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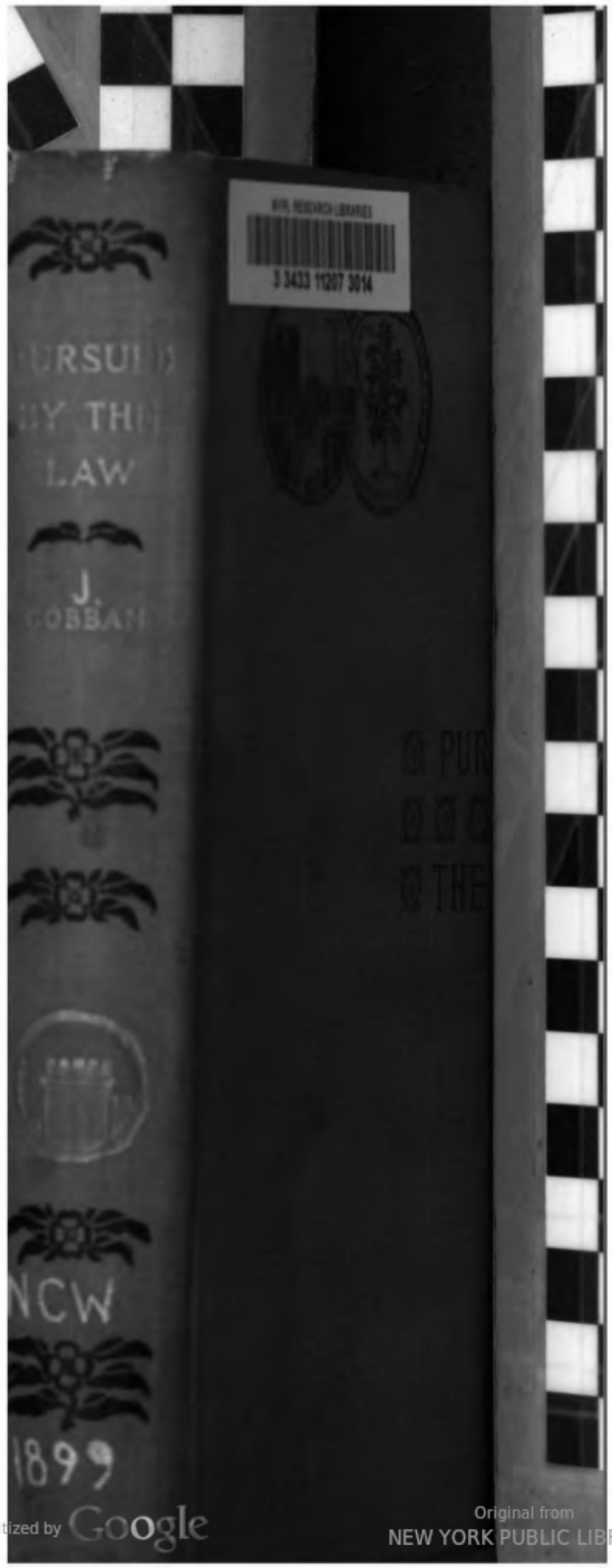

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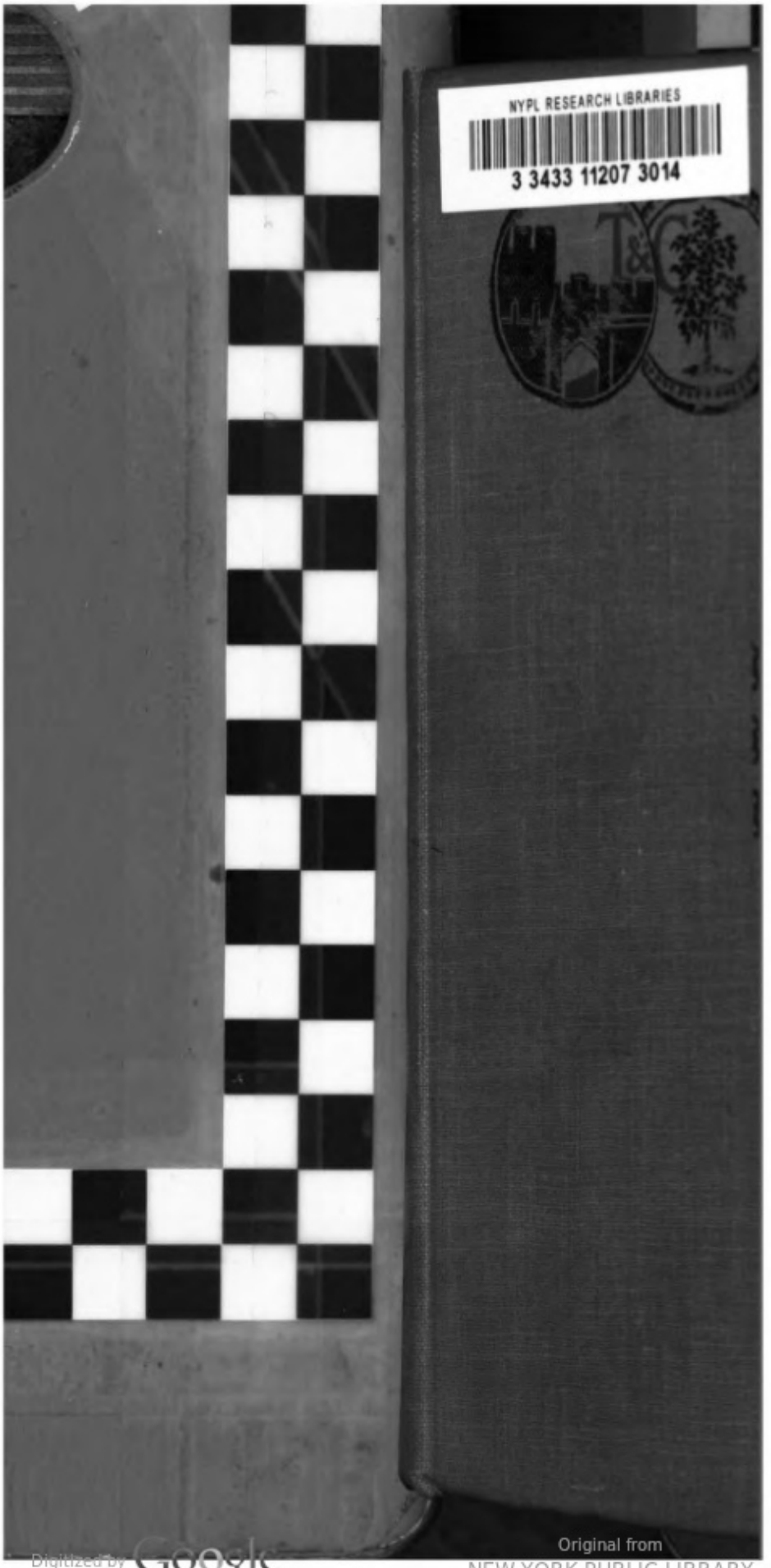
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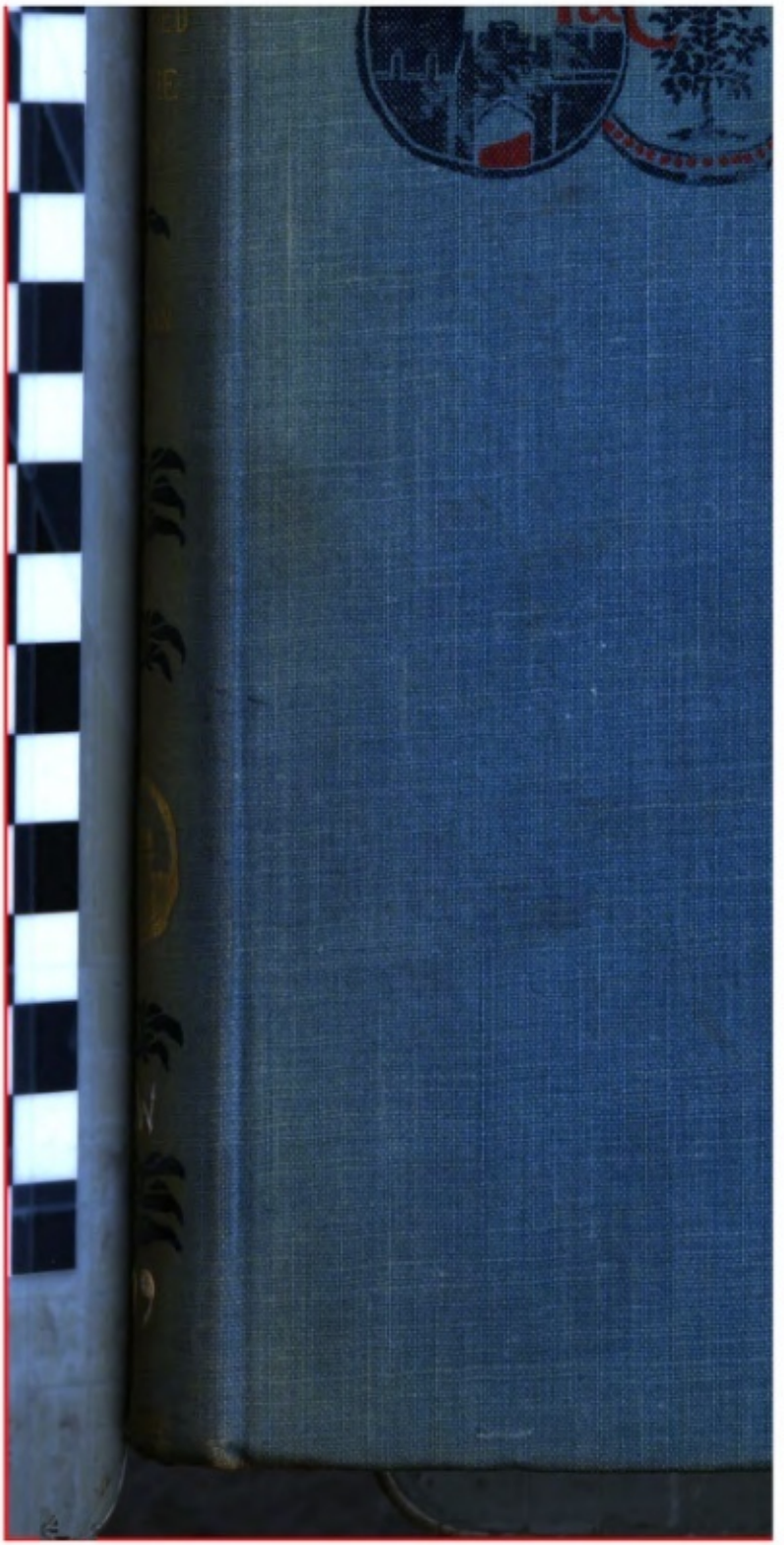

