

***WILLIAM  
LE QUEUX***

***THE SEVEN  
SECRETS***

**William Le Queux**

# **The Seven Secrets**

**British Murder Mystery**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCES AMBLER JEVONS

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“Ah! You don’t take the matter at all seriously!” I observed, a trifle annoyed.

“Why should I?” asked my friend, Ambler Jevons, with a deep pull at his well-coloured briar. “What you’ve told me shows quite plainly that you have in the first place viewed one little circumstance with suspicion, then brooded over it until it has become magnified and now occupies your whole mind. Take my advice, old chap, and think nothing more about it. Why should you make yourself miserable for no earthly reason? You’re a rising man — hard up like most of us — but under old Eyton’s wing you’ve got a brilliant future before you. Unlike myself, a mere nobody, struggling against the tide of adversity, you’re already a long way up the medical ladder. If you climb straight you’ll end with an appointment of Physician-in-Ordinary and a knighthood thrown in as makeweight. Old Macalister used to prophesy it, you remember, when we were up at Edinburgh.

Therefore, I can’t, for the life of me, discover any cause why you should allow yourself to have these touches of the blues — unless it’s liver, or some other internal organ about which you know a lot more than I do. Why, man, you’ve got the whole world before you, and as for Ethelwynn —— ”

“Ethelwynn!” I ejaculated, starting up from my chair. “Leave her out of the question! We need not discuss her,” and I walked to the mantelshelf to light a fresh cigarette.

“As you wish, my dear fellow,” said my merry, easy-going friend. “I merely wish to point out the utter folly of all this suspicion.”

“I don’t suspect her,” I snapped.

“I didn’t suggest that.” Then, after a pause during which he smoked on vigorously, he suddenly asked, “Well now, be frank, Ralph, whom do you really suspect?”

I was silent. Truth to tell, his question entirely nonplussed me. I had suspicions — distinct suspicions — that certain persons surrounding me were acting in accord towards some sinister end, but which of those persons were culpable I certainly could not determine. It was that very circumstance which was puzzling me to the point of distraction.

“Ah!” I replied. “That’s the worst of it. I know that the whole affair seems quite absurd, but I must admit that I can’t fix suspicion upon anyone in particular.”

Jevons laughed outright.

“In that case, my dear Boyd, you ought really to see the folly of the thing.”

“Perhaps I ought, but I don’t,” I answered, facing him with my back to the fire. “To you, my most intimate friend, I’ve explained, in strictest confidence, the matter which is puzzling me. I live in hourly dread of some catastrophe the nature of which I’m utterly at a loss to determine. Can you define intuition?”

My question held him in pensive silence. His manner changed as he looked me straight in the face. Unlike his usual careless self — for his was a curious character of the semi-Bohemian order and Savage Club type — he grew serious and thoughtful, regarding me with critical gaze after removing his pipe from his lips.

“Well,” he exclaimed at last. “I’ll tell you what it is, Boyd. This intuition, or whatever you may call it, is an infernally bad thing for you. I’m your friend — one of your best and most devoted friends, old chap — and if there’s anything in it, I’ll render you whatever help I can.”

“Thank you, Ambler,” I said gratefully, taking his hand. “I have told you all this to-night in order to enlist your sympathy, although I scarcely liked to ask your aid. Your life

is a busy one — busier even than my own, perhaps — and you have no desire to be bothered with my personal affairs.”

“On the contrary, old fellow,” he said. “Remember that in mystery I’m in my element.”

“I know,” I replied. “But at present there is no mystery — only suspicion.”

What Ambler Jevons had asserted was a fact. He was an investigator of mysteries, making it his hobby just as other men take to collecting curios or pictures. About his personal appearance there was nothing very remarkable. When pre-occupied he had an abrupt, rather brusque manner, but at all other times he was a very easy-going man of the world, possessor of an ample income left him by his aunt, and this he augmented by carrying on, in partnership with an elder man, a profitable tea-blending business in Mark Lane.

