

# How He Passed!

By Richard Marsh

## I. MR. STANBROUGH'S DREAM

"EATON SQUARE, W.

"DEAR MR. TYRREL,—I shall call on you tomorrow afternoon. It is of paramount importance that I should know, with *absolute certainty*, if Leonard will pass. I fear! I fear! But if you can only assure me that *he will*, you will earn the undying gratitude of yours sincerely,

"VIOLET STANBROUGH."

"Well, my dear Lady Stanbrough, I can assure you, with absolute certainty, that he won't." So I told myself as I perused her ladyship's letter. "A young man comes to us who knows nothing, and who, while he continues here, insists on learning less, and then his fond mother expects us to precipitate him to the head of the pass list by some process of hankey-pankey, which, I imagine, is supposed to be known to crammers. No, my dear madam, had it not been for your very urgent solicitations, Young Hopeful would have been shown the door within four-and-twenty hours of his arrival. The Honourable Leonard Stanbrough is a pleasing combination of weakness and vice. I doubt if he could go straight if he tried to—and I don't think he's likely to try."

While mentally commenting on Lady Stanbrough's letter I had rung the bell. I told them to send young Stanbrough to me. A minute after he came. A tall, lanky, overgrown young man, with a lisp, an eyeglass, and an embryo moustache.

"Here is a letter which may perhaps interest you." I handed him his mother's note. "What answer am I to give her ladyship when she comes?"

He took up his position on the centre of the hearthrug with his back to the fire—he is one of the very few young gentlemen who have ventured to take up that position when closeted with me.

"Poor dear old girl!" he said. Then he paused.

"I admire the filial admiration which prompts you to make' the remark, Mr. Stanbrough, but is that *all* you have to say?"

He had been surveying the ceiling with his eyeglass. Now he brought his eyeglass down to me.

"Oh, I shall pass!" he observed.

"Indeed? I am very glad to hear it. Especially as it happens to be news to me. May I ask what grounds you have for your assertion?"

"Oh, I had a dream!"

"A dream? I've no doubt you had a dream."

"Yes, I had a dream last night." ("*Latht* night," he said.)

"I venture to conjecture that it was late last night."

"Was rather late. Fact is, two or three of us had supper with some of the Frivolity girls, and I expect something they put into the drinks gave me a kind of nightmare, don't you know." I admired his assurance, if I admired nothing else. I have had pupils as to whose proceedings—out of doors—I have had the gravest doubts, but I do not remember one who was *quite* so frank as her ladyship's son. "I've a suspicion," he immediately added, "that I got beastly drunk."

"And it is because you were drunk, or because you had the nightmare, that you say you will pass?"

"Well, you see it was rather a funny kind of nightmare, don't you know."

"I expect it had its humorous side."

"I saw all the papers, don't you know."

"You saw what?"

"All the examination papers."

"The deuce, you did!"

I looked the speaker up and down. He appeared to be quite at his ease—vacuous as ever.

"It must have been a remarkable nightmare, Mr. Stanbrough."

"Ya-as!"

"May I ask you to let me understand exactly what it is you mean?"

"Certainly! With pleasure! Delighted! I saw all the examination papers, and I copied 'em."

"Copied them?"

"Copied 'em. Struck me as rather a sensible kind of thing to do, don't you know—for me."

"To what examination papers are you alluding, Mr. Stanbrough?"

"To the examination papers full of questions, don't you know, for the fellows to answer, don't you know."

"Do you mean to say that you saw those papers in a dream?"

"Kind of nightmare. Expect it was something in the drinks, don't you know."

"Are you jesting, Mr. Stanbrough?"

"Jesting! Good gracious, no!"

He seemed positively alarmed. I am bound to allow he was not of a humorous turn—as a rule.

"And you say you copied them?"

"Rather! What do you think? Sensible of me, wasn't it? Mind my smoking?"

"Not at all—if you feel you want it. You will soon cease to be my pupil, Mr. Stanbrough, and far be it from me to cast a gloom upon your latest hours. Can you describe this—nightmare?"

"I was in a room, don't you know, and the papers were brought, don't you know, and I copied 'em, don't you know."

"And was this in a waking nightmare?"

"Don't follow."

"Oh, yes, you do! Am I to understand that you have had a private view of the examination papers?"