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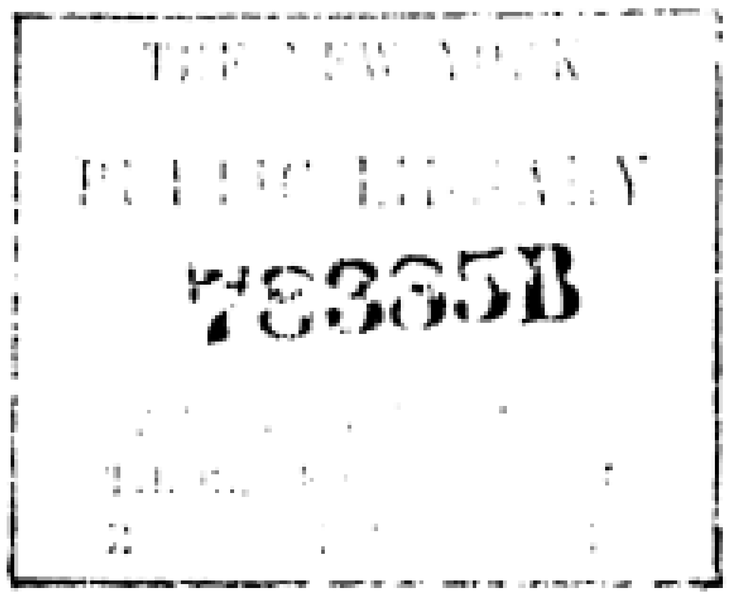
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"	1
II.	For his mother's sake	13
III.	A faithful sweetheart	25
IV.	"Crowner's quest law"	35
V.	The needle-gun	46
VI.	Mr. Townshend of Jermyn Street	49
VII.	Sentenced	59
VIII.	On the night express	71
IX.	The man with the burnt scar	81
X.	Alone on the wide wide moor!	92
XI.	A change of clothes	102
XII.	The man with the burnt scar again	114
XIII.	A golden hair	126
XIV.	Ben Knott's lad	136
XV.	A lady fair to see	146
XVI.	The iron curtain	159
XVII.	"Strictly private and confidential"	170
XVIII.	The green-eyed monster	181
XIX.	Caught in a trap	189
XX.	In strange company	203
XXI.	The terrible telegram	216
XXII.	Nelly and the actress	227

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CHAPTER PAGE

XXIII.—THE MAN AND THE DOG 239

XXIV.—RESCUED, AND YET IN DANGER 252

XXV.—NELLY SPEAKS 263

XXVI.—TOWNSHEND AS A QUICK-CHANGE ARTISTE . 276

XXVII.—THE HUNTING THREE 288

XXVIII.—A WAYSIDE INN 300

XXIX.—BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA . 310

XXX.—TWO FALLS ON SNOWDON 320

XXXI.—FOR A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE . . . 328

XXXII.—CONCLUSION 341

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CHAPTER I.

"HAST THOU FOUND ME, O MINE ENEMY?"

THUD! thud! thud! *Clang!* Thud! thud! thud! *Clang!* It was an afternoon at the end of January. Within the famous Fotheringay Engine Works on the banks of the Thames a young man was working alone in a small forge near the inner office, marked "Strictly Private." Three vigorous blows with his hammer on a piece of soft white-hot metal, and then a ringing drop on the anvil; three more on the metal, and one on the anvil—and so on he continued till the cooling and hammered metal needed to be thrust into the fire again and reheated. He blew the bellows, and shovelled the fire together, and the blaze illumined all his person—his well-knit figure, neither tall nor short, but instinct in every line and pose with energy and resolution, his dark face, and his black hair and beard. He was taking the white-hot bit of metal again from the fire when a lad entered and stood before him.

"Hallo!" said he.

"There's somebody wants to speak to you, Mr.

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Graham," said the boy, who was one of the messengers attached to the porter's lodge.

"Tell somebody to go to the devil!" answered Graham. "I'm busy."

"It's a gentleman, Mr. Graham," said the boy.

"Oh," said Graham, "if it's a gentleman he needn't."

"Needn't what, sir?"

"Go to the devil. But say I am very sorry: I can't see anybody till the bell rings at five o'clock."

"But the gentleman's here, sir," said the boy.

At that the gentleman, who had been just outside the door, came forward.

"Oh," said Graham, "it's you!" A change passed upon him. His face glowed and hardened with indignation. "You've found me again, have you?"

"Yes, Jim, lad," said the man, who was handsome and well dressed, but who had something uneasy and insolent in his manner. Moreover, except that he looked somewhat broken and debauched, he was wonderfully like the young man. They gazed upon each other an instant, Graham with an ill-controlled indignation, the other with a truculence that was half-smile, half-snarl.

"I can't speak to you now," said Graham, going back to the fire to reheat his metal. "This time's my master's."

"My master's!" re-echoed the man, with a shrug. "Imagine a Graham a common blacksmith!"

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Graham returned to the anvil with the white-hot metal in his hand. "There's one Graham," said he, "that would be better under this hammer than over it!" And he set to hammering the metal and making a shower of sparks which made the other retreat.

"Very well, Jim, lad," said he. "I'll wait till after hours. Bye-bye." And he went away, still attended by the astonished porter lad, while Graham continued his fierce and insistent hammering.

And that man was his father! To think of it! The thought of it was so provoking and maddening to Graham that he hammered till he scarce knew what he did. Thud! thud! thud! Clang! Thud! thud! thud! Clang! He hammered and grew very hot, spite of his light clothing. He paused to roll his shirt-sleeves higher above his elbow, and disclosed an upper arm whose whiteness a lady might envy—but not its bulging hardness. Yet for a man's it was a remarkably handsome arm. It was an arm that a sculptor would have rejoiced in as a model for a Greek athlete's: it was not stringy, but firmly fleshed, and yet it had all the muscles distinctly marked. A beautiful male arm and a powerful; for Graham was in the first flush of manly beauty and strength, unsapped and unsullied by any kind of dissipation.

He thrust the thought of his father as far back as possible out of sight. He heated and hammered his piece of metal, and worked and shaped it more and more gently and delicately, till it be-

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came something which he looked at with pride, and set aside to cool. Then he turned down his shirt-sleeves, put on his jacket (for he was careful not to catch cold after his hot work), and passing from the forge he entered the private office. He sat down at a table in a corner, and pen and ruler in hand, he drew, and calculated, and wrote figures and a description of something till the winter's light waned; and all the while the multitudinous thud and clink and ring of hammers and the rush of machinery sounded furiously round him, and seemed to soothe and inspire, rather than to disconcert him. When the dusk had gathered so that he could not see to work he rose to turn on the electric light; for he happened to be alone in that inner *sanctum sanctorum* where the secrets of the firm were kept. Before he lighted up he turned for a moment to the window which looked out upon the river, and contemplated its busy life. A high tide was flowing, and on its top came fussing along stout, noisy tugs, churning up the brown water which broke over the bows of the big, laden barges dragging at their tail. The increasing lights on the Surrey shore winked across, like friends, at him, and the lamps of the bridge gleamed solemnly forth and were grandly reflected and broken up in the fast-flowing current.

He had just turned on the light and resumed his work when the door opened and the head of the firm—Mr. Moorhouse—entered. Both he and Graham were North-country men, and they talked

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to each other with a North-country friendliness and a North-country accent.

"Well, Graham," said Mr. Moorhouse, "how is it working out?"