He had entered the tea trade not because of necessity, but because he considered it a bad thing for a man to lead an idle life. Nevertheless, the chief object of his existence had always seemed to be the unravelling of mysteries of police and crime. Surely few men, even those professional investigators at Scotland Yard, held such a record of successes. He was a born detective, with a keen scent for clues, an ingenuity that was marvellous, and a patience and endurance that were inexhaustible. At Scotland Yard the name of Ambler Jevons had for several years been synonymous with all that is clever and astute in the art of detecting crime.

To be a good criminal investigator a man must be born such. He must be physically strong; he must be untiring in his search after truth; he must be able to scent a mystery as a hound does a fox, to follow up the trail with energy unflagging, and seize opportunities without hesitation; he must possess a cool presence of mind, and above all be able to calmly distinguish the facts which are of importance in the strengthening of the clue from those that are merely superfluous. All these, besides other qualities, are necessary

for the successful penetration of criminal mysteries; hence it is that the average amateur, who takes up the hobby without any natural instinct, is invariably a blunderer.

Ambler Jevons, blender of teas and investigator of mysteries, was lolling back in my armchair, his dreamy eyes half-closed, smoking on in silence.

Myself, I was thirty-three, and I fear not much of an ornament to the medical profession. True, at Edinburgh I had taken my M.B. and C.M. with highest honours, and three years later had graduated M.D., but my friends thought a good deal more of my success than I did, for they overlooked my shortcomings and magnified my talents.

I suppose it was because my father had represented a county constituency in the House of Commons, and therefore I possessed that very useful advantage which is vaguely termed family influence, that I had been appointed assistant physician at Guy's. My own practice was very small, therefore I devilled, as the lawyers would term it, for my chief, Sir Bernard Eyton, knight, the consulting physician to my hospital.

Sir Bernard, whom all the smart world of London knew as the first specialist in nervous disorders, had his professional headquarters in Harley Street, but lived down at Hove, in order to avoid night work or the calls which Society made upon him. I lived a stone's-throw away from his house in Harley Street, just round the corner in Harley Place, and it was my duty to take charge of his extensive practice during his absence at night or while on holidays.

I must here declare that my own position was not at all disagreeable. True, I sometimes had night work, which is never very pleasant, but being one of the evils of the life of every medical man he accepts it as such. I had very comfortable bachelor quarters in an ancient and rather grimy house, with an old fashioned dark-panelled sitting-room, a dining-room, bedroom and dressing-room, and, save for the fact that I was compelled to be on duty after four



o'clock, when Sir Bernard drove to Victoria Station, my time in the evening was very much my own.

Many a man would, I suppose, have envied me. It is not every day that a first-class physician requires an assistant, and certainly no man could have been more generous and kindly disposed than Sir Bernard himself, even though his character was something of the miser. Yet all of us find some petty shortcomings in the good things of this world, and I was no exception. Sometimes I grumbled, but generally, be it said, without much cause.

Truth to tell, a mysterious feeling of insecurity had been gradually creeping upon me through several months; indeed ever since I had returned from a holiday in Scotland in the spring. I could not define it, not really knowing what had excited the curious apprehensions within me. Nevertheless, I had that night told my secret to Ambler Jevons, who was often my visitor of an evening, and over our whiskies had asked his advice, with the unsatisfactory result which I have already written down.

## CHAPTER II “A VERY UGLY SECRET”

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The consulting-room in Harley Street, where Sir Bernard Eyton saw his patients and gathered in his guineas for his ill-scribbled prescriptions, differed little from a hundred others in the same severe and depressing thoroughfare.

It was a very sombre apartment. The walls were painted dark green and hung with two or three old portraits in oils; the furniture was of a style long past, heavy and covered in brown morocco, and the big writing-table, behind which the great doctor would sit blinking at his patient through the circular gold-rimmed glasses, that gave him a somewhat Teutonic appearance, was noted for its prim neatness and orderly array. On the one side was an adjustable couch; on the other a bookcase with glass doors containing a number of instruments which were, however, not visible because of curtains of green silk behind the glass.

Into that room, on three days a week, Ford, the severely respectable footman, ushered in patients one after the other, many of them Society women suffering from what is known in these degenerate days as “nerves.” Indeed, Eyton was *par excellence* a ladies’ doctor, for so many of the gentler sex get burnt up in the mad rush of a London season.