"In a kind of nightmare, don't you know."

"Mr. Stanbrough *is* telling you about his nightmare, is he! Quite an interesting story, is it not?" Martin, my partner, said this as, unannounced he entered the room. He had a bundle of papers in his hand. "Mr. Stanbrough has been telling the story to the whole world. He has gone farther—he has lent his copy of the papers to his friends. This is the copy, is it not?"

Martin held out the bundle of papers. Stanbrough immediately advanced. Before Martin suspected his purpose he had snatched them from him.

"Thanks. So they are."

"Mr. Stanbrough, you will immediately return me those papers."

Stanbrough had placed them in his breast pocket. He was buttoning his coat.

"Not to-day, old man. Call again tomorrow."

Martin turned to me. He never had taken to the Honourable Leonard. Even her ladyship's very liberal cheques had failed to soften the hardness of his heart.

"Mr. Tyrrel, Mr. Stanbrough appears to have obtained, by surreptitious means, a copy of the questions which are to be set in examination."

The Honourable Leonard interposed.

“Surreptitious,” he said, “I suppose, means nightmare.”

“Nightmare! Mr. Stanbrough, do you really propose to yourself to obtain the rank of an officer, and of a gentleman, by means of a fraud and of a lie?”

“I don’t want to quarrel with you, old man, so I think I’d better go. Funny chap you are, Martin, ’pon my word you are.”

That was the way in which this promising young man addressed his tutor.

“Do you mean to tell me that *you* copied those papers which I just now held?”

“In a dream!”

“Then how comes it that the handwriting is so different from your usual hand?”

“Nightmare, don’t you know. There was something in the drinks. But I don’t want to row—really now.”

The Honourable Leonard made for the door. I interposed.

“Excuse me, Mr. Stanbrough, but, at this point, the interview can hardly close. I am always unwilling to doubt the word of one of my pupils, but there are occasions on which faith becomes folly. If you have, by any means, become acquainted with the questions which are to be set in the examination it will be my duty to communicate with the authorities.”

The Honourable Leonard never turned a hair. With complete nonchalance he resumed his position in the centre of the hearthrug. For a moment he stood in an attitude of listening. I thought he was turning my words over in what stood for his mind. I was mistaken.

“Here’s my mother,” he said.

He had keener ears than I. Almost before the words were spoken, without any act of preliminary notice, the door opened, and Lady Stanbrough came bursting in.

“Excuse me, Mr. Tyrrel, for my unceremonious entrance, but they told me I should find you up here, and Mr. Martin, and Leonard! ‘I will show myself up,’ I said. How are you, my dear boy?” She took the “dear boy’s” hands in hers, and kissed him. The “dear boy” showed as many signs of reciprocity as if he had been a pillar-box.

“I hope, Mr. Tyrrel, that you have good news. So *much* depends upon it. I *know* that he is wild, but you are *so* clever. Now *will* he pass?”

“I am sorry to have to tell you, Lady Stanbrough, that, by fair means, he won’t.”

Her ladyship sank into a chair. A lace handkerchief was raised to her eyes.

“You wicked, wicked boy! I knew how it would be! Now you’ll have to emigrate, or earn your living, or do some dreadful thing or other, because your father won’t pay your debts—I’m sure he won’t!”

The son did not seem much moved by his mother’s sorrow. He kept his eye and ears fixed on the ceiling, as though all his interests were centred there.

“I am still more sorry to add,” I continued, “that your son, knowing perfectly well that there is no possibility of his passing by fair means, has, I fear, resolved to resort to fraud.”

“What *do* you mean?”

I turned to the candidate for military honours.

“Mr. Stanbrough, if you will hand me those papers which you have in your pocket the matter shall go no further.”

“See you hanged!” replied the candidate.

“Leonard! *What* language you use! *What is* the matter now?”

“The matter is that Mr. Stanbrough has obtained an advance copy of the papers which are to be set in examination, and, for all I know, an advance copy of the answers too.”

“What would be the use of that?” At another time her ladyship’s innocence would have amused me.

“To be quite frank with you, Lady Stanbrough, I fear that Mr. Stanbrough intends to obtain the Queen’s commission by means of fraud.”

“Leonard! What *are* you doing? I *wish* you would be advised.”

Young Hopeful brought his eye-glass down to me.

