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## "Sapolin" Varnish Stain

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## KARL GRIER

Continued from page 10

his fingers, and gazed at me straight in the eyes. "Never was fortress besieged more patiently," he said. "It is only within the past few weeks that I have received any answer, and that is why—But you will surely agree with me that the full and explicit story of my life had better be deferred until a more convenient occasion."

Now, lest I be accused of romancing, I shall not endeavor to analyze closely the most curious and agreeable illusion which held me during the few seconds needed for the delivery of his protest. Instead of the crowded restaurant I saw a moonlit lake, with the terraces of an Italian garden rising in black and white lines of closely clipped hedges, gravel paths, smooth lawns, and broad stairs with curving balustrades.

On the topmost and widest lawn, where the grass had the semblance of a black carpet owing to the shadows cast by a castellated building in the background, three people were walking—actually in motion, that is—not in the fixed attitudes of a picture, but moving. Two were women, one dressed in black and the other in white, and the moonlight glinting on their robes had an effect worthy of Gustave Doré, so startling was the contrast, so instantly did they hold the eye. With them was a man, a tall man; but that was all I caught of the scene, for my ears were listening to Karl throughout, and the change in his voice brought back my scattered senses.

And a waiter spoke. "Your fish, sir." I think I must have gazed at him blankly, but Karl came to my assistance. "Tell the chef we are in a hurry," he said; "then there will be no delay in the kitchen."

The man left us. I stuck a needless fork into the amiable sole.

"Have you been hypnotizing me?" I demanded angrily.

"You may call it that if you like," he said calmly. "You saw Maggie and her mother."

"Did I?" I snapped. "And who was the man?"

"I do not know his name. I decline to listen. But I am fairly certain he is an Italian of good birth, and he is madly in love with Maggie."

I thawed. There was a reason for the trick he had played me. "And she?" I demanded.

"Like me, she thinks that marriage is a duty."

"There appears to be material for a neurotic novel in the present situation."

"Far more. It may supply two tragedies. But why are you harpooning that unresisting fish?"

Again I resolved to drift. It was clear that Karl meant me to travel along the road he had already mapped out. So I ate my dinner and drank a couple of glasses of wine, and kept asking myself how it was possible for my young friend to produce so easily a slight but distinct hypnosis in a veteran like me.

Then I remembered the poker-polarizing of the Mitre Hotel, and dug my elbow into his ribs as a hansom carried us westward.

"By Jove!" I cried, "I have it! Constantine's death interfered in some way with the private *telegnomy* line Maggie and you had set up; but recent events have repaired the breakage. Constantine, living, supplied the earth contact for your ethereal wires! When he died you were forcibly separated, practically torn asunder, and his place had to be filled again before you could resume communication on the same basis as before."

"You are not far wrong," he said dryly. "But you have lived so much abroad that you forget the propriety due to the British hansom. If you wave your arms so excitedly, the policeman at the top of St. James's-st. will stop us, and I shall be compelled to magnetize him."

"Could you?" I inquired irrelevantly.

"Ask the gov'nor what I did to the *douanier* at the Gare du Nord who wished to confiscate a pound of the only tobacco the old man can smoke. I made him



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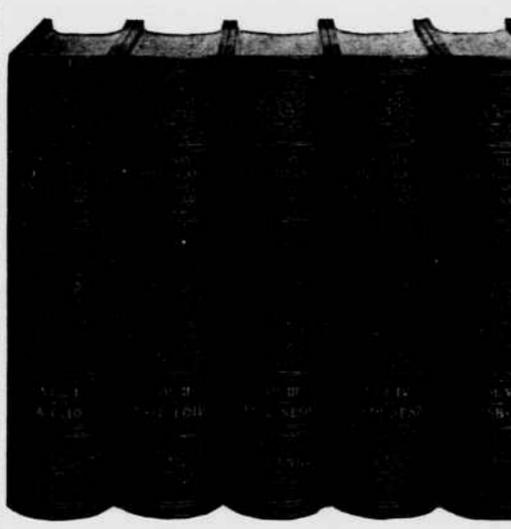
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