-someone must have done it for him."

"Looks as if that were the case, sir."

"Then who can have done it? – in my hotel; with the house full of people; in a private sitting-room; seated at his own dinner-table! What have you been doing?"

"Several things; there have been a great many things, sir, to do, with the house so busy. I've seen and heard nothing of what was taking place in this room since I came to say there was a gentleman wished to see him."

"A gentleman? What gentleman?"

"That I couldn't say, sir. A message and a note were brought to me; which I brought in to Mr Emmett; and he went out to see the gentleman."

"Went out, did he? He didn't bring the gentleman in here?"

"Not so far as I am aware, sir. They ought to be able to tell you better about that downstairs."

The personage was looking about him.

"What's all this broken glass? – and what's that?"

He was pointing to the splintered neck of the bottle which the stranger had left on the table.

"Seems, sir, as if a bottle had been broken."

"A champagne bottle-perhaps-" The personage looked at the waiter; the waiter looked at him. Possibly it was because of what each saw in the other's eyes that the speaker left his sentence unfinished. He broke into petulant anger. "Nice thing this is to happen in my house right at the beginning of the race week, about the only time in the year when one does have a chance of making a little money-goodness only knows what mischief it may do me when it gets known. Who's that at the door? Shut it at once! You can't come in here!"

It seemed that someone could come in, because someone did-a woman. She was what is sometimes described as a fine woman, still in the prime of life; big and well covered, she would probably have turned the scale at sixteen stone. She wore a black silk dress, which had a generous train; her ample bust glittered with chains and gewgaws. Unmistakably this was the hostess, the personage's wife. She stood in the doorway.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"First of all, Mrs Elsey, be so good as to shut that door. Then, when you've done that, if you'll take the trouble to walk as far as this, you will see what is the matter for yourself."

Shutting the door, she walked to the table-and saw.

"Why, whatever! Good gracious! Who's done it?"

"Seems as if someone had-by the looks of him."

"Bob! – what a sight he is! Goodness knows he never was much in the way of looks, but who'd have thought he ever could have looked like that? Don't you know who did it?"

"I'd make it hot for him if I did-doing a thing like this in my house, in my busiest season!"

"There's plenty who might have done it-plenty. No one ever had much love for him-and small blame to them. Why I only heard, with my own ears, a man say to him this afternoon: 'By God, Emmett, for two pins, I'd have your life'-sounded as if he meant it too."

"Perhaps someone gave him the two pins."

This was the waiter. Whether the remark was meant to be humorous, or merely a suggestion, was not clear. No one heeded him. The personage went on:

"What man was that? Be careful what you say, Mrs Elsey."

"No need for you to tell me to be careful; I can be that without your telling me-as careful as anyone. What I say I heard I did hear-I'm ready to swear to it anywhere, though who the man was I don't know; he was a stranger to me-but I should know him again among a hundred. He was a smallish man, with a sharp, clean-shaven face, and a brown suit, and a white billycock, which he wore a little on one side-he'd something to do with horses, of that I'm sure. But he's not the only one who had a grudge against George Emmett. Who, who had anything to do with him, hadn't? Why, if it comes to that, we'd no cause to love him."

"Now, Mrs Elsey, none of that sort of talk, if you please; that's a sort of talk I won't have. It doesn't follow that because a man has a grudge against another man he wants to kill him."

"Doesn't it? It depends on the man. But whatever did he do it with? I never saw such a sight as he has made of him!"

"Seems as if he did it with a bottle-a champagne bottle."

"He must have hit him a crack, to make a sight of him like that-why, his head's all smashed to pulp."

"You can hit a man a crack with a champagne bottle, if you mean business, and know how to. But this sort of thing won't do-the first thing we've got to do is to send for the doctor and the police; and, till they've been, nothing's to be touched; let them find things just as we did, then they'll be able to draw their own conclusions, and blame no one. So out you go, Mrs Elsey, and you too, Timmins, and I'll lock the door, and keep it locked, and, Timmins, you hang about and see that no one comes near; and, if you want to keep your place, mind you don't say so much as a syllable to anyone about what's in here, till I give you leave."