“This comes of a fellow telling his dreams,” he said.

“Mr. Stanbrough, are you prepared to swear, in a court of justice, or, for the matter of that, in a court of honour, that you obtained a copy of those examination papers by means of a dream?”

“I am. I don’t set up to be a parson, but I am not a liar.”

His calmness rather staggered me. “Do you mean to swear that that copy was not obtained by means of material agency?”

“Hanged if I know about material agency, because I don’t know what material agency is. I don’t set up to be a swell, don’t you know; but I swear this. I swear that I had a dream last night. I dreamt that I was in a sort of room. A lot of the fellows were there. They gave us a lot of papers. I don’t know what the other fellows did with theirs, but I copied mine—I do know that. When I woke up there papers on the table. I’ve my pocket now, and if it’s you—or if it isn’t!—I’ll keep ’em there.”

I exchanged glances with Martin. There was an air of greater earnestness about the speaker than I had ever observed in him before.

“This is a very extraordinary story which you tell us, Mr. Stanbrough.”

“I don’t know if it is or if it isn’t; it’s true.”

“But,” put in Martin, “you don’t tell us how you came to know that those particular questions were the questions which are about to be set in examination.”

“That’s where it is—I don’t know; but I’ll chance that, anyhow. A fellow like me doesn’t have a dream like that for nothing.”

“Nor how it comes if, as you say, you copied them, that the copy is not in your writing.”

“There you are again! Perhaps when a fellow writes in a dream his fist is altered.”

“Perhaps,” said his mother, when Martin and I were mute, “when you gentlemen have *quite* finished, you will tell me the meaning of it all.”

“For that, Lady Stanbrough, I must refer you to your son.”

“Come along, mother, let’s cut it. I’ll post you up as we go along—that is, if you’ll drop me at the Giraffes.”

“I wish you *wouldn’t* go to that *horrible* club.”

“Horrible!” On his face was a look of genuine surprise. “Why, it’s full of pugilists! Good gracious, mother, how you talk!”

When they had gone—and we let them go, mother and son—with the papers in his pocket, Martin and I had a little discussion on the subject of Mr. Stanbrough’s “dream.”

“Did you look at the papers?” I asked.

“I glanced at them. I saw enough to be sure that they were never written by him. They looked to me as though they had been copied by a lawyer’s clerk.”

“Then you don’t believe this story about a dream?” Martin hesitated—or I thought he did. “Don’t you think his volunteering the tale was rather curious? Supposing he obtained them through any of the channels through which such things are to be obtained, it would have been at least more prudent to have kept the fact of their existence quiet.”

"I think this." Martin's tone was dry. "I think that with the papers he won't pass. I know his mental capacity, and I doubt whether it will be possible to hammer the proper answers, even poll-parrot fashion, into his head."

"He might take a copy of the answers with him into the room."

"He might. But I shouldn't advise him to try. I don't think that even he is fool enough for that. My own opinion is that even with the aid of his 'dream' he won't pass."

But he did—pretty low down, but still he passed. Not as a pupil of ours, for we never saw him again after he departed with his mother. We did not claim him as one of our successes—perhaps that goes without the saying—but we did take the trouble to make sure that there had been no personation in the case. That he had been present there can be no doubt—his seat had not been occupied by an obliging friend.

I was in Piccadilly one night last May. It was rather late, the weather was not too fine, and I was hurrying along, when, as I was passing Sackville Street, a voice fell on my ear which seemed familiar. Turning I found myself face to face with Mr. Stanbrough. There was no mistaking him—and, on his part, there was no mistaking me. He was in evening dress. His Inverness, open in front, was thrown back upon his shoulders, and I could see by his face he had been drinking. At his side was another man. He, too, was in evening dress. He was tall and dark. He had—no one could see him without being struck by the fact at once—a pair of the most remarkable eyes I ever remember to have seen—quite as remarkable as any of those wonderful "orbs" which we read about in novels, and that is saying not a little.

"Hallo!" cried Stanbrough. "Here's old Tyrrel! Tyrrel, how do you do?" He turned to his companion. "Hook it! You won't get anything out of me."

His manner was particularly offensive. But the other man did not seem to notice it. He was regarding me with a smile.

"So this is Mr. Tyrrel, is it? *The* Mr. Tyrrel, I presume. Good-night."