I had made up my mind to consult my chief, and with that object entered his room on the following afternoon at a quarter before four.

“Well, Boyd, anything fresh?” he asked, putting off his severely professional air and lolling back in his padded writing-chair as I entered.

“No, nothing,” I responded, throwing myself in the patient’s chair opposite him and tossing my gloves on the

table. "A hard day down at the hospital, that's all. You've been busy as usual, I suppose."

"Busy!" the old man echoed, "why, these confounded women never let me alone for a single instant! Always the same story — excitement, late hours, little worries over erring husbands, and all that sort of thing. I always know what's coming as soon as they get seated and settled. I really don't know what Society's coming to, Boyd," and he blinked over at me through his heavy-framed spectacles.

About sixty, of middle height, he was slightly inclined to rotundity, with hair almost white, a stubbly grey beard, and a pair of keen eyes rather prominently set in a bony but not unpleasant countenance. He had a peculiar habit of stroking his left ear when puzzled, and was not without those little eccentricities which run hand in hand with genius. One of them was his fondness for amateur theatricals, for he was a leading member of the Dramatic Club at Hove and nearly always took part in the performances. But he was a pronounced miser. Each day when he arrived at Victoria Station from Hove, he purchased three ham sandwiches at the refreshment bar and carried them in his black bag to Harley Street. He there concealed them in a drawer in the writing-table and stealthily ate them instead of taking half-an-hour for luncheon. Sometimes he sent Ford out to the nearest greengrocer's in the Marylebone Road for a penny apple, which he surreptitiously ate as dessert.

Indeed, he was finishing his last sandwich when I entered, and his mouth was full.

It may have been that small fact which caused me to hesitate. At any rate, sitting there with those big round eyes peering forth upon me, I felt the absurdity of the situation.

Presently, when he had finished his sandwich, carefully brushed the crumbs from his blotting-pad and cast the bag into the waste-paper basket, he raised his head and with his big eyes again blinking through his spectacles, said:

"You've had no call to poor old Courtenay, I suppose?"

“No,” I responded. “Why?”

“Because he’s in a bad way.”

“Worse?”

“Yes,” he replied. “I’m rather anxious about him. He’ll have to keep to his bed, I fear.”

I did not in the least doubt this. Old Mr. Henry Courtenay, one of the Devonshire Courtenays, a very wealthy if somewhat eccentric old gentleman, lived in one of those prim, pleasant, detached houses in Richmond Road, facing Kew Gardens, and was one of Sir Bernard’s best patients. He had been under him for a number of years until they had become personal friends. One of his eccentricities was to insist on paying heavy fees to his medical adviser, believing, perhaps, that by so doing he would secure greater and more careful attention.

But, strangely enough, mention of the name suddenly gave me the clue so long wanting. It aroused within me a sense of impending evil regarding the very man of whom we were speaking. The sound of the name seemed to strike the sympathetic chord within my brain, and I at once became cognisant that the unaccountable presage of impending misfortune was connected with that rather incongruous household down at Kew.

Therefore, when Sir Bernard imparted to me his misgivings, I was quickly on the alert, and questioned him regarding the progress of old Mr. Courtenay’s disease.

“The poor fellow is sinking, I’m afraid, Boyd,” exclaimed my chief, confidentially. “He doesn’t believe himself half so ill as he is. When did you see him last?”

“Only a few days ago. I thought he seemed much improved,” I said.

“Ah! of course,” the old doctor snapped; his manner towards me in an instant changed. “You’re a frequent visitor there, I forgot. Feminine attraction and all that sort of thing. Dangerous, Boyd! Dangerous to run after a woman of her

sort. I'm an older man than you. Why haven't you taken the hint I gave you long ago?"

"Because I could see no reason why I should not continue my friendship with Ethelwynn Mivart."

"My dear Boyd," he responded, in a sympathetic fatherly manner, which he sometimes assumed, "I'm an old bachelor, and I see quite sufficient of women in this room — too much of them, in fact. The majority are utterly worthless. Recollect that I have never taken away a woman's character yet, and I refuse to do so now — especially to her lover. I merely warn you, Boyd, to drop her. That's all. If you don't, depend upon it you'll regret it."

