

The Usher of Lea House School

By A. Conan Doyle

Mr. Lumsden, the senior partner of Lumsden and Westmacott, the well-known scholastic and clerical agents, was a small, dapper man, with a sharp, abrupt manner, a critical eye, and an incisive way of speaking.

“Your name, sir?” said he, sitting pen in hand with his long, red-lined folio in front of him.

“Harold Weld.”

“Oxford or Cambridge?”

“Cambridge.”

“Honours?”

“No, sir.

“Athlete?”

“Nothing remarkable, I am afraid.”

“Not a Blue?”

“Oh no.”

Mr. Lumsden shook his head despondently and shrugged his shoulders in a way which sent my hopes down to zero. “There is a very keen competition for masterships, Mr. Weld,” said he. “The vacancies are few and the applicants innumerable. A first-class athlete, oar, or cricketer, or a man who has passed very high in his examinations, can usually find a vacancy—I might say always in the case of the cricketer. But the average man—if you will excuse the description, Mr. Weld—has a very great difficulty, almost an insurmountable difficulty. We have already more than a hundred such names upon our lists, and if you think it worth while our adding yours, I dare say that in the course of some years we may possibly be able to find you some opening which—”

He paused on account of a knock at the door. It was a clerk with a note. Mr. Lumsden broke the seal and read it.

“Why, Mr. Weld,” said he, “this is really rather an interesting coincidence. I understand you to say that Latin and English are your subjects, and that you would prefer for a time to accept a place in an elementary establishment, where you would have time for private study?”

“Quite so.”

“This note contains a request from an old client of ours, Dr. Phelps McCarthy, of Willow Lea House Academy, West Hampstead, that I should at once send him a young man who should be qualified to teach Latin and English to a small class of boys under fourteen years of age. His vacancy appears to be the very one which you are looking for. The terms are not munificent—sixty pounds, board, lodging, and washing—but the work is not onerous, and you would have the evenings to yourself.”

“That would do,” I cried, with all the eagerness of the man who sees work at last after weary months of seeking.

“I don’t know that it is quite fair to these gentlemen whose names have been so long upon our list,” said Mr. Lumsden, glancing down at his open ledger. “But the coincidence is so striking that I feel we must really give you the refusal of it.”

“Then I accept it, sir, and I am much obliged to you.”

“There is one small provision in Dr. McCarthy’s letter. He stipulates that the applicant must be a man with an imperturbable good temper.”

"I am the very man," said I, with conviction.

"Well," said Mr. Lumsden, with some hesitation, "I hope that your temper is really as good as you say, for I rather fancy that you may need it."

"I presume that every elementary school-master does."

"Yes, sir, but it is only fair to you to warn you that there may be some especially trying circumstances in this particular situation. Dr. Phelps McCarthy does not make such a condition without some very good and pressing reason."

There was a certain solemnity in his speech which struck a chill in the delight with which I had welcomed this providential vacancy.

"May I ask the nature of these circumstances?" I asked.

"We endeavour to hold the balance equally between our clients, and to be perfectly frank with all of them. If I knew of objections to you I should certainly communicate them to Dr. McCarthy, and so I have no hesitation in doing as much for you. I find," he continued, glancing over the pages of his ledger, "that within the last twelve months we have supplied no fewer than seven Latin masters to Willow Lea House Academy, four of them having left so abruptly as to forfeit their month's salary, and none of them having stayed more than eight weeks."

"And the other masters? Have they stayed?"

"There is only one other residential master, and he appears to be unchanged. You can understand, Mr. Weld," continued the agent, closing both the ledger and the interview, "that such rapid changes are not desirable from a master's point of view, whatever may be said for them by an agent working on commission. I have no idea why these gentlemen have resigned their situations so early. I can only give you the facts, and advise you to see Dr. McCarthy at once and to form your own conclusions."

Great is the power of the man who has nothing to lose, and it was therefore with perfect serenity, but with a good deal of curiosity, that I rang early that afternoon the heavy wrought-iron bell of the Willow Lea House Academy. The building was a massive pile, square and ugly, standing in its own extensive grounds, with a broad carriage-sweep curving up to it from the road. It stood high, and commanded a view on the one side of the grey roofs and bristling spires of Northern London, and on the other of the well-wooded and beautiful country which fringes the great city. The door was opened by a boy in buttons, and I was shown into a well-appointed study, where the principal of the academy presently joined me.