Lifting his hat he sauntered away. Stanbrough stood glaring after him till he was lost in the crowd. Then he turned to me.

"Hallo, Tyrrel, I haven't seen you for an age. Sorry I can't stop now. Got an appointment, don't you know?"

He hastened away, leaving me, in my turn, smiling. Since he had donned the epaulettes Mr. Stanbrough had evidently not improved either in manners or in morals. I pursued my way. I had not gone a dozen yards when someone touched me on the shoulder. It was the Honourable Leonard.

"I say, Tyrrel, if that brute Lansberg comes and tells you any lies about me, don't you believe him—he's the greatest liar living."

I was a little amused. The young gentleman was excited.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Stanbrough. I know no one of the name of Lansberg."

"That was Lansberg whom you saw speaking to me. He's a thief. If he comes to you I 'd give 'em orders not to let him in. Keep him out in the street."

"I am obliged to you for your advice, Mr. Stanbrough, and for your information as to the character of your friend. Advice coming from such a quarter I cannot fail to value."

I left him there, staring after me with half-drunken eyes, as if in doubt as to the meaning of my words. For my part I had other and more important matter on my mind. Almost immediately after the chance encounter was forgotten. When, the next day, the servant brought me a card with the name of "Hermann Lansberg" on it, it recalled no associations, and it was only when the

stranger was ushered into the room that I recognised in him the person whom I had seen with Mr. Stanbrough, and whom that gentleman had advised me to keep out in the street.

### III. MR. LANSBERG'S EXPLANATION

Daylight revealed the fact that Mr. Lansberg was exceptionally good-looking, though his was a type of beauty for which I, personally, have no taste. He was too much of the "stage hero" sort of man for me. Not only was he dressed like a gentleman, but he bore himself like one. And when he spoke, I discovered that he was possessed of that greatest of all charms—a musical voice.

"I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Tyrrel for the first time last night." I bowed. I was remembering Mr. Stanbrough's words. I felt that the less I had to do with that young gentleman's acquaintances the better pleased I should be. "Mr. Stanbrough, an old friend of mine, was, I believe, an old pupil of yours." I bowed again. "Was Mr. Stanbrough a diligent pupil when with you?"

"I am unable to discuss Mr. Stanbrough with a stranger. May I ask what is your business with me, Mr. Lansberg? I am particularly engaged just now."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I am sure that Mr. Tyrrel, whose reputation is known to the whole world, would not wish to connive at a fraud."

I did not like the fellow's tone. Although it was perfectly courteous, it yet conveyed a sneer.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Lansberg. And, as I said just now, I am particularly engaged."

"Very well, Mr. Tyrrel." He had been taking his ease in an armchair. Now he rose. "Far be it from me to intrude upon your pressing labours. I would merely mention that I am about to inform the Horse Guards that Mr. Stanbrough, at that time your pupil, obtained his commission by means of a fraud, of which fraud you were aware. Good-day."

"Mr. Lansberg!"

He had reached the door, but he turned again.

"Mr. Tyrrel?"

I at once decided that the fellow's object was blackmail. I resolved to foil him there, at any rate.

"You are, of course, at liberty to take any steps you please. I would merely advise you to be careful how you mention our name."

"My dear sir, I shall not mention your name. I have too much respect for your character—and my own. I shall merely repeat Mr. Stanbrough's words."

"And what are they?"

"He tells me that he obtained an advance copy of the examination papers. He says that you were well aware of the fact, that he himself was your informant. In my note to the Horse Guards I shall mention this, adding, that I have no doubt that Mr. Stanbrough's story, so far as it relates to your having a guilty knowledge of his fraud, will be found, upon inquiry, to be unreliable."

A pretty scoundrel the fellow was. And nice fools Martin and I had been! If such a story got about it might entail our ruin.

"Did Mr. Stanbrough, among his other confidences, tell you how he came into the possession of the papers?"

"Ah, now you are coming to business!" The fellow sat down again, and nursed his leg. "Now you are coming to the point!"

"He told us that he obtained them by means of a dream."

“Is it possible, then, that you were aware that they were in his possession! But, of course, you at once communicated with the authorities.”

“May I ask you, Mr. Lansberg, to tell me frankly what is the purpose of your presence here?”