"Then there's some secret or other of her past which she conceals, I suppose?" I said hoarsely, feeling confident that being so intimate with his patient, old Mr. Courtenay, he had discovered it.

"Yes," he replied, blinking again at me through his glasses. "There is — a very ugly secret."

## **CHAPTER III THE COURTENAYS**

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I determined to spend that evening at Richmond Road with open eyes.

The house was a large red-brick one, modern, gabled, and typically suburban. Mr. Courtenay, although a wealthy man with a large estate in Devonshire and extensive properties in Canada, where as a young man he had amassed a large fortune, lived in that London suburb in order to be near his old friends. Besides, his wife was young and objected to being buried in the country. With her husband an invalid she was unable to entertain, therefore she had found the country dull very soon after her marriage and gladly welcomed removal to London, even though they sank their individuality in becoming suburban residents.

Short, the prim manservant, who admitted me, showed me at once up to his master's room, and I stayed for half-an-hour with him. He was sitting before the fire in a padded dressing gown, a rather thick-set figure with grey hair, wan cheeks, and bright eyes. The hand he gave me was chill and bony, yet I saw plainly that he was much better than when I had last seen him. He was up, and that was a distinctly good sign. I examined him, questioned him, and as far as I could make out he was, contrary to my chief's opinion, very much improved.

Indeed, he spoke quite gaily, offered me a whisky and soda, and made me tell him the stories I had heard an hour earlier at the Savage. The poor old fellow was suffering from that most malignant disease, cancer of the tongue, which had caused him to develop peripheral neuritis. His doctors had recommended an operation, but knowing it to be a very serious one he had declined it, and as he had suffered great

pain and inconvenience he had taken to drink heavily. He was a lonely man, and I often pitied him. A doctor can very quickly tell whether domestic felicity reigns in a household, and I had long ago seen that with the difference of age between Mrs. Courtenay and her husband — he sixty-two and she only twenty-nine — they had but few ideas in common.

That she nursed him tenderly I was well aware, but from her manner I had long ago detected that her devotedness was only assumed in order to humour him, and that she possessed little or no real affection for him. Nor was it much wonder, after all. A smart young woman, fond of society and amusement, is never the kind of wife for a snappy invalid of old Courtenay's type. She had married him, some five years before, for his money, her uncharitable enemies said. Perhaps that was so. In any case it was difficult to believe that a pretty woman of her stamp could ever entertain any genuine affection for a man of his age, and it was most certainly true that whatever bond of sympathy had existed between them at the time of their marriage had now been snapped.

Instead of remaining at home of an evening and posing as a dutiful wife as she once had done, she was now in the habit of going up to town to her friends the Penn-Pagets, who lived in Brook Street, or the Hennikers in Redcliffe Square, accompanying them to dances and theatres with all the defiance of the "covenances" allowed nowadays to the married woman. On such occasions, growing each week more frequent, her sister Ethelwynn remained at home to see that Mr. Courtenay was properly attended to by the nurse, and exhibited a patience that I could not help but admire.

Yes, the more I reflected upon it the more curious seemed that ill-assorted *ménage*. On her marriage Mary Mivart had declared that her new home in Devonshire was deadly dull, and had induced her indulgent husband to allow

her sister to come and live with her, and Ethelwynn and her maid had formed part of the household ever since.

We doctors, providing we have not a brass plate in lieu of a practice, see some queer things, and being in the confidence of our patients, know of many strange and incomprehensible families. The one at Richmond Road was a case in point. I had gradually seen how young Mrs. Courtenay had tired of her wifely duties, until, by slow degrees, she had cast off the shackles altogether — until she now thought more of her new frocks, smart suppers at the Carlton, first-nights and “shows” in Mayfair than she did of the poor suffering old man whom she had not so long ago vowed to “love, honour and obey.” It was to be regretted, but in my position I had no necessity nor inclination to interfere. Even Ethelwynn made no remark, although this sudden breaking forth of her sister must have pained her considerably.