"It's getting along, I think, Mr. Moorhouse," said Graham, "like a house a-fire."

"That's the ticket," said Mr. Moorhouse. He rubbed his hands in business-like fashion together as he went to his own desk, saying, "Just pulled off a contract for triple condensers to put into the cruiser they're going to build down the river for the Japanese Government!"

"O-ho, that's good!" exclaimed Graham, looking up quickly from his work. "Now, maybe," said he, "my new valve will have a chance!"

"It shall, lad!—it shall!" said the master. "You get it done as fast as you can!"

At that moment the five o'clock bell of dismissal rang. Graham continued working at his table for some minutes longer, while the head of the firm was engrossed with papers at his desk. He waited, but no one came to seek him. Presently he gathered his papers up in a portfolio, saying to the master: "I'm going to take the sketches and plans home with me, and finish up to-night."

"All right," said Mr. Moorhouse half-absently, and plunged again into his own papers.

"Good-night," said Graham cheerfully, when he had put on his coat.

"Good-night," answered Mr. Moorhouse, bare-

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ly looking up before he cast his eyes back to his papers.

Graham went out with his portfolio of drawings and plans under his arm. As he passed through the lodge-way he bade good-night to the porter. The porter thrust his head out of his window.

"That gentleman ain't been back, sir," said he.

"Oh, yes," said Graham, halting, "that gentleman." He scarcely knew what to say, for his anger was awake again. "Did he say he would come back?"

"No, sir."

"That's all right, then," said Graham.

"Well, you'll excuse me, sir, but you're just the very moral of him; and he told me he was your father. A fine, pleasant-spoken gentleman, sir, as ever I see."

"Oh!" said Graham, with involuntary bitterness. "You think so?" Then, saying: "If he comes again let me know," he was going out into the darkness.

"P'r'aps you'll see him to-night, sir. He asked me where you lived, and I told him."

"You told him," said Graham in surprise and rage. "You infernal ass!" And he flung out into the dark of the street.

Anxiety, fear, horror filled heart and brain, and drove him home with rapid steps to the little house he occupied with his mother. His father might be there! The dark, handsome, insolent and violent devil who had broken his mother's life, and

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would have broken and trampled on his had he not fled years ago when he was a mere boy and taken his mother with him! The subtle, relentless hound who had tracked them from town to town, and made them pay heavy blackmail to be free of him—till again he had fled and taken his mother with him to this place where he now was! That was three years ago, and the oppressor and enemy had found them again! His mind seething with dread, horror and indignation, Graham reached his home.

The blinds were undrawn in the bow-window of the little parlour as he stepped across the yard or two of fore-court, and the firelight gleamed and flickered from within. All looked so peaceful, inviting and home-like that Graham thought that his father neither was there nor could have been. It was only then that he knew how tightened with fear his heart had been from the slack sense of relief that pervaded him. He put his latch-key into the door, and was somewhat surprised that the latch was already shot back and fixed back, and that the door was merely closed and not fastened. He stepped into the dark passage, and turned and shot the latch. He took from his pocket a match to light the gas-jet. Again his heart was seized with dread: on the chair reposed a strange coat and hat. He turned the handle of the parlour-door and entered and then stood arrested with a horrid fear.

The fire burned brightly, with flames that

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winked and flickered to and fro, but the white cloth was not laid for tea as usual, and the ordinary table-cloth was dragged half-off, while in the remotest corner of the little room his mother sat—a tragic figure!—with pale, drawn, terror-smitten face. Her hand was pressed to her cheek, her mouth was piteously open, and her eyes—dark, wide, horrified!—were fixed on something that lay on the hearthrug! He stepped forward to light the gas, and stumbled on a foot! That touch froze his blood and made his flesh creep. As a precautionary act, that no possible eye without might see what was within the room, before lighting the gas he went to the window and lowered the blinds. Then he lit the gas, and let his gaze seek the hearthrug.

He saw a man's head an inch or two from the fender, with black hair and beard, and with features fixed as in death. At once he recognised his father, understood the meaning of the deadly show, and went to his mother's side. Grimly calm outwardly, but inwardly suffused with tenderness and filial love, he sat down by her and took her hand. She responded to the strength and warmth of his grasp by a sympathetic shiver and by a slackening of the tensely drawn nerves. She withdrew, as with an effort, her gaze from the awful object that was the centre of the scene and after a long perusal of her son's face recognised him.

"Oh, it's James!" she said.

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"Yes, mother, it's me!" And he pressed her hand. "Tell me!"

Then she gave way. Her head sank on his shoulder—the poor, dear head, prematurely grey—she trembled like a nestling in the hand, clung to her son, and poured out her grief.

"Oh, James, you have come home, haven't you? Don't be angry with me, dear. I didn't do it! I didn't do anything. I was too frightened. He was very terrible. He must have money, he said. I told him I had no money but yours, and that he should not have. I would not give him the money you work so hard to earn, my dear! He said he knew where it was," and she pointed to the desk on one side of the fireplace, "and he must have it. I stood there against the desk and he came at me. He gave a trip on something, and said 'God!' and fell, and hit his head. Oh, I heard it hit the fender, and my blood ran cold! And that's all, truly, my dear. I confess I was wicked enough to wish him dead, and there he lies. But I didn't raise a little finger to him. Ask Liz, my dear!"

"Is she in?" asked her son.

"Who, my dear?" asked the trembling and distracted mother.

"Liz," said he.

"I don't know," she answered. "I thought I saw her at the door when he fell. I called, but she didn't come. And then I waited till you came home!"

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Her son stepped out into the kitchen for the old servant; but there was no one there.

"You are sure, mother," said he, when he returned, "that you did not push him or anything? It's only me asking you, mother."

"Push him, James! I never pushed him, or struck him in my life. I couldn't—though many a time he's done it to me." And she shuddered. "Many a woman would have done it. But I never had the spirit or the strength. He couldn't say I touched him."

She turned her head and gazed anew on the prostrate body, as if to question it. She shrank and shivered. "He looks awful! He has never moved! And there's blood! Do you think he is dead? Oh, it's terrible for you, my dear! And your tea is not ready, my dear! And I'm afraid there will be trouble!"

These last sentences came from her all panting and huddled, like a suggestion of the ruin she saw lie before her.

Suddenly mother and son were smitten with a fresh stroke of horror and fear. The presumably dead body emitted a sound—a sound between a sigh and a groan, such as a heavy sleeper will often utter in the midst of his light breathing—and the mother screamed in a sharp, shrill note, and sat staring, while the son felt the hair of his flesh stand up. Had a doctor been present he would have said that the sound was no evidence at all of lingering life, but merely of the involuntary cooling and con-

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traction of the muscles expelling air from the lungs. But James Graham did not know that; and he went and stooped over the body to feel the heart. It was a horrible business, but he went through with it: he always went through with everything he set himself to do. He raised the head; the neck was cold, with the chill that comes from within; there was a discoloured mark on the temple, but little blood on the hearthrug. He undid the waistcoat, and laid his hand on the heart; dead cold had not quite supervened, but there was not the faintest throb of life. James Graham considered that his father was not the man to be overcome with a syncope or faint; he must be dead beyond recall. So the son rose again to his feet to face the consequences.

"Is he dead?" his mother asked in a horrified whisper.

Her son said neither "yea" nor "nay"; and she, by a sudden revulsion of feeling and memory, slipped to her knees on the floor, calling on her husband's name.

"O Robert, Robert!" she cried. "That this should have happened! O Robert! O Robert!"

A loud rat-tat sounded on the street door—insistent, as if it were the repetition of a knock that had been disregarded.

"Hush, mother!" said her son strenuously. "There's some one knocking at the door! It must be Liz. But why does she knock? She has a key!"

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"She's gone out to buy some things! She's been out since before he came! Though I thought," she murmured, "that she was back."

James Graham went to the door to answer the knock.

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CHAPTER II.

FOR HIS MOTHER'S SAKE.

WHEN Graham opened the front door he was surprised and alarmed to see a tall and very gentlemanly looking man arrayed in a fur coat and a tall hat. ("A doctor! A coroner! A magistrate!" flashed through the young man's thoughts.) He had an uncommon air of ease, politeness and distinction. He turned the flash of a single eyeglass on Graham, and in the light of the lamp the young man saw that he wore a very heavy black moustache, and that above it there was a handsome nose like the beak of a hawk. He spoke with an educated accent, which was touched a little with the drawl of a "swell."

"Oh—er—ah, I beg pardon for troubling you, but will you kindly tell me if Mr. Graham is within?"

"I'm Mr. Graham."

"Oh, quite so, I'm sure. But I mean the other Mr. Graham." (Young Mr. Graham shivered.) "I presume you are the son that my friend, your father, tried to get an interview with this afternoon at the Fotheringay Works?"

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"I must be."

"It's a pity you could not accommodate him; forgive my saying so." One side of his moustache lifted and fluttered an instant with a kind of deprecatory smile. Graham said nothing, and he continued: "When he left the works, he came here I know; and I've been waiting for him—killing most of the time," he added, with that odd smile that lifted half his moustache, "in the company of the riverside bargees at the Red Lion. But he is not here, you say?"