It was not such an easy business as, possibly, the personage would have wished, to induce his wife to leave the room: she evinced an uncomfortable curiosity in the details of the scene of which the man in the chair was such a gruesome centre; had she been left alone, she might have pushed her curiosity beyond desirable limits. As it was, her husband had to put his arm through hers, and positively lead her from the room, she remonstrating as she went. So soon as she was out the door was slammed, and the key turned on the other side. And once more, for the third time, Dorothy Gilbert was left alone with her guardian, from whom there seemed to be as little chance as ever of escaping. It was by some ironical stroke of fate that he appeared to guard her better dead than living.

CHAPTER V

DOROTHY IS LEFT ALONE WITH HERGUARDIAN FOR THE NIGHT

With the passing minutes the girl's plight took a different shape. When she had first rushed behind that curtain it had been with a childish desire to hide; to avoid the man who had threatened her with kisses; and perhaps worse—for her maiden soul had warned her that he was one who, if opportunity offered, would not stop at a little. In sheer childish terror she had fled to the first refuge she could think of; as if it were a refuge; as if, after an instant's search, he was not sure to discover her hiding-place, and have her out. The advent of the stranger if, in a way, it had saved her, had also complicated the situation; it was not, then, so much discovery she had to fear, as something it was not good to think of. Indeed, the situation was reversed; because, had she then taken the initiative and discovered herself, not only would she have been saved; but also Mr Emmett, and the stranger. Too late she was beginning to realise that all three were destroyed: the two living, and the one dead. Practically, in killing Mr Emmett, the stranger had killed himself, and her. It might turn out that he had done it actually. And in his action she was aware that she had been an aider and abettor. So in remaining hidden she had thrown away her own salvation.

The position now, however, wore a different aspect. Her mental faculties were more on the alert than they had been; as it seemed to her, they kept coming and going; so that now she saw clearly, and now not at all. So far as they enabled her to judge, now, again, her only hope of immunity rested on her continuing undiscovered. If they found her all sorts of dreadful consequences would immediately result. For one thing they would quite probably accuse her of having had at least a hand in her guardian's death, if she were not the actual assassin; not unnaturally taking it for granted that her persistent concealment could only have a criminal meaning. She could only disprove the charge, if it could be disproved, by shifting the onus of guilt on to the vanished stranger's shoulders. Already—though, as yet, the thing might not be acknowledged to herself—in her heart she had arrived at a final resolution that under no conceivable circumstances would she bear witness against him. Happen what might; where, in this matter, he was concerned she would be dumb. Although she had not formulated it in so many words, she felt that, in what had been done, they had been partners, even friends; that, though unwittingly, it had been done for her. Therefore, if to prove her innocence, it should become necessary to prove his guilt, her doom was sealed. In that case, so soon as they drew aside the curtain, and found her behind it, her fate was sealed.

It amazed her to think that she had not been discovered already. She herself was so conscious of her imminent proximity to what had taken place; was so well aware of how slender a protection that screen of hanging drapery really was; that it bewildered her that she should have played, with complete impunity, for so long the part of a spy—and more. But the continuance of such impunity could not be counted on. When the police came—and, possibly, they were already on the threshold—the room would be searched for evidence. Then, in a moment, her hiding-place would be revealed. She could not wait for that; she must get away out of the room, before they came. But how? — since the door was locked.

Parting the curtains, she stepped out from between them, looking about her eagerly for a key to the riddle. The wildest notions came into her head. There was a sideboard at one end of the room, with a cupboard beneath. It might not occur to them to look inside that cupboard; might there not be room in it for her? A moment's consideration made her doubt it. She might be able to squeeze herself into a small space; but, compress herself as she might, she doubted if there would be room for her inside that cupboard; even if it was empty, which was by no means sure. Then there was the fireplace; but, though it was old-fashioned, it was not a large one; she was pretty certain that she would not be

able to force herself up the chimney. But though she crammed herself into the cupboard, or rammed herself up the flue, she would still be little better off. That was not at all the sort of thing she wanted. She would still be in the room: what she wanted was to get out of the room. Plainly there were only two ways out of it—the door, and the window. Since the door was locked, only the window remained.