“I think you have guessed already.” I suppose I started, for he immediately added, “No, Mr. Tyrrel, for once your prevision is at fault, you have guessed wrong. I might make a pleasant little income out of the information which I hold, but, at present, such is not my intention. I will be frank with you—my intention is to be frank. My purpose here is—to smash my friend!”

“Explain yourself Mr. Lansberg.”

“Does not the situation explain itself? My reasons—my reasons are my own. I say to myself I have information which will—smash him! If I use that information it will look a little awkward. I say, therefore, that you shall use that information, and I will smash him—by deputy!”

“Really, Mr. Lansberg, you propose to us a very pleasant office.”

“If you decline, then I shall use the information and smash you both together. Because I can prove that you were aware that an advance copy of the papers was in his possession.

“He told us that he obtained them by means of a dream.”

“Pooh, my dear sir, pooh! Was that any reason why you shouldn’t have communicated with the authorities? You were well acquainted with his character, and the tale was quite incredible.”

I indulged in a few moments’ consideration before I answered.

“Mr. Lansberg, you are a stranger to me, and I have no wish to pry into the reasons which actuate your conduct. That conduct is rather a matter for your consideration than for mine. But with reference to this matter of Mr. Stanbrough, I would remark that he swore, solemnly, in our presence, and in the presence of his mother, that he obtained those papers by means of a dream.”

“But you don’t seem to see my point. Even supposing that what he said was true, was that a reason why you should not communicate with the authorities? Don’t you see that your own story looks a little ugly?” I did see it—but I did not tell him so. Our decision to forbear, which had been made in haste, promised to give us cause to repent at leisure. The man went on: “I am sure you will see that the disclosure would come more gracefully from you. And I am so sure, that I will be quite frank with you—why should I not? I know that those papers were not obtained by means of a dream.”

“How do you know?”

“Because they were obtained through me.”

“Mr. Lansberg!”

“So you see I ought to know.”

The man’s assurance was superb. I perceived that he and his friend made a capital pair.

“Do you mean to tell me that you obtained those papers for Mr. Stanbrough, and that then you come and threaten us?”

“No threat intended—none at all. I suggest what I think you will find, upon reflection, to be the wisest course of action. And in doing so I place, at your service, further information—gratuitously.”

“This, I suppose, is a conspiracy between you two?”

“It was. It is now going to be a conspiracy between us too—you and I.”

I have seen equally impudent men—in farces! Never out of them!

“If it is not trespassing unduly upon your courtesy, Mr. Lansberg, may I ask how you obtained these papers for your friend?”

“My dear Mr. Tyrrel, I shall be delighted to make of you a confidant, although I fear that you will find my story almost as incredible as Mr. Stanbrough’s. I may preface it with the

observation that the matter was managed in such a manner that it would be impossible to take action against me, even on my own confession.”

“I have no doubt, from what I have seen of you in this short interview, that the matter was managed with exquisite skill.”

“Not only skill, Mr. Tyrrel, not only skill! Something higher than skill. Science—knowledge—power. I obtained those papers by means of hypnotic force.”

“By means of what?”

“Hypnotic force.”

I am no great believer in the current craze for undeveloped forces. And as for some of the marvels of so-called “hypnotism,” I fear that I should have to see—and test!—before I believed. But I perceived at a glance that here was a man who was as likely as any other man to work such wonders. There *is* something in the magic of the eye, and this man undoubtedly possessed it. I never saw such eyes. I myself found it difficult to meet his glances. And his manner, voice, and general deportment conveyed suggestions of latent forces, which, to me, were wholly disagreeable. Still I began, in spite of myself, to take an interest in the scamp—interest which was of a peculiar speculative kind.

“I am afraid you will have to make yourself clearer, Mr. Lansberg, before I am able to grasp your meaning.”

He made himself quite clear.

“Ever since I was a mere boy I have been conscious of the hypnotic power. I think I might even manage to hypnotise you.”

“You might find it more difficult than you perhaps imagine.”

“I think not. I think that I might succeed—in time.

“Suppose we return to the subject in hand.”

I did not like his tone at all!

“To the subject of the papers! With pleasure. My first acquaintance with Mr. Stanbrough was a hypnotic one.”

“How do you mean?”