"No," said Graham, quickly accepting as his own an answer he had not made. "He is gone!"

"Ah," said the other, looking shrewdly and smiling at the young man, "that's so like him! Gone without a word to me! You're quite sure he's gone?"

Young Graham noticed that his eyes were fixed on the hat and coat that occupied the chair, and felt sure he knew whose they were. A shock of horror swept over him; but he stood forward to completely interrupt the man's view into the passage.

"I'm quite sure he's gone," said he in a firm voice.

"You can't tell me which way, I suppose, Mr. Graham?" the stranger asked; and again his mouth and moustache twitched with that old smile. "Up or down?"

"I can't," said Graham, preparing to close the door; more and more he feared the man's meaning.

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"I am very much obliged. Ah—er—by the way, if anything should arise—if he should come back—you will remember my name is Townshend."

"I will."

"Letters always find me if addressed to 25 Jermyn Street," said Mr. Townshend.

Graham stared an instant. Why should letters be mentioned to him?

"Good-night," said Mr. Townshend, and walked away.

As he walked away, Liz, the faithful old servant of the Grahams, came up. She was a little, thin, wiry woman, middle-aged, but active as a ferret. She was a native of Yorkshire, as any one might have guessed who heard her talk. She had no good looks, but she had strong affections.

"Sakes, Mister James!" she exclaimed. "Whoever's that?"

"Come in, Liz," said Graham; "and let me shut the door."

She entered.

"You haven't been in and out again within the last half-hour or so, have you?" he asked.

"No, never," said she. "I been out shopping. I put catch up because I thought I'd be back afore the missus had done with her nap, but this is first o' me. Is aught amiss?"

"Something has happened," said he.

"Eh," said she, pushing on to the parlour, "summat ave does happen when I go out!" She had opened the parlour-door before he could say

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another word. "Not had your teas yet?" she exclaimed. "Eh, dear, deary! The mess that things gets into if I ain't to whoam!"

"Be quiet, Liz!" said Graham. She glanced in wonder from his pale, grave face to the disorder, terror and woe depicted on his mother's. "Look!" said he, drawing aside the table-cloth.

"Gracious mercy, Mister James!" she exclaimed. "Here's to do!" Her shrewd, self-possessed gaze took in the full scene, and then she turned and closed the door. "However did it happen?"

A word or two of explanation was enough between them. Mrs. Graham was quickly becoming incapable of speech or attention, and gave no heed to either.

"Eh, dear! eh, dear!" Liz exclaimed, eyeing the dead man. "But he must ha' just waited to see me out o' t' house, and ta'en the chance to pop in!"

The bitter thought came to James Graham that Providence had offered him the chance of speaking with his father (and probably thus preventing this catastrophe) and that he had refused it. What was now to be done? At first there had been in the back of his mind the vague hope that the matter might be concealed; but now, with the visit of that man Townshend, it was evident that concealment was out of the question. Plainly, Townshend suspected, if he did not know, that something strange had happened; and if he, and other

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friends of his father's, never saw Robert Graham again——! No; concealment was not to be thought of. Concealment, followed by inquiry and discovery, would be utter condemnation. Moreover, James Graham's frank, strong nature prompted him to openness; and after all it had only been an accident, however strange and suspicious the circumstances might appear. He glanced at his mother, who was feebly holding out her hands to him, while she could scarce speak for hysterical sobbing.

"James," she said, "be good to me! Let me go to my bed and die! I would like to die, James, and be done with it all!"

"No, no, mother," said he, with an effort at cheerfulness; "we'll have no talk of dying! It will come all right! But thou shalt go to thy bed, mother," said he, using the dialect he knew she loved, though she seldom used it herself, "and compose thysen there! Come, mother! Put thy arm about my neck!"

He took her easily up in his arms, small and thin as she was, and carried her off to bed, saying in a low voice to Liz: "Come and help me to put her by." When he had taken her to her bedroom he left the faithful Liz to help her to undress, and returned to the parlour. He sat down to think, with his mother's words—"James, be good to me!"—sounding over and over in his ears. He had no strong or poignant grief for his father. His father had never been aught but a horror and of-

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fence to him: a terror—a hideous terror!—to his mother, and a ruthless tyrant to him. Why then should he grieve for him? Indeed, had he not now cause for offence against him that, after all the oppressions and cruelty he and his mother had endured at his hands, they should be so terribly involved in the catastrophe of his death?

His death? Yes; his life had been a cruel infliction on them, and in his death he had not spared them. How would the law view it? He wished he could have clear light on that. He had a dread of law and police; he suspected them of a fiendish desire and ability to make the worst of appearances. He knew there would have to be an inquest, with all its sordid and vulgar publicity. It had been an accident. But what would an examining doctor say? And the police, who believed nobody and suspected everybody, how would they take it? What would it be called? But he insisted to himself that it had been an accidental death, and he could not for a moment believe that what had happened could be so viewed and twisted as to be called by any other name. It suddenly struck him that his mother could not go through the prying and publicity of an inquiry. An inquest, with examination and cross-examination concerning her relations with her dead husband: she could not endure that. She would be distracted with shame and fear. No, at all costs his mother must be spared—the poor, tortured, timid, terrified mother, who had been so much to him, whom he had be-

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friended and defended since ever he was able. Then out of the jumbled to and fro of his thought there rose clear his duty, his privilege. And he made his decision once for all.

Liz appeared, and found him in a strange composure.

"How is she?" he asked.

"Eh," said she, "she's queer. Happen she's light in t'head. She keeps slummering off and waking up, and babbling and prattling o' her babby boy!—her bonny babby boy!—meaning thoo, no doubt, Mister James. Poor lass! She must be wandering about long years ago. She don't seem to know aught that's happened."

"Thank God for that, Liz," said he. "That'll make it easier."

She stared at him as if she suspected him also of wandering. "Now, seetha, lad, I'm going to make a nice cup o' tea for you and her. But bain't you going to get rid o' that?" She pointed with dislike at the dead body.

"No," said he, shaking his head.

"Not put it away? Bury it?"

"No," said he. "What would be the good of that? You saw that man at the door? That was a friend of his asking after him! And there may be more! No. It would be very much worse to be found out, than to go through with it openly."

"And you ain't a-going to put it away?"

"No."

"You ain't going to do aught with it?"

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"No."

"Just a-going to let it be found like?"

"No. I'm going to tell the police that it's there."

"Lord o' mercy, help us!" exclaimed the woman. "And dost thou mean to tell me, James Graham, that thou'rt a-going to let thy mother be ta'en up for that? They'll say 'twas done o' purpose!"

That chimed disagreeably with his own disturbing thoughts, and staggered him.

"They can't say that!" said he; but he was by no means sure.

"Oh, can't they?" said Liz. "And you're going to let her take her chance?"

"I'm not!" said he. "Just listen to me." And he earnestly fixed her attention. "I—me—I'm the only person that saw that done." And he pointed at his father's corpse, while the bewildered woman stared from him to it. "That's what you've got to get into your head! My mother knows nothing about it. You went out, leaving her ill in bed, and the door on the latch! I came in and found my father waiting. We had high words! My father came at me, tripped and fell; and then *that* happened."

"May God forgi'e tha, James Graham!" said she, "but thou'rt a liar! Nobody 'll believe tha! And where's the sense o't?"

"Can I see this trouble put upon my mother, woman?" he broke out. "Her trouble's mine—

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to go through with to the end whatever comes of it! And I'm glad she's wandering, and knows nothing about it!"

"And thou'rt a-going to take it on thysen?"

"I'm going to say that only I was here!" said he.

"Thou'rt either a greater fool than onybody has ever ta'en thee for, or thou'rt a better son, James Graham, than I ever thought ony man could be! And thou knows nought o' what may come o't! They may bring it in murder for aught tha knows! Them police and lawyer chaps are up to aught to mak' folk a deal worse than they are!" And she sat down firmly and looked at him. "Ay," she broke out presently, "and what'll thy sweetheart ha' to say about it?"

"Nelly," said he, after pulling his beard an instant in thought, "will think as I do."

"Eh?" said she. "I'm none so sure o' that! Wi' sweethearts that's up to aught, it's t'lad first, and the rest nowheres!"

"I'm going to tell her," said he, "and then go on to the police station. Are you going to get me that cup of tea?"

She rose. "I don't like it the least bit!" said she. "Thoo don't know what thou'rt going into, James Graham! And what will thy mother say to me when she knows I ha' let tha do it? And am I not as fair fond o' thee as I am o' her? Ha'e I not nursed tha on my knee and gi'en tha what thou cried for, James Graham?"

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And the affectionate creature's breast began to heave and a sob broke from her.

"Now, see tha, Liz," said Graham sternly, "none o' that! I'm bound to do it, as tha knows. There now, get me a cup o' tea!"

"Ah, dear now, 'ooney!" she pleaded. "Surely there'd be no more harm in digging a hole in t' cellar for *that*, than in digging a hole in t' cemetery!"

They were both silenced by another knock, a knock which Graham seemed to recognise.

"I believe it's Nelly," said he. "I'll go."