Drawing back into the recess she turned towards the window; it would have to be that way, since there was no other—though she threw herself out of it. Getting inside the blind she tried to raise the sash; it was immovable; obviously, it was fastened. She knew nothing of English windows; this was the first she had seen, but she presumed that it was meant to open. She searched for the fastening, above, below, on either side; so far as she could learn, there was none; apparently this window was a fraud—it was not meant to open. Examining it more closely she saw that there was nothing on either side to show that it was intended to be moved up and down; the paint was unbroken; the thing was a fixture.

The discovery startled her; was it an English custom to have no practicable window in a room? Nothing which would admit fresh air? If that were so, then, since the door was secured against her, beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt, she was caught like a rat in a trap, and only God could help her. She noticed that what looked like two wooden handles were hung on the ends of cords on either side of this dummy window, near the top of the sash. Did they mean anything? If they did, what was it? She gripped the two on the right, and pulled; then the two on the left, and pulled at them; nothing happened. Then she perceived that one handle on either side was of dark, and the other of light, wood; perhaps that might mean something. She took hold of the lighter handle on either side, and was about to tug, when she heard the key turned in the lock. Instantly the handles slipped from between her fingers; but before she could get from behind the blind she heard the door open, and footsteps come into the room.

This time she was indeed at a disadvantage. To all intents and purposes she was pinned between the blind and the window; she dared not move, since the slightest movement caused the stiffened blind to make an ominous rustling; if she tried to get away from under it she would be certain to make a noise which would ensure discovery. The only thing she could do was to stay where she was, and to refrain, if the thing were possible, from moving even so much as a muscle. She could see nothing. At first, in the shock of being taken unawares, her limbs trembled so; her brain was in such a tumult; there was such a singing in her ears, that she could not even hear. It was only by degrees that the sounds resolved themselves into distinct voices; and she became conscious of what was being said.

The personage, who was the landlord, and whose name was Elsey, had entered the room; and his wife, who declined to be kept out; and a fair-haired, spectacled young man, who was a doctor; and a policeman, who chanced to be the nearest at hand. The procession of four moved towards the table. The landlord spoke; his manner suggested a sense both of importance and of resentment.

"Here, Dr Nichols, and officer, is Mr Emmett, as you can see for yourselves. You see him exactly as he was found by Timmins, one of my waiters; Timmins is outside the door, and can give testimony to that effect, if required. He has not been touched; and nothing has been touched; each thing is just as it was when discovered, as Timmins can testify; and as, for that matter, I can testify; because I know it to be a fact. As regards this unfortunate man the question now is, is life extinct?"

He spoke as a showman might have done, who wished to call attention to the special features of his show. The doctor was bending over the figure in the chair.

"How long is it since he was found in this condition?"

"It might be ten minutes; it might be a quarter of an hour; it might be more. Timmins is outside, and will corroborate me, if required. At the earliest possible moment I sent for you, you happening to be the medical gentleman who lived nearest."

"I should say that there can be little doubt but that, as you put it, life's extinct; but it's not easy to examine him properly in this chair." He looked round the room, his glance passing over the curtained recess—if he had only known of the girl who shivered within it! "That couch wouldn't be convenient

either: it's not long enough. Couldn't you have a mattress, or something, placed upon that table? We might lay him on it, or, for the matter of that, we might manage without."

"Certainly you can have a mattress. I wish to do everything for Mr Emmett, who is an old customer of mine, which possibly can be done, though nothing can be more serious than the inconvenience, to say nothing of the positive loss, which he is likely to occasion me. Timmins!" The waiter came just inside the door, rubbing his chin. "Fetch me a mattress-at once!"

"Yes, sir; where from, sir?"

"Anywhere! Don't be a fool, sir, and stand gaping there; do as you're told!"

His wife interposed.

"It's you who's the fool, Mr Elsey! Where do you suppose Timmins is going to get a mattress from? Who do you suppose is going to give it him? – without my sanction! Come with me, Timmins; I'll see that a mattress is got."