“It was—why should I conceal it?—at a bar. I hypnotised him then and there. Under my direction he drank a bottle of brandy—neat.” I looked at the man who could own to such things—he might have been talking about the weather. “Of course, that sealed our friendship then and there.”

“It would!

“You mean that with a young man of Mr. Stanbrough’s stamp it would—how well you know him! I found that my young friend had several engaging qualities. He was a knave who pretended to be a fool.”

“You make no pretensions to folly, Mr. Lansberg?”

“Not any. I am a knave—self-confessed! Why should I conceal it from a kindred soul?” I had provoked it—yet I winced. This fellow was, in his way, magnificent. “In course of time my friend found himself in a singularly difficult position. He had failed before. *If* he failed again he might expect no money from his father. It would be as easy for him to swallow the monument as to pass the examination in the ordinary way. As friends should do, we put our heads together. What was to be done? Personation was played out. Besides, in this case there were circumstances which made the thing impossible. Could we get a glance at the examination papers? Easier said than done. Curiously enough, I happened to know the proof-reader whose duty it was to revise those very examination papers as they came from the press. He was a man of the very highest

character. I invited him one day to dine with me in the privacy of my own apartments. I asked him, casually, whether supposing some scamp were to offer a large sum of money for a rough copy of those particular papers, it would be possible to obtain one. He explained, to my entire satisfaction, that it would not. At that particular printing-office things were so managed that it was made plain, even to me, that it would be quite impossible. As I was realising this, an idea occurred to me which amounted to an actual inspiration. Was it not possible to obtain from my friend the proof-reader, in another way, what I wanted? And that without his knowledge? I tried, and succeeded. I waited till the table was cleared. Then I hypnotised him—a better subject I never had! I told him to write down what he remembered of the questions which were to be set in examination. He wrote them all down. Then I told him to write the answers. He was a man of great erudition, and it occurred to me that, even with the questions, we might be at a loss to find the answers. He answered them, every one! Then I gathered the papers together. I put them in my pocket. I withdrew the influence. And—we had a glass of wine.

“Really, Mr. Lansberg, I don’t know which story is the more remarkable, yours or Mr. Stanbrough’s. Do you mean that that man—that proof-reader—was unconscious of what it was he was doing?”

“As unconscious as—”

What comparison he was going to make I cannot say. Before the words had passed his lips, he rose from his seat. He turned to the door. It was opened and—Mr. Stanbrough came in! Lansberg threw up his arms with a gesture of burlesque melodrama.

“My prophetic soul! My uncle!”

“I thought I should find you here, you hound!” This was Mr. Stanbrough’s greeting to his friend. He took no notice of me. Continuing, his hat upon his head, he stood and glared at Mr. Lansberg. In return, Mr. Lansberg smiled at him. “I called at your place. They told me where you’d gone—there’s someone there can tell me things as well as you. I spotted your little game. He turned to me. “Didn’t I warn you against him? What lie has he been telling now?”

Mr. Stanbrough was revealing himself in a new light. Hitherto, so far as it had come within my range of observation, the chief feature in his character had been his imbecility. Now he seemed to be rather more of a brute than a fool. I hardly knew in which guise I liked him least. Mr. Lansberg answered the inquiry which he had addressed to me.

“I have been telling Mr. Tyrrel, my dear Leonard, the whole story of your—dream.”

“It’s a lie! He can hatch up any story!” Advancing, Mr. Lansberg went and stood close up to his friend. He fixed his eyes upon his face.

“It is no lie.”

“I say it is a lie! Don’t you touch me! Don’t you try to do anything to me, because you can’t!” Again the Honourable Leonard turned to me. “He is a mesmerist, this fellow. He has been playing the devil with me for years. I have fed and clothed him. He has mesmerised me, and then, when I didn’t know what I was doing, he has made me do what he liked; he has robbed me of thousands! But he can’t do it any longer; I have got beyond him; he has lost his power; he will never mesmerise me again—never! So because I won’t shell up to keep him going he says he ‘ll smash me. But he can’t! He tells nothing but lies! Liar!”

He turned upon Lansberg with the yelp of an angry cur. Their faces were within a few inches of each other. One, however, was as cool as the other was hot.

“My dear Leonard, up to a certain point you tell the truth. I have found you useful as a subject now and then. It is true that of late I seemed to have lost my power, but when you say that I shall

never mesmerise you again, you are mistaken. I will mesmerise you now! Stand still! and look at me!”