When at length I shook hands with my patient, left him in the hands of the nurse and descended to the drawing room, I found Ethelwynn awaiting me.

She rose and came forward, both her slim white hands outstretched in glad welcome.

“Short told me you were here,” she exclaimed. “What a long time you have been upstairs. Nothing serious, I hope,” she added with a touch of anxiety, I thought.

“Nothing at all,” I assured her, walking with her across to the fire and seating myself in the cosy-corner, while she threw herself upon a low lounge chair and pillowed her dark head upon a big cushion of yellow silk. “Where is Mary?” I asked.

“Out. She’s dining with the Hennikers to-night, I think.”

“And leaves you at home to look after the invalid?” I remarked.

“Oh, I don’t mind in the least,” she declared, laughing.

“And the old gentleman? What does he say to her constant absence in the evening?”



“Well, to tell the truth, Ralph, he seldom knows. He usually believes her to be at home, and I never undeceive him. Why should I?”

I grunted, for I was not at all well pleased with her connivance at her sister’s deceit. The sound that escaped my lips caused her to glance across at me in quick surprise.

“You are displeased, dear,” she said. “Tell me why. What have I done?”

“I’m not displeased with you,” I declared. “Only, as you know, I’m not in favour of deception, and especially so in a wife.”

She pursed her lips, and I thought her face went a trifle paler. She was silent for a moment, then said:

“I don’t see why we should discuss that, Ralph. Mary’s actions concern neither of us. It is not for us to prevent her amusing herself, neither is it our duty to create unpleasantness between husband and wife.”

I did not reply, but sat looking at her, drinking in her beauty in a long, full draught. How can I describe her? Her form was graceful in every line; her face perfect in its contour, open, finely-moulded, and with a marvellous complexion — a calm, sweet countenance that reminded one of Raphael’s “Madonna” in Florence, indeed almost its counterpart. Her beauty had been remarked everywhere. She had sat to a well-known R.A. for his Academy picture two years before, and the artist had declared her to be one of the most perfect types of English beauty.

Was it any wonder, then, that I was in love with her? Was it any wonder that those wonderful dark eyes held me beneath their spell, or those dark locks that I sometimes stroked from off her fair white brow should be to me the most beautiful in all the world? Man is but mortal, and a beautiful woman always enchants.

As she sat before me in her evening gown of some flimsy cream stuff, all frills and furbelows, she seemed perfect in her loveliness. The surroundings suited her to perfection —

the old Chippendale and the palms, while the well-shaded electric lamp in its wrought-iron stand shed a mellow glow upon her, softening her features and harmonising the tints of the objects around. From beneath the hem of her skirt a neat ankle encased in its black silk stocking was thrust coquettishly forward, and her tiny patent leather slipper was stretched out to the warmth of the fire. Her pose was, however, restful and natural. She loved luxury, and made no secret of it. The hour after dinner was always her hour of laziness, and she usually spent it in that self-same chair, in that self-same position.

She was twenty-five, the youngest daughter of old Thomas Mivart, who was squire of Neneford, in Northamptonshire, a well-known hunting-man of his day, who had died two years ago leaving a widow, a charming lady, who lived alone at the Manor. To me it had always been a mystery why the craving for gaiety and amusement had never seized Ethelwynn. She was by far the more beautiful of the pair, the smartest in dress, and the wittier in speech, for possessed of a keen sense of humour, she was interesting as well as handsome — the two qualities which are *par excellence* necessary for a woman to attain social success.

She stirred slightly as she broke the silence, and then I detected in her a nervousness which I had not noticed on first entering the room.

“Sir Bernard Eyton was down here yesterday and spent over an hour with the old gentleman. They sent the nurse out of the room and talked together for a long time, upon some private business, nurse thinks. When Sir Bernard came down he told me in confidence that Mr. Courtenay was distinctly weaker.”

“Yes,” I said, “Sir Bernard told me that, but I must confess that to-night I find a decided improvement in him. He’s sitting up quite lively.”

“Very different to a month ago,” my well-beloved remarked. “Do you recollect when Short went to London in a hansom and brought you down at three in the morning?”

“I gave up all hope when I saw him on that occasion,” I said; “but he certainly seems to have taken a new lease of life.”