When she reappeared the waiter was carrying one doubled up on his shoulder. A space had been cleared on the table, on which the mattress was placed. Then the landlord, the waiter, the doctor, and the policeman lifted Mr Emmett between them; the united four seemed to find him no easier burden than the stranger, singlehanded, had done. While the doctor was still conducting his gruesome examination someone else came into the room, an inspector of police. Him the landlord greeted with bustling cordiality.

"Most dreadful thing has happened, Mr Tinney; so unfortunate for me that it should have occurred in my house, at this, my busiest season; one of my oldest customers too, Mr Emmett; I daresay you know him."

"George Emmett? Oh yes, I know him; who doesn't? How did it happen?"

"That's what we don't know-what nobody seems to know-that's the mystery; the whole affair is most mysterious, and-and lamentable. To put it at its lowest, with every desire to put self on one side, one can't help feeling that someone has been guilty of a very unfriendly act to me. In my business one never knows how this sort of thing may be taken, especially by one's best customers. At this moment every bedroom's full; yet directly this becomes known I may have my house empty on my hands, my race week spoilt!"

"What's the cause of death?" The inspector put this question to the doctor.

"A blow with some blunt instrument, which must have been delivered with tremendous force. Some of the frontal cranium bones seem to be broken in two or three places. Of course my examination has at present only been superficial, but that appears to be the case."

The landlord proffered an addition of his own:

"It looks as if the blow had been delivered with a champagne bottle." He held up the broken neck. "We found this on the table, and the remaining pieces are here upon the floor."

The inspector again addressed the doctor.

"Could it have been done with a champagne bottle?"

The doctor settled his spectacles on his nose. Being a young man, a sense of responsibility seemed to weigh upon him. His reply was guarded:

"It might. Of course you understand that I am not prepared to give a definite opinion, but, to some extent, my present impression is, that it might have been."

The inspector turned to the landlord.

"Don't you know who was in the room with him?"

"That's the point-we don't; that's to say, not so that we can speak with certainty. You see, this is a private sitting-room, and occupants of private sitting-rooms have visitors of whom we know nothing. We can't keep an eye upon them as if they were public rooms-it stands to reason. But one of my waiters, named Timmins-this is Timmins-informs me that he brought a message and a note to Mr Emmett, who was enjoying his wine after dinner, to the effect that a gentleman wished to

see him; and that he went out to see the gentleman; but whether the gentleman returned with him Timmins cannot say."

The inspector addressed the waiter.

"When you brought that message was he alone?"

"Yes, sir, he was alone; except for the young lady."

The landlord exclaimed.

"Young lady! – What young lady?"

"Why, sir, the young lady he dined with; he and she dined together."

"This is the first time you've mentioned a young lady."

"Well, sir, he and the young lady had dinner together-dinner was ordered for two. I thought you knew that."

"I knew nothing about it-this is the first I've heard about it; this is the first time I've heard about any young lady. Did you know about it?" This last question was put to his wife. "I knew a lady came with him; he took two bedrooms, one for himself and one for her; his was No. 238, hers was No. 49, on the floor above. He wanted her next to him, they tell me in the office; but the rooms on either side of his were engaged."

"What was the lady's name?"

"That I don't know; I find he entered himself in the book as 'George Emmett and Lady.' When I asked Miss Wilson, who was there when he came, why she let him do it, she said that she asked him what was the lady's name; and he said it was all right and didn't matter."

"Did you see her?"

"No; I can't say that I did. I'm told she's quite young. She seems to have brought precious little luggage. There's only a small battered old tin box in her room."

"I can only say that this is the first mention I've heard of any young lady; I'd no idea that anyone came with him. I can't understand, Timmins, why you didn't speak of her before."

"Well, sir, I thought you knew."

"Don't I tell you I didn't know? What do you mean by persisting in thinking I knew? I understood you to say that when you brought the message he was alone."

"So he was, sir-except for the young lady."

"Except for the young lady! What the devil do you mean by 'except for the young lady'? He wasn't alone if she was there-was he?"

The inspector interposed.

"That's all right, Mr Elsey; you leave this to me-this is more in my line than yours." He tackled the waiter, whose expression, as they worried him, became more and more rabbitlike. "You say that Mr Emmett and this young lady dined together?"

