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**MISS MARGARET GUN,**  
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landing, undress yourself and go to bed. Sleep there until morning, and when you awake you will remember nothing of tonight's proceedings." Again my master bowed his assent and waited for further instructions. "Here are your pistol and dark lantern," the doctor continued, bringing out from a secret drawer in his desk the two articles mentioned.

"I want to caution you particularly tonight," he added. "The house is well protected. There are a burglar alarm, a watchdog and several manservants in the house. You must be extremely careful or you will be caught. Now, do you understand all?"

"Yes, I understand."

He made a movement as if to pick up the pistol from the desk, but I felt that my time had come, and I stepped quickly out of the closet and seized the

weapon. Before Dr. Squires could recover from his surprise I had him covered with my own pistol, while the other one was pointed at my master. I did not know what the latter might attempt to do in his hypnotic state.

"You are caught, doctor," I said as calmly as possible under the circumstances. "Do not attempt to move or I will shoot you dead."

The swarthy face paled a trifle, and then his eyes wandered toward my master. I saw his intention immediately.

"If you order him to help you, I will shoot you first and then disarm him," I said. "You are the one I'm after, and I shall have you or kill you."

He had not spoken, but I knew that his alert mind was active. I decided to cover him into submission if possible.

"I'm not alone here tonight," I added a moment later. "The house is surrounded. Your servant is a prisoner, and I have help behind me."

Mr. Jamieson and Miss Stetson stepped from their hiding place. The doctor uttered a hasty exclamation which never took the form of distinct words. He realized that it was impossible to deny his crime. There were three witnesses to testify against him.

"Well, I guess the game is up," he finally muttered.

A look of disgust and hatred entered his face.

"I had a suspicion from the first that you might be a detective in disguise," he said, scowling at me.

"You should have acted on that suspicion earlier," I replied, returning his scowl with a smile.

"Yes, but we are young yet, and we may meet again."

During this exchange of words my master had stood perfectly still, staring at us as if petrified. He seemed to recognize nobody in the room except the doctor and me.

Suddenly Miss Stetson walked up to his side and, taking one of his hands, said pleadingly:

"Charles, what does all this mean?" But he only returned a stony stare.

"Don't you know me? Charles, I'm—Oh, God! He does not know me!"

She staggered back a few steps, but her agonizing cry aroused the dulled senses of the hypnotized man. He raised his hand to his forehead and mumbled something.

Then slowly the feeble dawn of another intelligence seemed to break upon his mind. He moved a step forward, his eyes dilated, his features grew pale and drawn. He moaned as if awakening from deep slumber:

"Where am I? Who are you? Yes, Belle—my Belle—I see you. I—"

His eyes grew dim, his limbs collapsed, and he fell heavily to the floor. Miss Stetson was by his side in a minute, holding his head in her lap.

"Go for medical assistance at once," I said to Mr. Jamieson, "and bring other help."

The man tremblingly made haste to obey, and then I spoke to Dr. Squires sternly:

"Now that you are caught and there is no way of escape show some mercy to the man whose life you have nearly wrecked. Give him what medical help you can until another doctor comes."

At first he returned my command with a sardonic grin, and then a spark of a better nature in him changed his mind.

"Yes, I'll do it for Charles, but not to oblige you," he said.

He took some brandy from the shelf and poured it down the throat of the unconscious man. In this sudden readiness to help my master I thought there lurked a double motive. He was only waiting for a chance to make a break for liberty, but I kept him so carefully covered with my pistol that he did not have the opportunity. I followed him wherever he went and once ordered him not to leave the room.

"But I need some medicine," he said.

"We'll do without the medicine," I replied, "for another physician will be here in a moment to relieve you."

In half an hour Mr. Jamieson brought a doctor and two officers. While the latter took Dr. Squires in charge the rest of us devoted our attention to Mr. Goddard, who seemed lost in a heavy stupor.

**CHAPTER XXIV.**  
**A**LL that night my master remained unconscious. It was not safe to remove him from the house, and we made him as comfortable as possible in the doctor's own bed. Miss Stetson and I took turns in watching by his side.

But dawn broke in the east before he showed any signs of recovery. Then as the sun flooded the landscape with its first rays he moved uneasily. The doctor said that a high fever was raging in him and that he would be in a critical condition for weeks. All that day and the next he tossed restlessly upon his bed, talking excitedly in his dreams, but recognizing no one.

Meanwhile Dr. Squires was lodged in prison, and thither I went to see him. He was totally subdued now and resigned to his position. Luck had turned against him, and he was not averse to confessing everything. In fact, he prided himself upon the smart game he had played.

He made his confession first to me, which he afterward submitted in writing and signed in the presence of three witnesses. In his own spoken words, however, it sounded more interesting than when he wrote it out, and as such I will repeat the essential parts of it.

"You were smart to catch me," he said, "and I admire you for it. I thought I was alert enough to throw everybody off the track. In fact, you were the only one who ever suspected me. Now, be fair and tell me how you got your first clew."

"I visited your house some time ago and discovered the collection of stolen goods," I replied, "and neither you nor your servant was wise enough to find it out."

"He was always a fool," he ejaculated. "But when did you first realize that I was hypnotizing Charles and using him as a tool for my purpose?"

I flushed a little, but answered truthfully:

"I never suspected until that night in the office when you hypnotized him right before us."

"Ha, ha! Then I had one point ahead of you," he laughed.

"Yes, I never suspected it."

"Well, it's all over now, and I've had lots of excitement out of it. I wish Charles no evil and hope he will soon recover. I will explain everything so that he will be exonerated from blame. He is perfectly innocent of any crime."