“Do you think he really has?” she inquired with an undisguised eagerness which struck me as distinctly curious. “Do you believe that Sir Bernard’s fears are after all ungrounded?”

I looked at her surprised. She had never before evinced such a keen interest in her sister’s husband, and I was puzzled.

“I really can’t give an opinion,” I responded mechanically, for want of something or other to say.

It was curious, that question of hers — very curious.

Yet after all I was in love — and all lovers are fools in their jealousy.

## CHAPTER IV A NIGHT CALL

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“Do you know, Ralph,” she faltered presently, “I have a faint suspicion that you are annoyed about something. What is it? Be frank now and tell me.”

“Annoyed?” I laughed. “Not at all, dearest. Nervous and impatient, perhaps. You must make allowances for me. A doctor’s life is full of professional worries. I’ve had a trying day at the hospital, and I suppose I’m quarrelsome — eh?”

“No, not quarrelsome, but just inclined to be a little suspicious.”

“Suspicious? Of what?”

Her woman’s power of penetration to the innermost secrets of the heart was marvellous.

“Of me?”

“How absurd!” I exclaimed. “Why should I be suspicious — and of what?”

“Well,” she laughed, “I really don’t know, only your manner is peculiar. Why not be frank with me, Ralph, dear, and tell me what it is that you don’t like. Have I offended you?”

“Not at all, darling,” I hastened to assure her. “Why, you’re the best little woman in the world. Offend me — how absurd!”

“Then who has offended you?”

I hesitated. When a woman really loves, a man can have but few secrets from her. Ethelwynn always read me like an open book.

“I’m worried over a critical case,” I said, in an endeavour to evade her question.

“But your patients don’t annoy you, surely,” she exclaimed. “There is a distinction between annoyance and

worry.”

I saw that she had detected my suspicion, and at once hastened to reassure her that she had my entire confidence.

“If Mary finds her life a trifle dull with her husband it is surely no reason why I should be blamed for it,” she said, in a tone of mild complaint.

“No, you entirely misunderstand me,” I said. “No blame whatever attaches to you. Your sister’s actions are no affair of ours. It is merely a pity that she cannot see her error. With her husband lying ill she should at least remain at home.”

“She declares that she has suffered martyrdom for his sake long enough,” my well-beloved said. “Perhaps she is right, for between ourselves the old gentleman is a terrible trial.”

“That is only to be expected from one suffering from such a disease. Yet it can serve no excuse for his wife taking up with that gay set, the Penn-Pagets and the Hennikers. I must say I’m very surprised.”

“And so am I, Ralph. But what can I do? I’m utterly powerless. She is mistress here, and does exactly as she likes. The old gentleman dotes on her and allows her to have her way in everything. She has ever been wilful, even from a child.”

She did not attempt to shield her sister, and yet she uttered no condemnation of her conduct. I could not, even then, understand the situation. To me one of two things was apparent. Either she feared to displease her sister because of some power the latter held over her, or this neglect of old Mr. Courtenay was pleasing to her.

“I wonder you don’t give Mary a hint that her conduct is being noticed and remarked upon. Of course, don’t say that I’ve spoken of it. Merely put it to her in the manner of a vague suggestion.”

“Very well, if you wish it,” she responded promptly, for she was ever ready to execute my smallest desire.

“And you love me quite as truly and as well as you did a year ago?” I asked, eagerly, stroking the dark tendrils from her white brow.

“Love you?” she echoed. “Yes, Ralph,” she went on, looking up into my face with unwavering gaze. “I may be distraught and pre-occupied sometimes, but, nevertheless, I swear to you, as I did on that summer’s evening long ago when we were boating together at Shepperton, that you are the only man I have ever loved — or shall ever love.”

I returned her caress with a passion that was heartfelt. I was devoted to her, and these tender words of hers confirmed my belief in her truth and purity.

“Need I repeat what I have told you so many times, dearest?” I asked, in a low voice, as her head rested upon my shoulder and she stood in my embrace. “Need I tell you how fondly I love you — how that I am entirely yours? No. You are mine, Ethelwynn — mine.”