"Yes, sir, they did-I waited on them."

"Did she strike you as being young? How old would you have set her down as?"

"Well, sir, not more than seventeen or eighteen, at the outside-though perhaps she might have been a little more or less-it's not easy to tell a young lady's age."

"Did she strike you as being a lady? You know what I mean."

"Yes, sir, I do. Well, sir, I daresay-I should say, sir, she was quite a lady; most certainly a lady; though plainly dressed; in fact, for a lady, almost shabby."

"Did she and Mr Emmett appear to be upon good terms?"

"Well, sir, I couldn't exactly say that they did."

"What do you mean by that? On what sort of terms were they? Explain yourself, man."

"Well, sir-for one thing she never uttered so much as a single word while I was in the room, neither to me nor to Mr Emmett; not even so much as yes or no when I handed her a dish. And she scarcely ate anything; and she never drank anything neither. Mr Emmett told me to fill her glass with champagne; but I don't believe she ever so much as put her lips to it-in fact, when I came in and found

him there was her glass just as it was when I filled it. Mr Emmett, he did all the talking. From the way in which she sat right back in her chair-that's the chair in which she sat, sir-and never spoke or moved, it seemed as if she were frightened half out of her life of him."

"Why should she be frightened? Did you hear him say anything to frighten her?"

"No, sir, nothing I could swear to; but he kept speaking to her in a chaffing sort of way, which I could see she didn't like."

"Did she seem to be angry? – in a bad temper?"

"No, sir, not so much that as afraid of him."

"When he went out to see this gentleman, did he leave her behind?"

"Yes, sir, he did, on that chair; and I couldn't help noticing how queer she looked-so white that I couldn't help wondering if she was feeling ill."

"Was she here when you found him?"

"No, sir; the room was empty."

"Did anyone see her go out of the room? – did you?"

"No, sir; I haven't seen her since I saw her sitting in that chair."

"Then where is she now? Where is she, Mr Elsey?"

"I've no more idea than you have, Mr Tinney. As I've already tried to explain, till a moment or two ago I hadn't the faintest notion that there was a lady in the case."

"Mrs Elsey, where is this interesting young lady?"

Dorothy, behind the blind and the curtain, could scarcely refrain from shrieking: "Here!"

Mrs Elsey shook her head.

"That's more than I can tell you, Mr Tinney. Beyond knowing that a young lady came with Mr Emmett, I don't know anything. What Timmins has been telling you is all news to me."

"Someone must know where she is, if she's in the house. I don't want to make any statement, but it seems to me that she's a most important witness, and the sooner she's produced the better. If, as Mr Timmins hints, she was feeling ill, she may have retired to her room. Perhaps, Mrs Elsey, you won't mind making inquiries. If she isn't in her room, wherever she is, she must be found, so don't let there be any mistake about it. I must have an interview with this very interesting young lady before we are either of us very much older-you understand?"

"No, Mr Tinney, I can't say I do understand; not as you put it. I will have inquiries made; in fact, I'll make them myself; but as for finding her, wherever she is, that's another question altogether, and one for which I decline to be held responsible. Things are coming to a pretty pass if I'm to be held responsible for the comings and goings of anyone who chooses to take a room in my house."

The lady sailed out of the room, with her head in the air. The inspector looked at her husband.

"I'm afraid I've trodden on Mrs Elsey's toes."

"She's very sensitive, Mrs Elsey is-very sensitive. I'm far from saying that you mean anything; but, as you must see for yourself, she has enough to bear already, without having more put upon her."

"I'm putting nothing on her. I simply say that that young woman must be found, and, if your good lady can't find her, someone else will have to, because found she's got to be-and pretty soon."

"Quite so, Mr Tinney, quite so; no one denies it for a single instant. I only wish that I had known of her existence sooner; much trouble might have been saved."

How that was, was not quite clear. The inspector made no comment. He turned to the waiter.

"Now, Mr Timmins, about this gentleman whom you say Mr Emmett went out to see. Did you know him? Was he a stranger? What did he look like?"