The warnings and insinuations of the agent had prepared me to meet a choleric and overbearing person—one whose manner was an insupportable provocation to those who worked under him. Anything further from the reality cannot be imagined. He was a frail, gentle creature, clean-shaven and round-shouldered, with a bearing which was so courteous that it became almost deprecating. His bushy hair was thickly shot with grey, and his age I should imagine to verge upon sixty. His voice was low and suave, and he walked with a certain mincing delicacy of manner. His whole appearance was that of a kindly scholar, who was more at home among his books than in the practical affairs of the world.

"I am sure that we shall be very happy to have your assistance, Mr. Weld," said he, after a few professional questions. "Mr. Percival Manners left me yesterday, and I should be glad if you could take over his duties to-morrow."

"May I ask if that is Mr. Percival Manners of Selwyn?" I asked.

"Precisely. Did you know him?"

"Yes; he is a friend of mine."

“An excellent teacher, but a little hasty in his disposition. It was his only fault. Now, in your case, Mr. Weld, is your own temper under good control? Supposing for argument’s sake that I were to so far forget myself as to be rude to you or to speak roughly or to jar your feelings in any way, could you rely upon yourself to control your emotions?”

I smiled at the idea of this courteous, little, mincing creature ruffling my nerves.

“I think that I could answer for it, sir,” said I.

“Quarrels are very painful to me,” said he. “I wish every one to live in harmony under my roof. I will not deny Mr. Percival Manners had provocation, but I wish to find a man who can raise himself above provocation, and sacrifice his own feelings for the sake of peace and concord.”

“I will do my best, sir.”

“You cannot say more, Mr. Weld. In that case I shall expect you to-night, if you can get your things ready so soon.”

I not only succeeded in getting my things ready, but I found time to call at the Benedict Club in Piccadilly, where I knew that I should find Manners if he were still in town. There he was sure enough in the smoking-room, and I questioned him, over a cigarette, as to his reasons for throwing up his recent situation.

“You don’t tell me that you are going to Dr. Phelps McCarthy’s Academy?” he cried, staring at me in surprise. “My dear chap, it’s no use. You can’t possibly remain there.”

“But I saw him, and he seemed the most Courtyly, inoffensive fellow. I never met a man with more gentle manners.”

“He! oh, he’s all right. There’s no vice in him. Have you seen Theophilus St. James?”

“I have never heard the name. Who is he?”

“Your colleague. The other master.”

“No, I have not seen him.”

“*He’s* the terror. If you can stand him, you have either the spirit of a perfect Christian or else you have no spirit at all. A more perfect bounder never bounded.”

“But why does McCarthy stand it?”

My friend looked at me significantly through his cigarette smoke, and shrugged his shoulders.

“You will form your own conclusions about that. Mine were formed very Soon, and I never found occasion to alter them.”

“It would help me very much if you would tell me them.”

“When you see a man in his own house allowing his business to be ruined, his comfort destroyed, and his authority defied by another man in a subordinate position, and calmly submitting to it without so much as a word of protest, what conclusion do you come to?”

“That the one has a hold over the other.”

Percival Manners nodded his head.

“There you are! You’ve hit it first barrel. It seems to me that there’s no other explanation which will cover the facts. At some period in his life the little Doctor has gone astray. *Humanum est errare*. I have even done it myself. But this was something serious, and the other man got a hold of it and has never let go. That’s the truth. Blackmail is at the bottom of it. But he had no hold over me, and there was no reason why *I* should stand his insolence, so I came away—and I very much expect to see you do the same.”

For some time he talked over the matter, but he always came to the same conclusion—that I should not retain my new situation very long.

It was with no very pleasant feelings after this preparation that I found myself face to face with the very man of whom I had received so evil an account. Dr. McCarthy introduced us to each other in his study on the evening of that same day immediately after my arrival at the school.

“This is your new colleague, Mr. St. James,” said he, in his genial, courteous fashion. “I trust that you will mutually agree, and that I shall find nothing but good feeling and sympathy beneath this roof.”

I shared the good Doctor’s hope, but my expectations of it were not increased by the appearance of my *confrère*. He was a young, bull-necked fellow about thirty years of age, dark-eyed and black-haired, with an exceedingly vigorous physique. I have never seen a more strongly built man, though he tended to run to fat in a way which showed that he was in the worst of training. His face was coarse, Swollen, and brutal, with a pair of small black eyes deeply sunken in his head. His heavy jowl, his projecting ears, and his thick bandy legs all went to make up a personality which was as formidable as it was repellent.

