

Our captive sat in the cabin opposite to the iron box for which he had done so much and waited so long to gain. From the small smile which played over Sherlock Holmes's face, I could see that the speech had not been lost upon him. "No, no," I answered, "not to me, but to my friend Sherlock Holmes." "You seem to know as much about it as if you were there, sir. The truth is that I hoped to find the room clear. I knew the habits of the house pretty well, and it was the time when Mr. Sholto usually went down to his supper. I shall make no secret of the business. The best defence that I can make is just the simple truth. Now, if it had been the old major I would have swung for him with a light heart. I would have thought no more of knifing him than of smoking this cigar. But with this young Sholto, I had no disagreement whatever." "That he was, sir. I never got such a turn in my life as when I saw him grinning at me with his head on his shoulder as I climbed through the window. It fairly shook me, sir. I'd have half killed Tonga for it if he had not ran off. That was how he came to leave his club, and some of his darts too, as he tells me, which I dare say helped to put you on our track; though how you kept on it is more than I can tell. It does seem a strange thing," he added, with a bitter smile, "that I who have a fair claim to nearly half a million of money should spend the first half of my life building a seawall in the Andamans, and am like to spend the other half digging at Dartmoor. The soft light of a shaded lamp fell upon her as she leaned back in the basket chair, playing over her sweet, serious face, and giving the rich coils of her luxuriant hair a dull, metallic sparkle. At the sound of my foot-fall she sprang to her feet, however, and a bright flush of surprise and of pleasure coloured her pale cheeks. His face while relaxed was not an unpleasing one, though his heavy brows and aggressive chin gave him, as I had lately seen, a terrible expression when moved to anger. "Well, Jonathan Small," said Holmes, lighting a cigar, "I am sorry that it has come to this." "I don't believe that I can swing over the job. I give you my word on the book that I never raised hand against Mr. Sholto. It was that little Tonga who shot one of his evil darts into him. I had no part in it, sir. I was as sad as if it had been my blood-relation, but it was done, and I could not undo it again." "Smith says she is one of the fastest launches on the river, and that if he had had another man to help him with the engines we should never have caught her. He says he knew nothing of this Norwood business." "Yes, this is the great Agra treasure. Half of it is yours and half is Thaddeus Sholto's. You will have a couple of hundred thousand each. Think of that! There will be few richer young ladies in England. If I have it," said she, "I owe it to you." He had a large, prominent, bearded chin which marked a man who was not to be easily turned from his purpose. He sat now with his hands tied, and his head upon his breast, while he looked with his keen, twinkling eyes at the box which had been the cause of his ill-doings. "How could you expect so small and weak a man as this black man to overpower Mr. Sholto and hold him while you were climbing the rope?" "You are under the charge of Mr. Athelney Jones, of Scotland Yard. He is going to bring you up to my rooms, and I shall ask you for a true account of the matter. You must tell the truth, for if you do, I hope that I may be of use to you. I think I can prove that the poison acts so quickly that the man was dead before ever you reached the room." "It was a terrible day for me when first I saw the merchant Achmet and had to do with the Agra treasure." "Well, I think we may all congratulate each other. Pity we didn't take the other alive; but there was no choice. I say, Holmes, you must admit that you cut it rather fine. It was all we could do to catch her." "Well, if he has done no wrong we shall see that no wrong comes to him. If we are pretty quick in catching our

men, we are not so quick in convicting them."It was amusing to notice how Jones was already beginning to congratulate himself on solving the case.She was seated by the open window, dressed in some sort of white thin material, with a little touch of scarlet at the neck and waist.He was a sunburned, wild-eyed man, with a network of lines all over his brown face, which told of a hard, open-air life.His age may have been fifty or so, for his black, curly hair had thick areas of grey.