"That, sir, is more than I can tell you, seeing that I never saw him. The message and the note were both brought to me by one of the coffee-room waiters, of the name of Dowling-he may be able to tell you more than I can."

"Then fetch Mr Dowling here."

The landlord interposed.

"Excuse me! – one moment, Mr Tinney! At present no one knows what has occurred except ourselves; and, if it is possible, I should like as few persons as possible to know, till the morning."

"I don't see how you're going to prevent people knowing; you can't cover a murder with a napkin."

"Exactly; still, at the same time, if you wouldn't mind interviewing Dowling in my room, instead of here, I shall be only too glad to place it at your service; and to ensure you all possible privacy."

"Very well; there need be no difficulty about that. Have you finished, Dr Nichols?"

"I think I may say that, for the present, I have. Of course, a further examination will be necessary; but I think, under the circumstances, that that may be postponed till the morning; when, perhaps, I may be able to have the assistance of one of my colleagues."

"Have the assistance of whoever you like. Have his pockets been touched, Mr Elsey?"

"Certainly not, Mr Tinney: nothing has been touched-nothing; at least, not by anyone in my employ. I took care of that."

"Then I'll go through them, in your presence. It's just as well to have witnesses in cases of this sort." Mr Tinney "went through" the pockets of the man on the table; subjecting him to a process to which he would probably have strongly objected had it been in his power to object. A heterogeneous collection they produced.

"I'll put these things in my handkerchief, Mr Elsey; and, if you don't mind, I'll draw up a list of them, in your presence, in your room downstairs. In these cases you can't be too particular; and, as it's quite within the bounds of possibility that circumstances might arise in which someone may wish to hold you responsible for the property which he had in his possession when he came to your hotel, it's only right and proper that you should know exactly what I have got of his in my keeping. Now there's one other thing, before we go downstairs; about this room. If the corpse is to be left here-and I think it'll just be as well that it should be-then I must lock the door, and take the key. Have you a pass-key?"

"I believe I have one, somewhere."

"Then you must let me have it; you must let me have any keys which fit that lock. And you must give me your undertaking that no one, neither you nor Mrs Elsey, nor anyone, shall come into this room until I unlock it in the morning. If you won't, or can't, give me such an undertaking, then I shall have to leave one of my men outside there all night, to keep an eye on the door, to see that no one does come in."

"I will certainly give you such an undertaking-certainly I will! I promise you that no one shall come near the room; no one! You need have no fears upon that score."

"Then that's all right. Now, I think, we can go downstairs; and I'll hear what Mr Dowling has to say, about that mysterious gentleman, who, maybe, wasn't so very mysterious after all. And perhaps Mrs Elsey may have some news for us of that very interesting young lady; though it doesn't seem as if she's found her, or we should have heard. I'm not giving away any official secret when I say that I shouldn't be surprised if that young lady turns out to be the key of the situation, and on that account it's just possible that she may not be so easy to find as we should like her to be. But found she'll have to be; and found she will be; if our good hostess can't do it, then I will. I always was reckoned pretty good at hide-and-seek; I generally knew as well as another whether I was hot or cold. Now, gentlemen, if you please."

The party passed to the door. The inspector switched off the lights; drew the door to after him; locked it, and drew out the key; and Dorothy was left alone, in the darkness, to spend the night with her guardian.

CHAPTER VI

HOW DOROTHY MADE HER EXIT

In the darkness-that was the worst. When she realised that they indeed had gone, and that she was alone, she came out from behind the blind, parted the curtains, and found that the room was all dark. That was the worst. She could see so much better in the darkness, for though she might not be able to use the eye of sense she was at the mercy of the more vivid eye of the imagination-at its mercy. It made her see what she never would, what she never could, have seen in the light. Within sixty seconds of her having been left alone in the darkness she had already begun to have a vision of horrors. Yet she dared not switch on the electric lights; although she knew how to-there were none in the convent, but she had learnt all about them since-she did not dare. The inspector had spoken of leaving one of his men outside to keep an eye on the door; if he had not done so it was only because the landlord had promised that he would make it his especial charge; which meant that he would see that a watch was kept on it. Therefore, if she switched on the light, it would be seen at once; you could always tell from the outside if there was a light inside a room. If it was seen, they would know that she was there. Beyond a doubt that woman had not found her; probably the hue-and-cry was already out. Quite possibly it might dawn upon them ere long, that, since no one had seen her go out, she might have been in the room all the while and no one had had the sense to look. The danger of their repairing the omission, and coming back to look, was quite great enough, without the added danger of a light being seen inside the room.