“I hear you’ve never been out before,” said he, in a rude, brusque fashion. “Well, it’s a poor life: hard work and starvation pay, as you’ll find out for yourself.”

“But it has some compensations” said the principal. “Surely you will allow that, Mr. St. James?”

“Has it? I never could find them. What do you call compensations?”

“Even to be in the continual presence of youth is a privilege. It has the effect of keeping youth in one’s own soul, for one reflects something of their high spirits and their keen enjoyment of life.”

“Little beasts!” cried my colleague.

“Come, come, Mr. St. James, you are too hard upon them.”

“I hate the sight of them! If I could put them and their blessed copybooks and lexicons and slates into one bonfire I’d do it to-night.”

“This is Mr. St. James’s way of talking,” said the principal, smiling nervously as he glanced at rue. “You must not take him too seriously. Now, Mr. Weld, you know where your room is, and no doubt you have your own little arrangements to make. The sooner you make them the sooner you will feel yourself at It seemed to me that he was only too anxious to remove me at once from the influence of this extraordinary colleague, and I was glad to go, for the conversation had become embarrassing.

And so began an epoch which always seems to me as I look back to it to be the most singular in all my experience. The school was in many ways an excellent one. Dr. Phelps McCarthy was an ideal principal. His methods were modern and rational. The management was all that could be desired. And yet in the middle of this well-ordered machine there intruded the incongruous and impossible Mr. St. James, throwing everything into confusion. His duties were to teach English and mathematics, and how he acquitted himself of them I do not know, as our classes were held in separate rooms. I can answer for it, however, that the boys feared him and loathed him, and I know that they had good reason to do so, for frequently my own teaching was interrupted by his bellowing of anger, and even by the sound of his blows. Dr. McCarthy spent most of his time in his class, but it was, I suspect, to watch over the master rather than the boys, and to try to moderate his ferocious temper when it threatened to become dangerous.

It was in his bearing to the head master, however, that my colleagues conduct was most outrageous. The first conversation which I have recorded proved to be typical of their intercourse. He domineered over him openly and brutally. I have heard him contradict him roughly before the whole school. At no time would he show him any mark of respect, and my

temper often rose within me when I saw the quiet acquiescence of the old Doctor, and his patient tolerance of this monstrous treatment. And yet the sight of it surrounded the principal also with a certain vague horror in my mind, for Supposing my friend's theory to be correct—and I could devise no better one—how black must have been the story which could be held over his head by this man and, by fear of its publicity, force him to undergo such humiliations. This quiet, gentle Doctor might be a profound hypocrite, a criminal, a forger possibly, or a poisoner. Only such a secret as this could account for the complete power which the younger man held over him. Why else should he admit so hateful a presence into his house and so harmful an influence into his school? Why should he submit to degradations which could not be witnessed, far less endured, without indignation?

And yet, if it were so, I was forced to confess that my principal carried it off with extraordinary duplicity. Never by word or sign did he show that the young man's presence was distasteful to him. I have seen him look pained, it is true, after some peculiarly outrageous exhibition, but he gave me the impression that it was always on account of the scholars or of me, never on account of himself. He spoke to *and* of St. James in an indulgent fashion, smiling gently at what made my blood boil within me. In his way of looking at him and addressing him, one could see no trace of resentment, but rather a sort of timid and deprecating good will. His company he certainly courted, and they spent many hours together in the study and the garden.

As to my own relations with Theophilus St. James, I made up my mind from the beginning that I should keep my temper with him, and to that resolution I steadfastly adhered. If Dr. McCarthy chose to permit this disrespect, and to condone these outrages, it was his affair and not mine. It was evident that his one wish was that there should be peace between us, and I felt that I could help him best by respecting this desire. My easiest way to do so was to avoid my colleague, and this I did to the best of my ability. When we were thrown together I was quiet, polite, and reserved. He, on his part, showed me no ill-will, but met me rather with a coarse joviality, and a rough familiarity which he meant to be ingratiating. He was insistent in his attempts to get me into his room at night, for the purpose of playing euchre and of drinking.

"Old McCarthy doesn't mind," said he. "Don't you be afraid of him. We'll do what we like, and I'll answer for it that he won't object." Once only I went, and when I left, after a dull and gross evening, my host was stretched dead drunk upon the sofa. After that I gave the excuse of a course of study, and spent my spare hours alone in my own room.