He went to the door and opened it, while the faithful Liz hovered between the passage and the horrible thing on the hearthrug.

"It is you, Nelly," she heard her young master say. "I was just coming round to see you. Wait a moment, and I'll take a turn with you."

He returned into the parlour for his hat.

"Oh, Mister James," wailed Liz, "and you ain't had your tea!"

"Never mind," said he hurriedly. "See to mother; I'll be back in half an hour."

"Eh, dear! eh, dear!" she said, as he went out. "A wilful man mun ha'e his way! They didn't know aught about it that said 'woman'!"

The two lovers walked away arm in arm, Nelly's head barely reaching Graham's shoulder. ("A penn'orth of cloves," was his pet joke about her smallness, her sweetness and her warmth of temper combined.)

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"Is anything the matter, Jim dear?" she asked.

"An accident has happened, Nelly," said he. "My father's dead!—killed!"

"Oh, where?" said she.

"In there," he answered, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "In our parlour. It's very unfortunate."

"Oh, yes, Jim!" said she. "But how did it happen?—killed?"

"He fell, and hit his head on the fender—never stirred again!"

"Oh, Jim! Fell?" she said. "Pushed, do you mean? Knocked down? Or what?"

"He seemed to trip and fall heavily," was his answer.

He had at first intended not to tell her about his mother; but thus intimately close to her who was truth incarnate, he was compelled to tell her all and trust her with his decision. He related how he had first seen his father for a moment at the works, and then how he had gone home to find him dead on the hearth.

"I don't understand how it happened quite," said he; "but mother's too overcome, too ill, to go through the trouble of it. I must keep her out of it altogether; it would be her death!"

"What do you mean, Jim?" Nelly asked, in fear.

"I mean, Nelly dear, that I'm going to say that it was I myself who saw my father and had a few words with him."

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"Oh, Jim!" she cried, looking up at him in piteous wonder. "And what about you?"

"Oh, nothing will come of it," said he, affecting a lightness he did not feel. "They'll see it was an accident, and after an inquest they'll find it so; and that'll be the end of it."

"And where are you going now, Jim?" she asked, as they came out into the highroad.

"To the police-station," he answered, "to tell them. Wait here for me a minute, Nelly," said he, preparing to cross the road to the station, whose blue lamp shone opposite. "I shall not be long."

He ran across, and she watched him go with a troubled heart. But she had complete faith in her lover, and if he said nothing much would come of it, why—nothing much would come.

She waited, and waited—but he did not return.

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CHAPTER III.

A FAITHFUL SWEETHEART.

NELLY CLEMANCE waited for her lover's return till she was ashamed. When half an hour had passed, and anxiety tugged terribly at her breast, she ventured across the road to the police-station. As she approached, a policeman in uniform, and another who was not in uniform, came down the two or three steps of the office. On the impulse she turned to them.

"Excuse me," said she, "but a gentleman went into your office half an hour ago about a death that has happened at his house."

"Party of the name of Graham, miss?" inquired the policeman.

"Yes, that's his name," said Nelly.

"Do you know anything about this death, miss?" asked the other in plain clothes. "If you do you'd better come inside."

"Oh, no!" said she. "I know nothing at all about it. I only wanted to ask if Mr. Graham is in there still."

"Yes; he's there, miss," said the plain-clothes man. "And he'll have to stay there till we come back; he's detained on suspicion."

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"Oh!" cried Nelly. "Of what?"
"We can't tell yet, miss, till we see."
They were turning away.
"Can't I see him?" she asked.
They paused, and looked on her with interest and pity.

"Afraid you can't, miss," said the uniformed one. "But you can ask the sergeant."

They went away, and she entered. She made her request of the office sergeant, who most peremptorily said: "No, certainly not at present." And she went out, and hurriedly set off to the home of her lover.

In that hour of trouble and terror Nelly Clemance had no kindred of her own to turn to. She was an orphan. Two years before her father (who was a foreman at the Fotheringay Works) had been killed in an accident. That had been a crushing grief to her, for her father and she had been all in all to each other. But she had bravely buckled to, to earn a living. She gave music lessons, and on the produce of these, added to a small pension paid her by the Fotheringay firm on her father's account, she lived in lodgings in tolerable comfort. It was at the time of her father's death that she and young Graham had been brought together, and the lonely and struggling young man had become enamoured of the brave and lonely girl—all the more warmly enamoured that she was of a most pretty, piquant and captivating presence. Thus it came about that she had no very intimate friends but

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the Grahams, and that she regarded Mrs. Graham almost as her own mother.

She guessed that the two policemen she had encountered at the door of the station had gone to the house of the Grahams, and she ran all the way thither, to be up with them. When she arrived they had not; so she had an opportunity of coming to an understanding with the faithful Liz.

"So you see," said she to the jealous woman, when she had repeated what Graham had told her, "I know all about it, and you and I must agree to help each other through."

"He's a good lad. He loves his mother," said Liz, with a tear in her eye, "and thou'rt a real good lass, too. God help us!" Then in a whisper (their talk was conducted in the passage) she asked: "Wouldst tha like to ha' a look at it?" For Liz, like all her order, found a horrible fascination in death—especially in a sudden death, or a death by violence.

"At the dead body, you mean?" gasped Nelly. "Oh, no! I couldn't bear it!"

Liz looked at her in some wonder and disappointment. "Well," said she wisely, "there's some as minds and some as doesn't. But where wilt tha go and sit, while I talk to t'police?"

"I'll sit with mother, if I may," said Nelly.

"Eh," said Liz, "she'll be no company. She's right off t'head now; she just keeps slummering and wandering about her babby boy!"

Nelly went upstairs to sit with Mrs. Graham.

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But the poor woman did not know her; and when in a few minutes the police came bringing a doctor with them, she slipped down stairs again, drawn by an overpowering anxiety and curiosity.

Then she began to see with horror what a terrible structure of presumptive truth, what a consistent and feasible story Law and Police can build up out of small appearances and worthless suspicions! She stood at the door, looking in; Liz stood within with her hand on the table, the doctor knelt on the hearthrug and examined the corpse with great attention, while the plain-clothes man stood by and looked on, and the uniformed policeman waited without in the passage.

"Well?" murmured the plain-clothes man, when the doctor seemed to have concluded his examination.

The doctor pursed his mouth and shook his head.

"It looks a queer business," said he. "This wound might have been made with falling on the edge of the fender or on that corner, or on the other hand it might have been made with a blow from something heavy with a blunt edge!"

Instantly the plain-clothes man shot sharp glances round the room; and dropped on his knees to peep under the furniture. "Ha!" said he, and produced from beneath the sofa a heavy, old-fashioned brass candlestick. Everybody looked and saw that the fellow of it stood at one end of the mantelpiece.

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"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Liz, holding up her hands with involuntary amazement. "However did that get there?"

She turned a terrified look upon Nelly, and every one gazed at the rest all round. The plain-clothes man was the first to bring his eyes back to his business. He took a small magnifying glass from his pocket and closely examined the rim of the base of the candlestick. Then with the smile of a man who finds what he looks for he handed both candlestick and glass to the doctor. The doctor looked and grunted. The plain-clothes man took a sheet of paper from his pocket and in it wrapped the candlestick. He took out a pocket-book and made some notes. Then he turned to Liz.

"Did you see anything of this?" he asked.

"Not I," said she. "I was out shopping."

He put some other questions about her age, and what not, which Liz resented. Then he fixed his eye on Nelly, and questioned her in the same manner. He was interrupted by the arrival of an inspector, who went through the matter as far as they had gone, and took up the inquiry.

"There's some one else in the house—isn't there?" said he.

"Yea, sir," said Liz. "My poor missus; but she's dreadful ill."

"Is there any medical man attending her?" asked the doctor.

"Nay," said Liz. "The missus and me don't

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hold wi' doctors. A cup o' hot water i' t' morning, or a dose o' senna at bedtime: that's doctor enough for hus!"

"You'd better see her," said the inspector to the doctor.

They all went upstairs, except the plain-clothes and the uniformed constables. Liz held the light, and the doctor examined the poor stricken lady who tossed and moaned upon the bed.

"How long has she been like this?" asked the doctor.

Then Liz knew that was the moment for lying firmly. She nerved herself and looked defiantly at the doctor—defiantly at the inspector.

"She's been queer all day," she said. "I made her gan to bed after dinner, and when I put my bonnet on to gan out shopping—there was no tay i' t' house—I left her snoozing off nicely."

"But how long," insisted the doctor, "has she been like this—unconscious of what's going on about her?"

"Sakes!" cried Liz. "Ain't I telling of you? I found her like that when I comed back. Happen she'd heard summat o' t' upset i' t' parlour!"

"Well," said the doctor, looking whimsically at Liz, "it's not a case for hot water or senna either this time, old girl! Your missus is in a high fever, and if you don't take care you'll lose her. I'll send round some medicine at once, and I'll come and see her again later on in the evening."

They descended the stairs again leaving Liz

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with her mistress. Nelly asked the inspector if Mr. Graham would now be allowed to come home. He seriously shook his head, considering her in the meanwhile.

"No," said he; "he will not be allowed to come to-night."

Might she then go and see him?

