listened without comment until I had finished.

"You, of course, have no knowledge of where we are? What part of the city?"

"I thought I recognized Michigan Avenue, and when we turned it was to the left."

"The South Side—in the neighborhood of the lake shore. I thought so although I was brought here with curtains tightly drawn. Then, if you are right, Monsieur, only one of the gang is left in the house—the man Swigert?"

"Yes."

"And he is on guard in the basement."

"He was. I will creep down now and discover if the passage is clear."

"No," and she caught my arm. "We will go together. I—I could not remain here alone."

At the door she drew her breath sharply, glancing back into the lighted room.

"Shall we leave him lying there just as he is?" she asked, her lips quivering. "It seems heathenish."

"We have ourselves to consider, not Franzen." I returned not unkindly, for talk aroused now to the situation, and drawing her with me out into the hall. "It can make no difference to him where he lies. Come, Mademoiselle."

I closed the door silently, feeling her press more closely to me in the sudden darkness. For a moment we stood there listening, but nothing broke the intense stillness, except our own breathing. Once she shuddered, and I heard a half suppressed sob.

"Do not break down," I whispered, almost tenderly. "Surely, there is nothing so terrible to fear."

"It is not that. I am not afraid, but—but the sight of that dead man, being there beside him so long, has unnerved me," she explained. "I will be all right when—when we start to do something."

"Then let us feel our way to the head of the stairs, there is a light burning below."

"Must we go that way? In a house like this there must be a servant's staircase."

"I remember none, and if there is it could be of little service. I told you the rear door was locked, and all the lower windows barricaded up. The front entrance under the area stairs is the only one untouched."

Her hand tightened on mine, but she made no further remonstrance, and I moved forward, feeling my way cautiously along the wall. Had I been alone I should have walked out boldly enough, paying small heed to Swigert, for Franzen's loaded revolver rested in my pocket, but her presence was a restraint. For all I knew Brandt might have returned, and it was to our interest to avoid creating alarm. If that one door was our sole means of escape the more quietly we could attain it the better. Scarcely realizing that I retained her hand closely clasped in mine, I stole down the stairs toward the dim reflection of light below. We had reached the foot when we heard the clug of the automobile, and came to a sudden pause, staring into each other's eyes. The frightened look in her face served to rouse me.

"We're too late. There is no time to bolt," I muttered shortly. "Quick—let's try the room until he goes by."

I flung open the door and thrust her into the dense darkness, crouching beside her, and noiselessly fastening the latch. Almost with the closing of the door we heard Brandt and the chauffeur at the head of the area steps the former calling for Franzen, as he passed into the lighted room opposite.

"No, Lois," he exclaimed. "Wait there where you are, Eisenbarth; he's probably down in the basement."

The clock hall vibrated to deliberate footsteps unheeded, but a moment later he were summoned again as he called:

"Below there!"

"Hello!"

"That you, Swigert? What has become of Franzen?"

"He was there in the back-parlor the last I knew, sir. He'll be around there somewhere all right."

"Crawled off and gone to sleep," put in Eisenbarth. "I'm tired enough myself."

"Then we'll wake him up," growled the leader. "How's the prisoner?"

"Couldn't be quieter if he was dead," returned the voice below. "Was about half asleep myself when you came in."

For a moment they all appeared quiet; then the chauffeur spoke.

"No use hunting him in there, sir; that's where we put the stuff."

"That's right; let's try the other rooms. Give me some matches, will you; it is too risky switching on the lights."

I drew the girl back behind the door, where we would be partially sheltered from observation. Without realizing I was doing so, or rather thinking nothing of the action in the excitement, I kept a grasp on her hands, and held her closely to me.

"Do not move," I whispered. "They may not discover us here, even if they come in."

The returning pressure of her fingers answered; I could feel the warmth of her body, hear her suppressed breathing. Outside, a match flared as it was scratched against wood, but no hand touched the knob of our door. It seemed to me the men were groping their way along the back hall. Finally Eisenbarth spoke again, his voice sounding some distance away:

"He isn't here, that's certain. Where did you put the girl?"