One point upon which I was anxious to gain information was as to how long these proceedings had been going on. When did St. James assert his hold over Dr. McCarthy? From neither of them could I learn how long my colleague had been in his present situation. One or two leading questions upon my part were eluded or ignored in a manner so marked that it was easy to see that they were both of them as eager to conceal the point as I was to know it. But at last one evening I had the chance of a chat with Mrs. Carter, the matron—for the Doctor was a widower—and from her I got the information which I wanted. It needed no questioning to get at her knowledge, for she was so full of indignation that she shook with passion as she spoke of it, and raised her hands into the air in the earnestness of her denunciation, as she described the grievances which she had against my colleague.

"It was three years ago, Mr. Weld, that he first darkened this doorstep," she cried. "Three bitter years they have been to me. The school had fifty boys then. Now it has twenty-two. That's what he has done for us in three years. In another three there won't be one. And the Doctor, that angel of patience, you see how he treats him, though he is not fit to lace his boots for him. If it wasn't for the Doctor, you may be sure that I wouldn't stay an hour under the same roof with such a

man, and so I told him to his own face, Mr. Weld. If the Doctor would only pack him about his business—but I know that I am saying more than I should!” She stopped herself with an effort, and spoke no more upon the subject. She had remembered that I was almost a stranger in the school, and she feared that she had been indiscreet.

There were one or two very singular points about my colleague. The chief one was that he rarely took any exercise. There was a playing-field within the college grounds, and that was his farthest point. If the boys went out, it was I or Dr. McCarthy who accompanied them. St. James gave as a reason for this that he had injured his knee some years before, and that walking was painful to him. For my own part I put it down to pure laziness upon his part, for he was of an obese, heavy temperament. Twice, however, I saw him from my window stealing out of the grounds late at night, and the second time I watched him return in the grey of the morning and slink in through an open window. These furtive excursions were never alluded to, but they exposed the hollowness of his story about his knee, and they increased the dislike and distrust which I had of the man. His nature seemed to be vicious to the core.

Another point, small but suggestive, was that he hardly ever during the months that I was at Willow Lea House received any letters, and on those few occasions they were obviously tradesmen’s bills. I am an early riser, and used every morning to pick my own correspondence out of the bundle upon the hail table. I could judge therefore how few were ever there for Mr. Theophilus St. James. There seemed to me to be something peculiarly ominous in this. What sort of a man could he be who during thirty years of his life had never made a single friend, high or low, who cared to continue to keep in touch with him? And yet the sinister fact remained that the head master not only tolerated, but was even intimate with him. More than once on entering a room I had found them talking confidentially together, and they would walk arm in arm in deep conversation up and down the garden paths. So curious did I become to know what the tie was which bound them, that I found it gradually push out my other interests and become the main purpose of my life. In school and out of school, at meals and at play, I was perpetually engaged in watching Dr. Phelps McCarthy and Mr. Theophilus St. James, and in endeavouring to solve the mystery which surrounded them.

But, unfortunately, my curiosity was a little too open. I had not the art to conceal the suspicions which I felt about the relations which existed between these two men and the nature of the hold which the one appeared to have over the other. It may have been my manner of watching them, it may have been some indiscreet question, but it is certain that I showed too clearly what I felt. One night I was conscious that the eyes of Theophilus St. James were fixed upon me in a surly and menacing stare. I had a foreboding of evil, and I was not surprised when Dr. McCarthy called me next morning into his study.

“I am very sorry, Mr. Weld,” said he, “but I am afraid that I shall be compelled to dispense with your services.

“Perhaps you would give me some reason for dismissing me,” I answered, for I was conscious of having done my duties to the best of my power, and knew well that only one reason could be given.

“I have no fault to find with you,” said he, and the colour came to his cheeks.

“You send me away at the suggestion of my colleague.”

His eyes turned away from mine.

“We will not discuss the question, Mr. Weld. It is impossible for me to discuss it. In justice to you, I will give you the strongest recommendation for your next situation. I can say no more. I hope that you will continue your duties here until you have found a place elsewhere.”

My whole soul rose against the injustice of it, and yet I had no appeal and no redress. I could only bow and leave the room, with a bitter sense of ill-usage at my heart.