"It was three years ago when I first met him in Paris. It was at the time when hypnotism was a fashionable rage. Everybody was talking about it and experimenting with it. I wanted to be fashionable, too, and I soon found that I possessed wonderful powers in that direction. I had been studying medicine and occult sciences with passionate interest for years, and it was natural that I should take up with hypnotism."

"While I was at the height of my studies I met Charles, and we struck up an intimate friendship. He talked to me freely then about the fear he had of inheriting phthisis from his father and said that it had been the means of his not marrying the girl he loved. I gradually got the whole story out of him. Now, I wanted somebody for my hypnotic experiments, and I found that I could easily influence Charles. Consequently I concocted a story about being able to eradicate the germs of phthisis from any human system through the aid of hypnotic therapeutics. He readily entered into my little scheme and willingly submitted to my experiments."

"Thereafter I regularly hypnotized him at his own volition and tried all manner of experiments with him. I would get him to do the strangest things and enjoy them hugely. I had no thought of crime then. But I would send him forth at night to do absurd things for me and then tell him to forget them all when he passed into his natural condition again. I found that I could control him in everything when hypnotized and completely change his nature, but he would remember nothing when he awakened."

"When he returned home, I accompanied him as a medical adviser. He had complete faith in me and promised to pay me liberally if I would continue my treatments. He imagined by this time that I was really helping him. Well, when I arrived here and saw Miss Stetson and realized what a princely fortune she possessed my nature changed. I envied Charles his prospects. I was poor and friendless; he was rich and had the love of a beautiful woman. Why could not I possess some of these good things of life?"

"It was while in this mood that I planned the scheme which you have succeeded in balking. While in his hypnotic state I made Charles rob house after house in the neighborhood. He brought all the silver plate, jewels and money to me. He was so shrewd when hypnotized that I had little fear of his ever being caught. His faculties were almost supernatural in their sensitiveness. When he woke up again the next morning, he never remembered anything of the preceding night's work."

"When I had collected a small fortune in stolen goods, I determined to ship them off to some foreign country and then go there and dispose of them, giving as an excuse for my absence that a distant relative had died and left me his wealth and that my presence was required to settle up the estate. Then I meant to return and marry Miss Stetson if possible. I believe that I was learning to love her for her own sake. I certainly thought more of her than of any other woman I ever met. To gain her hand I told her that Charles was suffering from the incipient form of leprosy and that I was devoting my time to curing him. This I knew would turn her from him in horror and that she would never dare marry him."

"But you can tell Miss Stetson that

there is no more leprosy in his system than in yours or mine and that he has no inherited disease of any kind that she need be worried about. If all men were as healthy as he is, we wouldn't need doctors in this world."

"Well, this part of the scheme didn't work entirely as I wished. The leprosy scare made her confess that she would never marry Charles, but she still loved him and wouldn't think of marrying anybody else. My only hope was to keep at it until she yielded to my importunities, and I was even contemplating some method of killing off Charles by slow degrees. With him out of the way my chances would be infinitely improved."

"That's all the story I have to tell I was about making arrangements to ship my stolen goods away when you

nabbed me. Another month and the robberies that have recently occurred in this neighborhood would forever have remained a mystery. But now the cat is out of the bag, and you can use this confession to suit yourself. I suppose I will get twenty years; maybe more. Well, I'll practice hypnotic experiments upon my keeper, and maybe I won't have to serve the full time."

He showed his white teeth in one of his sardonic grins and complacently smoked a cigar the keeper had permitted him to have.

**CHAPTER XXV.**

**W**HEN I related the whole confession to Miss Stetson, a new light slowly entered her beautiful eyes. In conclusion she laid her hand alongside of that of the sick man and sobbed.

A week after the arrest of Dr. Squires I was watching by the bedside of my master. Suddenly he opened his eyes and stared hard at me. A look of recognition seemed to enter them. I did not speak, but returned his glance steadily.

"You here?" he said suddenly. "What are you doing here?"

I thought he was wandering in his mind, and so did Miss Stetson, who smoothed out his hair and said gently:

"You mustn't talk, Charles. You must rest quietly."

But he did not notice her. His eyes were still fixed upon me.

"Why is it we meet so often?" he added. "Are you dogging my footsteps?"

"No," I replied, not knowing what else to say.

"When I met you that first night, I gave you one-third of the goods and told you I never wanted to meet you again. Why do you persist in running across me, or is it accident?"

"Yes," I replied, beginning to divine his meaning. "It is pure accident."

"And I saved you that other night from the doctor's hands. That should make you a little indebted to me. If you appreciate that, you will never meet me again."

"I hope I never shall."

I spoke in earnest then, for it was not my master who was talking, but the hypnotized robber and burglar whom I had twice encountered in his midnight prowlings.

The doctor, who had come in, said he was wandering in his mind, but I knew differently. His other self, which Dr. Squires had created out of him, was talking. Would that other self predominate and possess the body of Charles Goddard, my master?

He soon relapsed into his former quietness. About midnight the doctor said a change would soon come. We watched critically every line of his face and forehead.

"There are signs of his recovering consciousness," the doctor said finally. "He will probably remember nothing about all that has occurred. His hypnotic state is all a blank to him, and it must never be mentioned to him. He is as pure and innocent of crime as any of us. Let him never think otherwise. The whole story can be hushed up. If he knew it all, the shock might kill him."

The climax of the fever was reached shortly after 2 o'clock in the morning. The breathing slowly lost its laboriousness, and the hands grew moist and soft. The eyelids finally fluttered and opened. He looked around a moment in silence; then he said softly:

"Belle, dear, I've had such horrible dreams, but they were nothing but dreams, were they?"

"No, Charles; nothing but dreams—nothing but horrible dreams."

She bent over him with admirable composure, but a tear trickled down and splashed on the pillow as she kissed his lips.

**THE END.**

**His Auspicious Beginning.**  
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"What was it?"

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