Neither could that be allowed, he feared; and again he considered her.

"If he is a friend—a particular friend—of yours and you wish him well, I don't mind telling you he is in a very tight place. If I were you I'd look up whatever friends he has got to help him." And having said that he went off.

The uniformed policeman was left to keep watch and ward over the house. Nelly was free to go and come, and on a quick decision she went out to seek James Graham's employer, Mr. Moorhouse. The house was in a very quiet neighbourhood, and she was surprised and shocked to find quite a crowd of draggled women and children—the kind of crowd that always does smell out an excitement and gather about it as eagerly as if it were a free tea-meeting or a dole of blankets and coal—while the scandalised genteel neighbours (to whom the Grahams had had little to say) now and then dipped their heads out of doors into the sensation, and then withdrew them. The policeman stood outside the door, indifferent and bulky, ignoring the seething excitement, except that at intervals he took a step out upon the pavement when the crowd pressed too

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close and said in a deep and terrible voice, "Now, then, get out of it!" Upon which the children about his feet would scurry away into the depth of the crowd.

"Come now!" said he when Nelly came out. "Let the lady pass, will yer?"

Nelly, almost in tears, but resolute, pushed through the gaping, staring crowd, who demanded, as she passed, "Who's she?"—and tore along to find Mr. Moorhouse. She found him, and told him the story of the case which her lover had taught her, and also of the singular discovery and evident suspicion of the police. Mr. Moorhouse listened with surprise and perplexity.

"I ha' known James well for three years," said he, "and I never saw him give way to bad temper or hurt a fly! Though, I suppose, he must ha' had it in him! Eh, dear, dear! But it's a bad business, and I suppose it's all up now for a long while with that valve o' his!"

While he spoke he was getting his hat and overcoat; he was willing and prompt to render what aid he could to his subordinate. He returned to the house with Nelly, and thence he went to the police-station to seek an interview with Graham, to receive instructions from him, and to act for him as far as he was able.

Nelly sat down, in the meanwhile, by the bedside of Mrs. Graham, to watch and wait, with her head on fire and her heart strung tight with anxiety. How foolishly and thoughtlessly we talk

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about woman being "the weaker vessel." When a man is caught in the toils of trouble he can commonly act—act—and so with the effort of struggle relieve his mind and keep it off strange imaginings. But a woman in a similar case, what can she do but wait—wait—be patient, and be suddenly engulfed in terrors, and then struggle up to lay hold on hope again; let fear threaten her heart and seek to sip at the cup of her life and her love, and all the while sit still and hold her tongue! Which situation, think you, needs the greater courage, the finer nerve? Nelly sat by the delirious Mrs. Graham, and thought of the strange and horrible situation; and wonder, perplexity, fear and hope haunted her mind and made it waver to and fro like a flame, while all the while the fire of love and devotion, of faithfulness and courage burned bright and steady in her heart. She could not relieve herself by weeping: she could relieve herself with nothing: she could but sit still and wait.

She heard the tramp of heavy feet below, and the mutter and murmur of strange men's voices. Liz came up to her, and spoke in a whisper.

"It's th' undertaker's men, 'ooney, to measure for a coffin!"

Still she sat and waited and wondered. When it was so late that she must go to her own lodgings if she would not be shut out for the night, the heavy footsteps returned. When she went down to go home the parlour-door stood wide open. She turned her head to glance in. Liz was there and

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a strange woman and strange men also. They were doing something with the dead body; and just as she looked it seemed to her that the ghastly pale face with the black beard rose and fixed its glassy gaze on her. In horror she opened the door and fled.

"And he was my Jim's father! He was my Jim's father!" she continued to repeat to herself, without quite knowing what she meant.

When she came to herself, she thought what a terrible thing for that man's soul it would be, if it could come back changed and made kinder, to see the ruin it had wrought! It had blasted with terror and loathing, during the life of its body, the creatures it should have cherished most dearly, and now the body, a thing of hatred and horror, was like to work greater havoc still to those who should have been so dear! For it was being set out for that inquest on the morrow which would bring a new and nameless terror to the son made in its own image!

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CHAPTER IV.

"CROWNER'S QUEST LAW."

AGAIN it was evident how terribly and relentlessly the hands of Law and Police may be laid upon an innocent man to his utter condemnation! The Police and the Law began with an assumption of the truth of his confession, and then their powerful machinery was set going to expand the meaning of his confession, and to grind him to powder!

John Wormall was the name of the young officer who had discovered the candlestick under the sofa in Graham's parlour. I am particular to set down his name, because we shall have more to do with him. He was a smart young man, and he had one ambition in life—to become a great detective. He had, of course, no personal feeling about Graham, but only the professional feeling that he was a man to be proved guilty of more than he confessed to. This Graham affair was the first case of any consequence in which he had had a leading hand, and he took pride in making it as complete and unmistakable as he could. He had made up his mind what the crime should be called, and he got together his evidence very carefully to the end that it

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should, without hesitation from the jury, receive its proper name.

At twelve o'clock the coroner's court was formed in the billiard-room of the Red Lion. The assembled jury were called over by name and sworn.

"Gentlemen," said the coroner (a big man who seemed to like his salary better than his duties, and who had no gift of speech whatever)—"you've met—impanelled—t'inquire—death of—of—of—a man. Evidence will be given—given—er—and you will give your verdict accordingly. Gentlemen—first thing," said he, with a palpable sense of relief, "to view the body."

Brought by the police, James Graham was waiting for coroner and jury on their return from viewing the body. Most of the jury, being fathers, looked with suspicion and disapproval upon the pale-faced, black-bearded young man who was the son of the body they had just viewed. They settled down into their places, and then the curious and excited public (of bargees awaiting the tide, and other idle and unoccupied folk) pushed into the room.

First, the inspector made his sworn statement how the young man, James Graham, appeared at the police-station and declared to the effect that his father and he were having words, and that his father had tripped, fallen heavily on the fender, and never stirred again. Then to James Graham his own statement was read over. Being asked if

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he had anything to add to or take away from it, he answered, "No."

"Was your father drunk?" asked the coroner —"in liquor?"

"He might have been," answered Graham; "he frequently was."

After that, the evidence was set forth chronologically, so to speak. It began with the porter of the Fotheringay Works, who declared how a gentleman (whom he had since identified as the body) had asked at his lodge for Mr. James Graham and had been admitted, and so forth; "a affable, well-spoken gentleman as ever he see—quite the gentleman he was."

The next witness, the boy who had conducted the gentleman into James Graham's presence, created something of a sensation. The short and passionate scene between father and son had clearly impressed the boy.

"Mr. Graham looked at the gentleman as if he could kill him!—told him to get out!—and to come back if he dared after hours!—said he'd like to have him under that 'ammer, meaning the 'ammer he was 'ammering with, and he hit the hot metal out of the fire very wicious!"

Again the jury, fathers all, looked at James Graham, and made up their honest, British, judicial minds that here was a villain—a beastly, low, ill-tempered villain! It was plain he had been determined to "do for" his father!—the father whom he had disgraced—or else why was he figuring as

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a superior kind of workman merely while his father was "quite the gentleman?"

Liz was called, and said she had left her missus in bed and gone out shopping, leaving the door on the latch. Being asked by a juror if she was in the habit of leaving the door "on the latch" when she went out, she answered, "No. But I had mislaid t' key, and I couldn't fetch t' missus out o' bed to let me in when I comed back, and I knowed t' master wouldn't be in before me."

Encouraged by that, another juror put another question, through the coroner: might he take the liberty to ask which she means by "the master"—the father or the son? The son, of course, said Liz; the father was no master of hers, nor hadn't been; and thank God for it, for he was "a reg'lar bad un"—as bad as God ever made 'em. And so she gave, at the instance of the coroner, a brief and succinct history of the long persecution and oppression practised by the deceased man upon his wife and son, which impressed the jury with the conviction that, after such provocation, the son was sure to "go for" the father upon the first occasion, and that he had "gone for" him.

Then the doctor gave his evidence concerning the wounds on the head of the deceased man, and the length of time he judged he had been dead.

"Did you think he had been drinking?" asked the coroner.

"No," answered the doctor; "I did not." And the jury looked reproach at James Graham.

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Next came the ambitious young detective, John Wormall, with his evidence about the finding of the heavy brass candlestick, which was produced amid profound sensation, and handed up with the magnifying glass, for the inspection of the coroner.

The coroner said he did not see anything he could swear to; but it did not matter.

James Graham had listened with complete composure, and with something of carelessness, to the evidence of the witness, until there came the mention of the candlestick. That was the first he had heard of it, and his manner changed at once. He became pale and uncontrollably excited. He glanced quickly round from one face to another.

"I declare, on my oath," he broke out, "that this is the first I have seen or heard of the candlestick, and that I never had it in my hand yesterday!"

The coroner warned him that whatever he said would be used against him, and that he had better keep silence till the right time; for the matter had proved a—a thing—a case which—a case which would not be for him to dispose of. He asked if there was any more evidence, and Mr. Moorhouse requested to be heard. He said he had known James Graham for three years, and had the highest opinion of him. He had never seen him lose his temper. Besides, he was a clever engineer, and had invented a valve that—— The coroner, interrupting, said that was not evidence; and forthwith he put the whole matter to the jury.