My first instinct was to pack my boxes and leave the house. But the head master had given me permission to remain until I had found another situation. I was sure that St. James desired me to go, and that was a strong reason why I should stay. If my presence annoyed him, I should give him as much of it as I could. I had begun to hate him and to long to have my revenge upon him. If he had a hold over our principal, might not I in turn obtain one over him? It was a sign of weakness that he should, be so afraid of my curiosity. He would not resent it so much if he had not something to fear from it. I entered my name once more upon the books of the agents, but meanwhile I continued to fulfil my duties at Willow Lea House, and so it came about that I was present at the *dénouement* of this singular situation.

During that week—for it was only a week before the crisis came—I was in the habit of going down each evening, after the work of the day was done, to inquire about my new arrangements. One night, it was a cold and windy evening in March, I had just stepped out from the hall door when a strange sight met my eyes. A man was crouching before one of the windows of the house. His knees were bent and his eyes were fixed upon the small line of light between the curtain and the sash. The window threw a square of brightness in front of it, and in the middle of this the dark shadow of this ominous visitor showed clear and hard. It was but for an instant that I saw him, for he glanced up and was off in a moment through the shrubbery. I could hear the patter of his feet as he ran down the road, until it died away in the distance.

It was evidently my duty to turn back and to tell Dr. McCarthy what I had seen. I found him in his study. I had expected him to be disturbed at such an incident, but I was not prepared for the state of panic into which he fell. He leaned back in his chair, white and gasping, like one who has received a mortal blow.

“Which window, Mr. Weld?” he asked, wiping his forehead. “Which window was it?”

“The next to the dining-room—Mr. St. James’s window.”

“Dear me! Dear me! This is, indeed, unfortunate! A man looking through Mr. St. James’s window!” He wrung his hands like a man who is at his wits’ end what to do.

“I shall be passing the police-station, sir. Would you wish me to mention the matter?”

“No, no,” he cried, suddenly, mastering his extreme agitation; “I have no doubt that it was some poor tramp who intended to beg. I attach no importance to the incident—none at all. Don’t let me detain you, Mr. Weld, if you wish to go out.”

I left him sitting in his study with reassuring words upon his lips, but with horror upon his face. My heart was heavy for my little employer as I started off once more for town. As I looked back from the gate at the square of light which marked the window of my colleague, I suddenly saw the black outline of Dr. McCarthy’s figure passing against the lamp. He had hastened from his study then to tell St. James what he had heard. What was the meaning of it all, this atmosphere of mystery, this inexplicable terror, these confidences between two such dissimilar men? I thought and thought as I walked, but do what I would I could not hit upon any adequate conclusion. I little knew how near I was to the solution of the problem.

It was very late—nearly twelve o’clock—when I returned, and the lights were all out save one in the Doctor’s study. The black, gloomy house loomed before me as I walked up the drive, its sombre bulk broken only by the one glimmering point of brightness. I let myself in with my latch-key, and was about to enter my own room when my attention was arrested by a short, sharp cry like that of a man in pain. I stood and listened, my hand upon the handle of my door.

All was silent in the house save for a distant murmur of voices which came, I knew, from the Doctor's room. I stole quietly down the corridor in that direction. The sound resolved itself now into two voices, the rough bullying tones of St. James and the lower tone of the Doctor, the one apparently insisting and the other arguing and pleading. Four thin lines of light in the blackness showed me the door of the Doctor's room, and step by step I drew nearer to it in the darkness. St. James's voice within rose louder and louder, and his words came plainly to my ear.

"I'll have every pound of it. If you won't give it me I'll take it. Do you hear?"

Dr. McCarthy's reply was inaudible, but the angry voice broke in again.

"Leave you destitute! I leave you this little gold-mine of a school, and that's enough for one old man, is it not? How am I to set up in Australia without money? Answer me that!"

Again the Doctor said something in a soothing voice, but his answer only roused his companion to a higher pitch of fury.

"Done for me! What have you ever done for me except what you couldn't help doing? It was for your good name, not for my safety, that you cared. But ugh cackle! I must get on my way before morning. Will you open your safe or will you not?"

"Oh, James, how can you use me so?" cried a wailing voice, and then there came a sudden little scream of pain. At the sound of that helpless appeal from brutal violence I lost for once that temper upon which I had prided myself. Every bit of manhood in me cried out against any further neutrality. With my walking cane in my hand I rushed into the study. As I did so I was conscious that the hall-door bell was violently ringing.