The change in the man was wonderful. He seemed to have increased in stature; his eyes dilated; his voice was altered. The Honourable Leonard gazed at him as though he exercised the proverbial fascination of the snake.

“Lansberg!” he gasped. “Lansberg!”

That gentleman said nothing. He seemed to be using his utmost exertions to produce a certain result. Raising his hands he made some passes before the victim’s face. The Honourable Leonard visibly shuddered; Mr. Lansberg’s efforts relaxed. Smiling, he turned to me.

“It is true, my power is going! I never had to use so much force before. Still, our young friend was wrong. He has been mesmerised again, you see! You will now behold that little scene with the proof-reader performed before your eyes. Leonard, dear boy, sit down.”

He pointed to my writing-table. Without a word or sign of remonstrance Mr. Stanbrough crossed the room and seated himself in front of it.

“You remember the circumstances connected with those examination papers?”

“Yes.”

“Write down a short and correct account of all that happened, and sign it! Nothing extenuate, nor ought set down in malice! I believe I have the quotation right?” He turned to me with what he doubtless intended should be a charming smile. “Coinmence, dear boy.”

Mr. Stanbrough took a pen, drew a sheet of paper towards him, and began to write. I could scarcely believe that the scene which was being enacted before me was not a little performance got up for my special benefit.

“Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Lansberg, that Mr. Stanbrough is in a state of complete unconsciousness?”

“Ask him yourself.”

I spoke to him. “Mr. Stanbrough!”

There was no reply.

“Shake him up.”

I went and laid my hand upon the young man’s shoulder. “Mr. Stanbrough!” I repeated. Still no reply. I was startled when I saw his face; the muscles seemed fixed and rigid. All expression had disappeared—he never had much, but what little he ordinarily had was gone; the eyes were staring wide open.

“Won’t he answer you?” Mr. Lansberg took out a penknife; he opened a tiny blade. “Stick this into him.” I shrank away. “Then if you won’t, I will.” Stooping, he thrust the blade of the knife into the young man’s thigh. The Honourable Leonard never winced; he continued to write with a calmness which, under the circumstances, I found unpleasant. “Will that suffice? or shall I pin his hand to the table? I’m sure he won’t object.”

I declined his offer. I was content to see the scene played through. Whether the unconsciousness was real or fictitious, experiments of that kind did not commend themselves to me. Lansberg kept up a running commentary of remarks while Stanbrough continued writing. I was still. At last the Honourable Leonard laid down his pen. Wheeling round in his chair he observed to Lansberg, very much as we might imagine that an automaton would make a similar observation—

“I have finished.”

“Thanks, dear Leonard, thanks.” Mr. Lansberg took up the paper on which he had been writing. He read it carefully through. “Your composition does you credit, Leonard—and your accuracy! Now I think you may come back again.”

With his hands he made some fresh passes before the victim’s face. Again Mr. Stanbrough shuddered. He rose from the chair. He seemed dazed.

“What’s the matter? Where am I? I—I thought——” His glance fell on Mr. Lansberg. “Curse you! Have you been at me again?”

“Yes, my dear Leonard, I have been at you again. And you, too, have been at it again. Allow me, Mr. Tyrrel, to hand you Leonard’s own, true, faithful, and particular account of how he became possessed of those examination papers. Now I really think that I must say good-day. I have only one remark to make to Mr. Tyrrel.

It is this: if, within four-and-twenty hours, you do not tell the story—I shall. Tell any story you please, only—tell one. I feel sure that you will perceive, upon reflection, that it would be better for all of us if the initiative were taken by you.”

“And I, Mr. Lansberg, have but one remark to make upon my side. If you imagine that I should take advantage of a confession obtained by such means as those which I have witnessed, you are mistaken. That is all.”

I tore the paper into pieces. The pieces I threw into the grate.

“As to that, Mr. Tyrrel—as you please. Good-day! Good-day, dear Leonard.”

Bowing low, he left the room. Mr. Stanbrough and I stared at the door through which he had vanished.

“Good riddance to a thief,” remarked his friend.

“If, Mr. Stanbrough, you follow my advice, you—will follow the thief.”

He followed him. His exit was certainly the less graceful of the two.

“Now what is to be done?”