"Up above; you don't suppose—"

"Why not? That is his reputation, and she was a peach, what little I saw of her. If that is where he is we better let him alone."

Brandt laughed.

"I never thought of that," he admitted. "Oh, I'll let him alone on that proposition, never fear. Best thing that could happen to keep her tongue still. Just creep up the stairs and see if there is a light burning."

There followed a few moments of silence, then the voices again, this time directly before our door.

"There is a light, all right, Captain, in the front room, but I couldn't hear any noise."

The other chuckled as though it was all a good joke.

"So much the better for Franzen. He'll chew up prettily. Meanwhile I am hungry enough to eat; Swigert."

"Yes, sir."

"There is nothing to remain down there for. Come up, and see what kind of a lunch you can spread. Any liquor in the house?"

The footsteps of the caretaker sounded plainly enough. I could even distinguish when he set his gun down against the wall.

"Plenty of that, but not so much to eat. Franzen had a bottle already."

"Which accounts for his courage—hey, Eisenbarth? Well, hustle up what you have, and bring in some whiskey."

We waited, pressed close together, listening, barely able to distinguish the faint sounds reaching us from without.

"What shall we do?" she whispered.

"I cannot decide yet," I answered. "There are three of them armed, we must wait for some chance to slip out."

CHAPTER XII.

In the Dead Chamber.

Waiting there in the dark was hard work. I drew a bit away from her, changing my position as silently as possible, but she kept her clasp on my hand.

"Please do not leave me," she urged. "I—I actually believe I am afraid."

"The position is enough to make anyone nervous; it seems quiet out there. I thought I would see how it looked."

"Oh, don't venture yet! I can hear voices." She leaned forward. "What was it Captain Brandt meant when he laughed? Did he—did he actually believe I was with that man?"

"Undoubtedly; otherwise he wouldn't rest so easily now. It is, in fact, a good thing for us he did."

She gave a little sob.

"But why should he think that? Why should he speak—speak like that of me?" her voice trembling even in its whisper. "Have I acted unwomanly?"

"You? Why, it is nothing you have done at all, Mademoiselle. There are men who think evil of all women, because they are themselves evil. Do not permit that fellow's words to trouble you."

"But you heard what he said, and you have far more reason to doubt me than he. I have appeared under false colors, and acted as an accomplice to these conspirators. Brandt's sneer has caused me to realize, as I never have before, the depth of my degradation. You are kind, Monsieur, and you treat me with courtesy, yet down in your heart there can be no respect for any woman who would do what I have done."

Even in the darkness I felt the hand outstretched in despairing gesture, and held it firmly.

"I am sorry such a doubt has come to you," I said soberly, "for it is not true. I cannot speak here, for we are still in peril, and every moment is of value, but I hold nothing against you. The predicament in which we find ourselves is fate. You were but an unconscious instrument. So far am I from blaming you that even now I feel thankful you were involved in the affair."

"Thankful! you mock me!"

"Oh, no; not in months, even years, of ordinary intercourse could I have come to know you as I do now. Had we ever met under other conditions I might have considered you a most commonplace person to be forgotten in an hour."

"But I am!"

"Of that let me be judge; at least the forgetting will be impossible. Why should this not be true with me as well as with you. Can you forget?"

"No; I have no desire to do so; but with you it is different."

"Why, Mademoiselle? I am a man as you are a woman—the gulf between us is not so wide."

"Oh, but it is! You are a man of affairs of the world, an officer of your nation, distinguished, honored, respected. You know the women of the capitals of Europe, while what am I? A mere newspaper scribbler, forced to do work of which I am ashamed. No! do not interrupt, for I wish you to realize that I understand the truth. I know what your class in Europe think of women who write for the daily press. They are held as unsexed. Is that not so?"