"You villain!" I cried, "let him go!"

The two men were standing in front of a small safe, which stood against one wall of the Doctor's room. St. James held the old man by the wrist, and he had twisted his arm round in order to force him to produce the key. My little head master, white but resolute, was struggling furiously in the grip of the burly athlete. The bully glared over his shoulder at me with a mixture of fury and terror upon his brutal features. Then, realising that I was alone, he dropped his victim and made for me with a horrible curse.

"You infernal spy!" he cried. "I'll do for you anyhow before I leave."

I am not a very strong man, and I realised that I was helpless if once at close quarters. Twice I cut at him with my stick, but he rushed in at me with a murderous growl, and seized me by the throat with both his muscular hands. I fell backwards and he on the top of me, with a grip which was squeezing the life from me. I was conscious of his malignant yellow-tinged eyes within a few inches of my own, and then with a beating of pulses in my head and a singing in my ears, my senses slipped away from me. But even in that supreme moment I was aware that the door-bell was still violently ringing.

When I came to myself, I was lying upon the sofa in Dr. McCarthy's study, and the Doctor himself was seated beside me. He appeared to be watching me intently and anxiously, for as I opened my eyes and looked about me he gave a great cry of relief. "Thank God!" he cried. "Thank God!"

"Where is he?" I asked, looking round the room. As I did so, I became aware that the furniture was scattered in every direction, and that there were traces of an even more violent struggle than that in which I had been engaged.

The Doctor sank his face between his hands.

"They have him," he groaned. "After these years of trial they have him again. But how thankful I am that he has not for a second time stained his hands in blood."

As the Doctor spoke I became aware that a man in the braided jacket of an inspector of police was standing in the doorway.

“Yes, sir,” he remarked, “you have had a pretty narrow escape. If we had not got in when we did, you would not be here to tell the tale. I don’t know that I ever saw any one much nearer to the undertaker.”

I sat up with my hands to my throbbing head.

“Dr. McCarthy,” said I, “this is all a mystery to me. I should be glad if you could explain to me who this man is, and wily you have tolerated him so long in your house.”

“I owe you an explanation, Mr. Weld—and the more so since you have, in so chivalrous a fashion, almost sacrificed your life in my defence. There is no reason now for secrecy. In a word, Mr. Weld, this unhappy man’s real name is James McCarthy, and he is my only son.”

“Your son?”

“Alas, yes. What sin have I ever committed that I should have such a punishment? He has made my whole life a misery from the first years of his boyhood. Violent, headstrong, selfish, unprincipled, he has always been the same. At eighteen he was a criminal. At twenty, in a paroxysm of passion, he took the life of a boon companion and was tried for murder. He only just escaped the gallows, and he was condemned to penal servitude. Three years ago he succeeded in escaping, and managed, in face of a thousand obstacles, to reach my house in London. My wife’s heart had been broken by his condemnation, and as he had succeeded in getting a suit of ordinary clothes, there was no one here to recognise him. For months he lay concealed in the attics until the first search of the police should be over. Then I gave him employment here, as you have seen, though by his rough and overbearing manners he made my own life miserable, and that of his fellow-masters unbearable. You have been with us for four months, Mr. Weld, but no other master endured him so long. I apologise now for all you have had to submit to, but I ask you what else could I do? For his dead mother’s sake I could not let harm come to him as long as it was in my power to fend it off. Only under my roof could he find a refuge—the only spot in all the world—and how could I keep him here without it exciting remark unless I gave him some occupation? I made him English master therefore, and in that capacity I have protected him here for three years. You have no doubt observed that he never during the daytime went beyond the college grounds. You now understand the reason. But when to-night you came to me with your report of a man who was looking through his window, I understood that his retreat was at last discovered. I besought him to fly at once, but he had been drinking, the unhappy fellow, and my words fell upon deaf ears. When at last he made up his mind to go he wished to take from me in his flight every shilling which I possessed. It was your entrance which saved me from him, while the police in turn arrived only just in time to rescue you. I have made myself amenable to the law by harbouring an escaped prisoner, and remain here in the custody of the inspector, but a prison has no terrors for me after what I have endured in this house during the last three years.”

“It seems to me, Doctor,” said the inspector, “that, if you have broken the law, you have had quite enough punishment already.”

“God knows I have!” cried Dr. McCarthy, and sank his haggard face upon his hands.