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"Gentlemen," said he, "you have heard—heard the evidence—death of the deceased, Robert Graham. If you are of opinion—death by accident—you will so find. If you think—um—um—buzz—wuzz" (he was reading hurriedly from his text-book on law) "you will find, on the contrary—er—ah—umum—manslaughter."

The jury retired to the lavatory and returned in a quarter of an hour. The foreman stood in his place and said they had agreed unanimously on the finding that Robert Graham had died of a blow on the temple, and that his son, James Graham, had dealt the blow with a candlestick, but without intent to kill.

"Your verdict, then, gentlemen," said the coroner, "is manslaughter. Very good. I agree—quite agree."

When the inquest was over, and while the public—tide-bound bargees and other idlers—went clamping and tramping off, James Graham, before he had quite come to himself to understand what was happening, was quietly and formally taken into custody on the charge of causing his father's death; and he was suddenly startled by feeling cold steel about his wrists, and hearing the snap of the handcuffs. A cab was waiting outside the Red Lion. He was hurried into it, with the young, ambitious detective and a policeman to keep him company, and was driven away to prison. The remarkable combination of suspicious circumstances, a careless coroner, an ambitious

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policeman, and a stupid jury, had brought him to that!

Nelly Clemance, who was neglecting her day's music lessons, had sat bravely and fearlessly through the inquest. At its overwhelming conclusion she relieved herself by shedding a few quiet tears. Then, drying her eyes, she resolved upon another effort to see and comfort her unfortunate lover. The polite inspector, to whom she had spoken the evening before, was there, and to him she addressed herself—Where was Mr. Graham being taken to, and would they let his friends speak to him now?

"They're taking him to Holloway," said the inspector. "And I think they'll let you see him."

Going out, she met Mr. Moorhouse. She told him her intention.

"You're a brave lass!" said he. "Tell Graham I'll come to see him in th' afternoon and bring a good lawyer wi' me. Keep your heart up, my girl," he added, patting her shoulder in fatherly kindness; "we'll get Jim Graham off yet. By all accounts his father deserved a deal more than he got, and happen by now he's getting what he deserved. I hope he is."

She took a cab and pursued to Holloway. A shiver of horror and depression seized her when she was admitted into the silent, lowering and gloomy prison, and conducted to James Graham. She resolutely cast the feeling off, lest she should affect him with depression; for she knew that he

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was the kind of dark, atrabilious person who, once made despondent, is sunk in the deepest gloom. Contrary to her expectation, she found her lover hopeful and even cheerful.

"The inquest!" he declared with contempt. "Did you ever hear anything like it? Would you have believed it could have been so stupid and absurd?"

"You don't think, Jim," said Nelly, "that mother could have taken up the candlestick and used it, without knowing or remembering that she did it? I have heard of such things happening when a woman is very excited or terrified."

"No, Nelly," he answered. "I think the candlestick was probably knocked down or rolled under the sofa when he fell."

"Perhaps," said she, sadly wondering if others could be convinced that that was the way of it.

"Cheer up, Nelly, my dear!" said he. "The trial will bring me out all right; it must, with an intelligent judge, an intelligent jury, and an intelligent lawyer on our side. But I want to show you this." He took a letter from his pocket. "That," said he, "was pushed in at the window of the cab as we were driving here. You see it's addressed to me. But they wouldn't give it to me till the governor here had first seen it. Read it."

Nelly opened the letter, and read as follows:—

"My Dear Sir: I know, I understand, the position you have taken up, and I can guess why you

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have taken it. Accept my homages. You have a brave human heart—truly filial. It was an ass of a coroner, and an absurdity of an inquest. The trial should come out differently. From sheer admiration of your conduct, I wish to be of service to you. I have a very clever solicitor who could conduct your business well, and who would, at my request. Pray contrive to let me know if you will accept this service. *I am he who waited for your father yesterday.*"

"Isn't it an extraordinary letter?" he asked, when she had finished the reading of it. He was very excited.

"It is, Jim," said she, looking it over again, considering its handwriting and the turn of some of its phrases. "I suppose it is from that gentleman you told me about, with the eye-glass and the fur coat?"

"I suppose so," said Graham. "Townshend, 25 Jermyn Street. He was a remarkable-looking man. I wonder what he and my father had to do with each other."

Nelly still considered the letter. "He writes," said she, "as if he really had seen something; he evidently knows that you weren't there at all—at the time; don't you think so?"

"Of course he does!" said Graham. "If he was waiting outside, he might easily have seen everything there was to be seen—for the blinds were not down and the fire was bright."

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"Why then has he not come forward to offer his evidence?" asked Nelly.

Graham shook his head. "I don't pretend to understand it," said he. "But I'm glad there's somebody besides ourselves knows I didn't do it. I was almost beginning to wonder after all I heard to-day whether I hadn't really done it. Well," he added, still excited, "you see, there's his letter, and there's his offer."

"But you won't accept it, will you, Jim?"

"No. I won't accept it; for I don't know him, or anything about him. But he may know of a clever lawyer for us, if Mr. Moorhouse doesn't find one."

Thus they talked about the strange letter to and fro; and at length they settled that Nelly should write to Mr. Townshend, in Graham's name, thanking him for his sympathy, but declining his services.

The time allowed was soon up, and with a murmured word or two of faith and trust, love and hope, they parted.

But the sensations of the day were not yet at an end. When Nelly returned home she went first to the Grahams' house to see how the mother was. There she found the detectives again, with the doctor, making a new examination of the corpse. The explanation of that she did not know till next morning when all the world read in the newspapers that the police had made a fresh discovery upon information anonymously conveyed. It was some little

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while before it was fully revealed what that strange information had been. This it was. A short anonymous communication, written in a round school-boy hand—which had a suspicious look of being feigned—had been received by the police inspector through the post. It ran thus:—

"You are all wrong. The young man didn't do it! It wasn't done the way you think. Before you put the man called Robert Graham under ground look at him again. You will see that he has been shot. You should have found that out at first."

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CHAPTER V.

THE NEEDLE-GUN.

THE result of that astonishing and mysterious assertion, that Robert Graham had been shot, was more astonishing still. The body of the deceased Robert Graham was carefully explored by the divisional surgeon. There was no sign of a bullet or shot wound, and the surgeon was about to cease his search, with the opinion that the anonymous letter was a hoax, when he found on the left of the back, in the neighbourhood of the heart, a singular reddish mark, like an enlarged flea-bite. On examining that closely he found that the skin was broken, and on fingering more closely still he discovered there was something buried there! A second or two's exploration with his instruments, and he drew out a steel thing which was shaped like a darning or carpet needle, but flattened and rounded at the head! From the wound thus left open flowed a drop or two of blood and serum!

"This is most extraordinary!" said the doctor. "Shot? How could he have been shot with this?"

The young and ambitious detective, Wormall,

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in looking and searching around, found thrust into the umbrella stand, among walking-sticks and umbrellas, a small gun, something like a carbine. Its barrel, however, was not a barrel in the ordinary sense, but five or six steel tubes of the thickness of tobacco pipes bound together. The bore of these tubes was just great enough to admit such a thing as the singular needle-shot.

"I wonder," said he, "if this has anything to do with it."

He inquired for the old servant, Liz (who was dividing attendance upon Mrs. Graham with a hospital nurse), and on her appearing, he asked her if she knew whose the gun was.

"Eh, to be sure I do," she answered, not knowing, as yet, why they were in the house again. "It's Mister James's; he made it hissen, just for play. For usual, it hangs there." And she pointed to two hooks on the wall above the umbrella stand.

"Did you ever see him shoot with it?"

"Shoot say'st tha?" She was about to flow on with speech, but of a sudden she became suspicious that she was being pumped, and she broke off with "Never! Not I." And she looked obstinate and defiant.

The detective examined the gun, so did the inspector, so did the doctor. How was it worked? How was a shot fired?

"There's nothing like trying," said the young man, and going out into the back yard (to dissipate the sound of the explosion in the open), he pulled

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the thing like a trigger and aimed at the back door. There was a low hiss like that of escaping steam, and a ping! And there, stuck deep in the wood of the back door, was such a needle-shot as had been extracted from the body of Robert Graham!

"It's an air-gun!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Of a new kind," said the detective; "a revolver."

"He must be a clever fellow," said the inspector, shaking his head. "I'm sorry for him; he's in a worse hole than ever now."

"Must the coroner's business be done over again?" asked the young detective, with some uneasiness.

"The Treasury," said the elder and more experienced man, "may get out a writ of *certiorari* for the coroner to sit again, but I don't think so. It ought to be good enough to let the young fellow go on trial on the present charge, with this new business to back it up."

"What I should like to know," said the doctor, "is who thought it worth while to write that anonymous letter and give the young man away."

"Ah!" said the two detectives; that and no more. They eyed the doctor, and they eyed each other; they each had an opinion—a theory—which they were not at the moment prepared to communicate.

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CHAPTER VI.

MR. TOWNSHEND OF JERMYN STREET.