Later in the day I related all the circumstances to Martin. It was to him I put the question.

“First of all,” he said, “where are those pieces of paper. I mean the paper which purports to be Mr. Stanbrough’s confession.”

“They are in the grate.”

“Then we must get them out of the grate.”

I happened to have had no fire in my room that day. The fireplace was littered with waste paper. Martin, going down on his knees, went carefully through the litter. I assisted him. We recovered the pieces. Then we pasted them together on a large sheet of foolscap—much as a child might piece together the different fragments of a puzzle.

“I don’t understand, Martin, your motive in doing this. I said that I would make no use of the contents of this paper.”

“Then if you won’t, I shall. In dealing with rogues honest men must make use of whatever tools they find to hand. There, now, I think, we have the whole of it.” Martin read it carefully through. Then he handed it to me. “Read it, and tell me what you think of it.”

It was unmistakably in Mr. Stanbrough’s writing. It was short and to the point. The wording was clear and simple. It stated that the first suggestion as to the papers had come from Mr. Stanbrough. He had asked his friend to obtain for him a copy. Lansberg, as he had told me, procured one from the proof-reader while the man was in a state of mesmeric trance—a copy both of the questions and the answers. Stanbrough learned the answers off by heart. When, however, it came to the actual examination he had already forgotten the greater part of them. The

result was that he only just scraped through. All this was stated, quite plainly and frankly, in his own scrawling caligraphy. At the bottom of the document was affixed his name.

“A nice young man!” said Martin. “A very nice young man! And how he lied to us—like truth!”

“The question is, what is the best thing for us to do?”

“We will go, with this document in our hands, to Mr. Stanbrough, and we will advise him to send in his papers to the Horse Guards—to himself take the initiative, and resign. I have no doubt that we shall be able to put the matter in such a way that, before the interview is concluded, he will see his way to act on our advice.”

We went to him then. Mr. Stanbrough was out. We left a note, intimating that we should return in the morning at eleven, and strongly advising him to be there to receive us. This time he was in. He received us with scant courtesy. He remained seated. A bottle of brandy, with a tumbler half filled with the raw spirit, was on the table at his side.

“So it’s you, is it? I hoped I’d seen the last of you.”

He added some choice expletives, which I need not particularly describe. Martin was suave in the extreme.

“We will not unnecessarily detain you, Mr. Stanbrough, but will come to the point at once. We are here to advise you, for reasons with which you are aware, to immediately resign the commission which you—hold!”

“I thought it was something of the kind! But it’s too late! I’ve resigned already!”

“I am afraid that we shall require to have proof of that!”

“Proof! Curse you! What has it to do with you? Look at that!”

He tossed a note across the table. Martin picked it up, and read it. When he had read it he passed it to me. It was a request from Mr. Stanbrough, not too nicely worded, for his papers. I returned it to Martin.

Folding it up, he placed it in the pocket of his coat.

“I will see that it is duly despatched,” he said.

Mr. Stanbrough made no comment upon the action. He swore “at large.” Early as was the hour, the young man had already been drinking freely.

“Don’t think I’m doing it because of you. You couldn’t have done anything to make me! I’ve done it on my own hook. I’ve come a cracker! Stonebroke! Owe everyone! And these fellows here are a lot of card sharps! They think I’m a fool—but I ain’t!”

“I think that when you say that we could do nothing that you forget the existence of a certain paper.

“Tyrrel tore it up. He said he wouldn’t use it.”

“But I have pieced it together again, and I will use it.”

Mr. Stanbrough was visibly disconcerted. He drank the brandy which was in the tumbler.

“Use it, and be damned!”

“And surely you are forgetting such a factor as Mr. Hermann Lansberg.”

“Lansberg!—Lansberg’s dead!”

“Dead?”

I suppose our startled faces tickled him. He laughed uproariously.

“Yes, dead! dead! I daresay you think I murdered him. I should have liked to, but I didn’t—curse him! But he’s dead! And a jolly good job too!”

Whether he was speaking the truth I cannot say. Possibly he was. We asked no questions. We should have received no trustworthy answer if we had. We have heard nothing of Mr. Lansberg

since. Frankly, we have not troubled ourselves to inquire if he is dead or living. Very shortly after, we saw that the resignation of the Honourable Leonard Stanbrough was gazetted.