

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.It seemed to me that there was more sadness than anger in his hard and controlled face."Have a cigar," said Holmes."But I certainly did not know that the Aurora was such a clipper.""We will be at Vauxhall Bridge soon," said Jones,"and shall land you, Dr. Watson, with the treasure- box.It is most irregular, but of course an agreement is an agreement."Hum! There was no use your giving this unnecessary trouble. We have had work enough already through you. However, doctor, I need not warn you to be careful. Bring the box back with you to the Baker Street rooms. You will find us there, on our way to the station."They landed me at Vauxhall, with my heavy iron box, and with a loud, friendly officer as my companion.With all the will in the world, I could never have followed up a clue which has taxed even his analytical mind."It was nothing. I will tell you no more gloomy details. Let us turn to something brighter. There is the treasure. What could be brighter than that? I got leave to bring it with me, thinking that it would interest you to be the first to see it."It had struck her, doubtless, that it might seem rude upon her part to be uninterested in a prize which had cost so much to win.Once he looked up at me with a gleam of something like humour in his eyes."Quite a family party," he commented."All is well that ends well," said Holmes.I chose his launch because I heard that she was a flier."It is a pity there is no key, that we may make a list of the items first. You will have to break it open. Where is the key, my man?"A quarter of an hour's drive brought us to Mrs. Cecil Forrester's.The servant seemed surprised at so late a visitor.Mrs. Cecil Forrester was out for the evening, she explained, and likely to be very late.Miss Morstan, however, was in the drawing-room: so to the drawing-room I went, box in hand, leaving the kind officer in the cab.One white arm and hand hung over the side of the chair, and her whole figure spoke sadness.She glanced at the iron box.she asked, coolly enough."Pray sit down and tell me all about it, Dr. Watson," said she."It is nothing," she said, as I hurried to pour her out some water.There was no eagerness in her voice, however.she said, leaning over it."This is Indian work, I suppose? And so heavy!""Small threw it into the Thames," I answered."And so am I, sir," he answered."Neither he did,"cried our prisoner, "not a word.I need hardly tell you that I am taking a very serious risk in doing this.I must, however, as a matter of duty, send an officer with you, since you have so valuable a charge."Yes, I shall drive.""At the bottom of the river," said Small, shortly."I heard a cab drive up," she said."I thought that Mrs. Forrester had come back very early, but I never dreamed that it might be you. What news have you brought me?""I have brought something better than news," said I, putting down the box upon the table."I have brought you something which is worth all the news in the world. I have brought you a fortune.""Is that the treasure, then?""I am all right again. It was a shock to me to hear that I had placed my friends in such horrible danger.""That is all over," I answered."It would be of the greatest interest to me," she said."What a pretty box!"she cried, trying to raise it. "The box alone must be of some value. Where is the key?"