And yet, to be left alone with her guardian lying on the table-that was much worse than seeing him huddled upon the chair. What might he not be doing, lying stretched out on the table at which she herself had such a little while ago been seated? Was he turning round to look at her? Turning what was left him of his head? It was so still. How loudly she breathed. She could hear her own respirations. Could he hear them too? She caught at the curtains with tightened fingers. Was that not someone trying to speak in a whisper?

All at once there was a sound. Someone was in the room. She felt herself trembling from head to foot; she clung to the curtains as for dear life. It was only after some consideration that she understood that the visitor was probably a mouse. She had been used to mice at the convent. There they had scampered about all over the place; sometimes about the room in which she had slept. The convent was old; the hotel was old; evidently the small marauders had taken up their quarters in the one building as they had done in the other.

The new-comer was joined by others. She had an impression that, after a while, numbers of mice were in the room. If they were conscious of her presence they ignored it. Certainly they cared nothing for the dead. She wondered if they were attracted by the smell of the champagne which had been spilt upon the floor when the stranger broke the bottle. Suddenly there were sounds quite close to her feet; she felt as if something ran over one of them; as if a fresh detachment were coming out of some crevice in the wood panelling of the recess in which she was standing. Was she to be shut up all night-alone with the dead, while the mice held festival? Was she to remain there, upright? Or should she seek rest on the floor? On the floor the mice might run to and fro across her body. She did not mind that so much as the thought that her guardian might be peering down at her from his place upon the table. There was a couch on her left; should she take refuge on that? To what purpose? Even suppose she slept, when they came in the morning would she rather that they should find her on it asleep or waking? If they were to find her at all, then it would be better, on all accounts, that she should turn on the lights at once, ring the bell, and bid them do with her what they would. Besides, she would be afraid to go to sleep with that in the room. The whole place was full of it. Each time her glance strayed, on this side or that, seeking, in the darkness, for she knew not what, with, as it

were, an irresistible jerk, her head was brought right round again, so that she had to look towards where she knew the table was, with its burden. She could not remain standing through the night; she dare not lie upon the floor; she dare not take refuge on the couch; she was unwilling to venture out from the sheltering curtains into the room; for all she could tell he might have got off the table, and be waiting for her just on the other side of them.

As she realised, more and more clearly, the disagreeable nature of her position, her thoughts recurred to the window, to the handles which hung on either side of the lower sash. It seemed incredible that a window, even a silly English window, should be made not to open at all, either at the top or bottom. After an interval of she knew not how long, she summoned up resolution enough to make another effort. Moving very softly, being anxious to be heard by no one, most of all by what was on the table, turning towards the window, she felt for the handles, and, finding them, began to pull. It was impossible to discriminate between the colours: she could only learn from experiment if she had the right ones. Apparently, to commence with, she had not: pull as she might, nothing happened. When, however, after one or two fumbling changes she tugged again something yielded: the handles came down towards her with a run. She did not doubt that she had succeeded in opening the upper portion of the window, at least in part. Not only was the movement so unexpected as to occasion her a sensation of shock, it was accompanied by a noise which made the sensation greater still. Either she had not tugged just as she should have done, or else the sash, or something which actuated it, stood much in need of oiling: it moved with a creaking sound which seemed to Dorothy to be one of the most frightful sounds she had ever heard. In her agitation she did not improve matters. So completely was she taken unawares that she loosed the handles as if they had been hot coals; swinging back they hit the window and the woodwork a series of raps as with a pair of hammers. To the girl's excited imagination it seemed very much as if pandemonium had all at once broken loose. That such a tumult could have remained unheard seemed to her incredible. If it had not actually called attention to the experiments she was trying on the window, beyond a doubt it had roused suspicion; which was already sufficiently on the alert, owing to the significant fact-with which, probably, the entire establishment had been made acquainted before now-that the mysterious young lady who had accompanied Mr Emmett had disappeared. She clearly realised how general a theme of conversation her inexplicable evanishment had probably become. How the men were asking the maids if they had seen anything of her; and how the maids were replying by putting the same question to the men. If anyone had heard the clatter she had caused-and someone must have heard it-he or she would promptly report the fact; inquiries into its origin would at once be set on foot; before many minutes had passed it would be traced to its source.