"There is a prejudice, yes," I admitted. "I was not free from it myself, for those of the profession I have met in Paris were hardly of the sort to inspire respect. If I had not you ordinarily my European prejudice would have blinded me. I would never have comprehended the American difference."

"You think me an exception then?"

"An utter contradiction rather, although, of course, I am not capable of passing judgment on American newspaper women."

"They are of all kinds—good and evil mixed. The work is of a nature to develop whatever tendency is uppermost at the start. But I am not so deeply interested in your judgment of my profession, as of your present faith in me individually. It is Helen Proleyn who is on trial."

"Not in my court," I answered earnestly, "for I have decided the issue already. I have forgotten all else of the case except that the defendant is a most charming woman."

"Which, even if true, can be no possible excuse for her actions, for the strange position in which she now finds herself. Monsieur, I appreciate your gallantry, but I ask more—your faith in me as a woman."

"It is yours, Mademoiselle," I said simply, and lifted her hand to my lips. "Not as a courtier, but as a man I speak. I am your friend always. You believe me now?"

"Yes," the faintest hesitancy in the whispered word. "I must believe; it is in my heart to wish it so. I—I cannot tell you how deeply I have been humiliated by my position. I did not care at first, for when I started out to gain an interview with you it was apparently but a part of my ordinary routine. Please let me explain! I want you to know you were nothing to me then—a mere name, a foreign name, in which I was in no wise interested. Yet, when I met you, I realized it was different. I regretted the part I was cast to play. When we were at supper I was planning how to escape; but you would not let me. My story, half told, had aroused in you a spirit of adventure, and I dare not warn you of what I suspected, because it was merely suspicion. There was nothing left me, but to accompany you—was there?"

"No; that was my fault, not yours."

"It is generous of you to say so. What I wish you to understand is this—it was a mere newspaper reporter who met you at the Art Building; but it was a woman who sat beside you at the Cafe Francois; it is a woman who is here now. You know what I mean?"

"Fully—you have changed, because I am no longer a mere name, but an individual—a friend."

"Yes, a friend," softly, the word lingering on her lips. "That means much sometimes. I have never had many friends; those to whom I could speak frankly. But we have met so strangely every barrier seems leveled. I scarcely recognize myself sitting here in the dark talking with you like this—as though I had known you always. It—it is not natural. Why should I care so much to retain your respect, your friendship. Yesterday I did not know your name."

"I am willing to let the mystery pass without explanation," I answered, my pulses leaping, "and rejoice in the acknowledgment. I want you for a friend, Mademoiselle, not merely in the darkness of tonight, but also in the glow of tomorrow. Let me make my confession as well. It was merely an adventurer who met you last evening, but it is a man who speaks now. The change wrought by a few hours is not for your alone. Helen Proleyn is no longer a mere name to me."

She did not speak, although I waited, listening to her quick breathing.

"Do you care?"

"Yes—of course I care," frankly, yet withdrawing her hand from mine, as though just realizing they were clasped together. "I value your friendship and always shall. But how can we sit here talking of such things? We have forgotten where we are. I hear no noise outside, are there men still there?"

"Someone passed along the hall a moment ago, and voices spoke in the room opposite. Remain where you are till I explore this apartment; there may be some other way out."

I arose to my feet, but she grasped my sleeve.

"Let me go with you! the—the silence is on my nerves."

We moved forward cautiously, groping our way through the dark, fearful of making the slightest noise to be heard without. Where Brandt, and his assistants might be, was only a matter of guess, and, at any moment, they might learn something to awaken suspicion, and cause them to commence search. With the loaded revolver in my pocket I was no longer greatly afraid of an encounter, in spite of the odds against me, yet the presence of the girl prevented my becoming reckless. Any revolver shot might attract intervention from without, and such public exposure would

tion, 77 amendments have been

Apperson, the cigar man

burned the first one in 1861 when deep. Report the appearance in 3