“And you will never think ill of me?” she asked, in a faltering tone. “You will never be suspicious of me as you have been to-night? You cannot tell how all this upsets me. Perfect love surely demands perfect confidence. And our love is perfect — is it not?”

“It is,” I cried. “It is. Forgive me, dearest. Forgive me for my churlish conduct to-night. It is my fault — all my fault. I love you, and have every confidence in you.”

“But will your love last always?” she asked, with just a tinge of doubt in her voice.

“Yes, always,” I declared.

“No matter what may happen?” she asked.

“No matter what may happen.”

I kissed her fervently with warm words of passionate devotion upon my lips, and went forth into the rainy winter’s night with my suspicions swept away and with love renewed within me.

I had been foolish in my suspicions and apprehensions, and hated myself for it. Her sweet devotedness to me was

sufficient proof of her honesty. I was not wealthy by any means, and I knew that if she chose she could, with her notable beauty, captivate a rich husband without much difficulty. Husbands are only unattainable by the blue-stocking, the flirt and the personally angular.

The rain pelted down in torrents as I walked to Kew Gardens Station, and as it generally happens to the unlucky doctor that calls are made upon him in the most inclement weather, I found, on returning to Harley Place, that Lady Langley, in Hill Street, had sent a message asking me to go round at once. I was therefore compelled to pay the visit, for her ladyship — a snappy old dowager — was a somewhat exacting patient of Sir Bernard's.

She was a fussy old person who believed herself to be much worse than she really was, and it was, therefore, not until past one o'clock that I smoked my final pipe, drained my peg, and retired to bed, full of recollections of my well-beloved.

Just before turning in my man brought me a telegram from Sir Bernard, dispatched from Brighton, regarding a case to be seen on the following day. He was very erratic about telegrams and sent them to me at all hours, therefore it was no extraordinary circumstance. He always preferred telegraphing to writing letters. I read the message, tossed it with its envelope upon the fire, and then retired with a fervent hope that I should at least be allowed to have a complete night's rest. Sir Bernard's patients were, however, of that class who call the doctor at any hour for the slightest attack of indigestion, and summonses at night were consequently very frequent.

I suppose I had been in bed a couple of hours when I was awakened by the electric bell sounding in my man's room, and a few minutes later he entered, saying: —

“There's a man who wants to see you immediately, sir. He says he's from Mr. Courtenay's, down at Kew.”

“Mr. Courtenay’s!” I echoed, sitting up in bed. “Bring him in here.”

A few moments later the caller was shown in.

“Why, Short!” I exclaimed. “What’s the matter?”

“Matter, doctor,” the man stammered. “It’s awful, sir!”

“What’s awful?”

“My poor master, sir. He’s dead — he’s been murdered!”



## **CHAPTER V DISCLOSES A MYSTERY**

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The man's amazing announcement held me speechless.

"Murdered!" I cried when I found tongue. "Impossible!"

"Ah! sir, it's too true. He's quite dead."

"But surely he has died from natural causes — eh?"

"No, sir. My poor master has been foully murdered."

"How do you know that?" I asked breathlessly. "Tell me all the facts."

I saw by the man's agitation, his white face, and the hurried manner in which he had evidently dressed to come in search of me, that something tragic had really occurred.

"We know nothing yet, sir," was his quick response. "I entered his room at two o'clock, as usual, to see if he wanted anything, and saw that he was quite still, apparently asleep. The lamp was turned low, but as I looked over the bed I saw a small dark patch upon the sheet. This I discovered to be blood, and a moment later was horrified to discover a small wound close to the heart, and from it the blood was slowly oozing."

"Then he's been stabbed, you think?" I gasped, springing up and beginning to dress myself hastily.

"We think so, sir. It's awful!"

"Terrible!" I said, utterly dumbfounded by the man's amazing story. "After you made the discovery, how did you act?"

"I awoke the nurse, who slept in the room adjoining. And then we aroused Miss Mivart. The shock to her was terrible, poor young lady. When she saw the body of the old gentleman she burst into tears, and at once sent me to you. I didn't find a cab till I'd walked almost to Hammersmith, and then I came straight on here."