The girl crouched against the side of the recess, every nerve on edge, quivering with apprehension, expecting each moment to hear the key being inserted in the lock of the door, the click of the turning lock, the opening of the door, the steps of those who had decided, at last, to leave no nook or cranny of the room unvisited in which she might, by any possibility, be hidden. But as the minutes went, and no one came, her immediate fears grew less. Perhaps, after all, she had been unheard. In which case it might be wise, and safe, to endeavour to find out what had really been the fruit of all her tugging.

Drawing aside the blind, she looked up. The window was open, but the blind prevented her seeing how much. It was in the way; it would be difficult, in any event, to take advantage of the open window while it was there. With anxious fingers she began to draw it up. It rose more smoothly than she had feared. It was only when it was half way up that it struck her that if anyone's eyes were on the window they could hardly fail to see the mounting blind. The tardy appreciating of the fact occasioned her another touch of panic. Pausing, she had a mind to let it stay where it was; then, with sudden recklessness, drew it right to the top, holding her breath, when it was up, fearful of the result. She still seemed to have attracted no one's attention. It seemed to be a clear night, she could see the stars in the sky. By their light she saw that she had drawn the top sash down some nine or ten inches,

so that it was plain that at least part of the window was meant to open. She had only to draw it down as far as she could; it might mean for her a way of escape. Again she gripped the handles-it was easy now to grip the right ones; in the dim light she could see that they hung down below the others; again she tugged; again the sash came down, with that horrid creaking noise. In desperate recognition of the truth that hers was a case in which she might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb she went on tugging, in spite of the persistent creaking, till she could tug no more. Apparently she had opened the window to its widest extent.

When she ceased to tug she strained her ears to listen. This time she heard a sound which seemed to make her feel that all which had gone before had been as nothing. It came from within the room. At first she had not the vaguest notion what it was; what it meant. Yet, the instant it reached her ear, she was oppressed as by the consciousness of something strange. It came, and went, so quickly that it left her in terrified doubt as to whether it had not been born of her imagination.

Then after an interval, which seemed to her of grimly portentous length, it came again-the sound. There was no mistake that that was real. Equally certain was it that it came from the other side of the curtains, from the room which was empty, save for the mice and the man stretched out upon the table. No mouse, no gathering of mice, could have produced that sound; and the man on the table was dead. Was it possible that anyone could have come into the room without her knowledge? Surely she must have heard the opening of the door if it had been opened. She had noticed that the key turned in the lock with a grating noise, as if either the lock or the key were rusty. She was convinced that if the door had been opened she must have heard it; there was no other way into the room, yet she had heard that sound.

It came a third time. Was it not someone breathing, or trying to breathe? It sounded like it. As if someone were gasping, struggling for breath, as if some too heavy sleeper were making a stertorous effort to wake out of slumber. If no one had come into the room-and how could anyone have come without her knowing it-who could it be? There was another point: such a noise could hardly come from a person who was in a normal condition. It had gone again; all was still, though she listened with all her ears, with every sense she had. Just as she was wondering if it had gone for good, hoping that it had, it came again-louder, more obvious, more terrible, than before. For there was a terrible quality in the noise itself, quite apart from the circumstances under which it was audible. A sensitive soul, hearing it in broad daylight, anywhere, would have shuddered; it had about it such a suggestion of physical discomfort: as though someone, spellbound in unwholesome sleep, strove to regain consciousness, in order to escape from some agonising nightmare, and strove in vain. Had Dorothy had any experience of modern medicine she would have recognised its likeness to the noise some surgical patients make as they gradually come back to life from the stupefying effects of some powerful anæsthetic.

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