It was plainly become a desperate situation in which James Graham was placed. It was all the more hazardous and exasperating that since he was not truly the responsible person, since he truly had seen nothing, he could give no explanation of the new circumstances; he could only speculate concerning them as others did.

As for his faithful sweetheart, little Nelly, she was at her wits' end when she knew of the anonymous letter and the discovery ensuing thereupon. And she could for some time discuss the matter only with Liz; for her lover was not accessible, and Mrs. Graham, still tossing in her fever, remained unaware of all that had happened and of what was happening. And Liz did not help much toward a solution of the mystery.

"I do wonder," Nelly said, "if mother could have fired that thing off."

"Not her!" said Liz. Then with conviction and satisfaction: "It was nobbut a judgment on that man!"

"But even if she has done it," said Nelly, pur-

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suing her own line of thought, "she couldn't have written the letter; that must have been written by some one who saw it done—or, perhaps, who did it!"

And her suspicion flashed upon the strange gentleman called Townshend of 25 Jermyn Street; though why he should have done it she could not guess.

"A man," she continued to Liz, "could easily have came in quietly, for you had left the door latched back."

"Now give over, 'ooney!" said Liz. "Wheer's t' use o' turning thy head inside out guessing conundrums like them? It's as plain to me as my hand that it was t' finger o' God Almighty!"

"What?" said Nelly. "You mean that God pulled the trigger and fired the gun?"

"And what for not?" demanded Liz indignantly. "Bain't God Almighty's judgments wonderful and past finding out, as t' Book says? And wasn't Robert Graham just as bad as bad could be?"

"And I suppose," said Nelly ironically, "God Almighty wrote that letter too?"

"Well," cried Liz, "and couldn't He? He has written a mort o' things about Moses and t' prophets, and it wouldna be so much wi' one dip o' His pen to write yon bit o' a letter!"

These views did not encourage Nelly to pursue speculation any farther with the aid of Liz.

But, brave and resolute little heart as she was,

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she formed a great and grave resolution. She had already adressed a civil little letter, in her lover's behalf, to "—— Townshend, Esq., 25 Jermyn Street," and she thought that, having done so much, she might do more. Mr. Townshend was evidently well-disposed to her lover—from whatever cause—and ready to do him a service; if she saw him face to face, she might be able to judge what kind of "gentleman" he was; might get some guidance or light from him in the darkness of this mystery; and, in short, might derive several advantages which were not quite clear to her yet. At any rate, she made up her impulsive and resolute little mind to go to Mr. Townshend's address, and she went.

Mr. Townshend, about seven o'clock that evening, sat in his rooms in Jermyn Street, talking to his "man," and keeping the thought of dressing in his mind.

"Yes, marquis," said the man; "and what jewellery?"

"It's at the Savoy—with Mr. Barnato and that lot. No, Mortimer, we won't be vulgar. I'll wear nothing but the Czar Alexander's diamond ring."

"Yes, marquis," said Mortimer (who though an old valet, was active and attentive): "that will be nobby. It will take the shine out of them."

"The devil!" exclaimed Mr. Townshend, who was running his eye through the extra special of The Globe. "Here's a new tip about that man Graham! Read it, Mortimer."

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Mortimer read the published news of the anonymous letter and the discovery which ensued thereupon, while Townshend pulled his thick moustache in careful thought. When Mortimer had finished and handed back the paper, Townshend looked up, tossing back the black lock which fell upon his forehead, and showing, with that and his long throat containing a very pronounced Adam's apple, a head strangely like that of a Polish fowl. That construction of head and throat gave him a remarkably deep and vibrant voice, which in its higher notes made you think of the sound of a fog-horn off a dangerous coast.

"What do you think of him, Mortimer?—of his chances after that?" he asked.

"Chances, marquis? I think he'll have to be one of us—and a lucky good chance, too!"

"I think so, Mortimer. 'Pon my soul, I'm sorry for him."

"You are for everybody, marquis."

"And a clever fellow, too!" Townshend continued, without heeding Mortimer's remark. "Just think of that gun, Mortimer—his own invention! A real needle-gun! Perfect safety with it, eh?"

"Yes, marquis!" said Mortimer, nodding in admiration. "But he'll be one of us yet, marquis: there's no doubt about it. You'll manage it, marquis!"

"Did I hear our bell ring, Mortimer?" said Townshend.

"I'll see, marquis," said Mortimer, and went off.

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In a minute or so he returned. "A lady wishes to see you, sir."

"A lady?"

"Yes, sir; seems a nice enough little person. But she has never been here before."

"All right. Show her in. And, Mortimer!"

"Yes, sir."

"Put my clothes out in there. I shall want to dress in a few minutes."

Mortimer was a discreet servant, with furtive step and drooping eye, and after introducing the visitor he retired so softly that he seemed to melt away, like an unsubstantial ghost.

It was a little lady—pretty and piquant—that Townshend received with an impressive bow as she crossed his threshold.

"Perhaps it is rude of me," said she in a tone at once frightened but resolute, "to call on you like this."

"Charmed, I'm sure," said Mr. Townshend, with another bow, and placed a chair. "Delighted, Miss—er——?"

"My name is Clemance," said Nelly bravely; "I wrote a note to you on Mr. Graham's account."

"Ah, to be sure—Miss Clemance," said he; and a new kindly politeness as well as a new attention seemed to animate his manner and his voice. "Won't you put off that damp cloak? It is a horrid wet night. Allow me." He lifted the fur cloak from her shoulders and spread it over the back of a chair.

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"You are Mr. Townshend?" said she, looking at him in frank scrutiny, when they had sat down opposite each other.

"I am—at your service, Miss Clemance."

"I heard from—from him—Mr. Graham—how you appeared at the door that first dreadful night," said she.

"Excuse me," said he; "but do you come to me from Mr. Graham?"

"No," she answered, a little put out and blushing in her perplexity. "I have come just because I suddenly thought I would. I thought—I thought——"

"Oh, be at your ease, pray, about that. I only wished to know if Mr. Graham had asked you to come. If I can serve you, be assured I will."

"It's him I want you to help, Mr. Townshend!" she broke out. "You seemed so kind and generous in the way you wrote to him I have ventured to come and ask you! I am bewildered. I don't understand this that has happened. Perhaps you do. You know, I think—or guess—that Mr. Graham had nothing to do with it at all; that it was all over, whatever it was, when he got home—that——"

"My dear Miss Clemance," he interrupted, "is it quite fair to put all that to me without Mr. Graham's permission? He went himself, without any compulsion, I presume, to the police, and made a certain statement; if he means to stick to that statement—and I suppose he does—what

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good purpose can be served by our going behind it?"

"Oh, I don't know!" she said, clasping her hands in her lap. "Perhaps I have done wrong. But I know he is innocent, and I want to save him. I would take his place if I could."

"Come, come," said Mr. Townshend soothingly and kindly. "Bear up. You are a brave young lady, I'm sure. Between ourselves I don't mind admitting that I know Mr. Graham to be innocent. That is very agreeable to know, because it makes us admire him; but it doesn't help us to get him off."

"It may," said she briskly, "because you must be sure he did not let off that gun; who did, then?"

"Ah, who?" said he, regarding her.

"We can find out, surely!"

"We can try. But we may fail. Let me point this out to you, Miss Clemance. An ordinary detective can no more work without a theory than a—a clergyman can preach without a text. You may be sure that the fixed theory of the detectives in this is that James Graham killed his father either on purpose or by accident. A new fact more or less won't turn them away from that theory: it will only make them squeeze the fact to fit the theory. Here they have little difficulty: the gun was Mr. Graham's own. And I venture to declare that they have already made up their minds that James Graham himself fired that shot—if," he added, with his odd flutter of a smile, "you can say

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fire a shot, when the business was done with air and a needle."

"But how unjust that is in them!" she exclaimed.

"My dear Miss Clemance," said he, "the business of detectives is not to do justice, but having got hold of a man to get him convicted. They don't mean any harm: it is just in the way of business."

"But," she cried, "what about the letter? Even if James might have fired the gun he can't have written the letter! They must be very stupid if they can't see that!"

"They are stupid. Most people are stupid. And then you know the saying, 'None are so blind as those who won't see.'"

"Do you really and truly think they won't see it?" she asked in dismay.

"From all I know of that kind of person—and I know a good deal, Miss Clemance—I should, really and truly, say they won't see it. But," he made haste to add, on noting how downcast she was, "you mustn't let that dishearten you. After all, the matter will rest with the jury, and we must get a clever counsel that will present things in their proper light and their true relation, and convince the twelve: I know the very man."

"You seem to know everybody, Mr. Townshend!" she exclaimed; "I mean everybody useful. It is very kind of you indeed. I don't know why you are so kind."

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"Well," said he in his most sonorous, vibrant tone, "I have a weakness for courage; I like to see a man—or a woman—brave enough to do something without counting the cost to themselves. I consider Mr. Graham that kind of man, and I take the liberty of admiring him. And then, in a case like his," said he, showing again that flutter of a smile under his thick moustache, "I can't help being something of a philanthropist."

"What are you really, Mr. Townshend?" asked Nelly impulsively. "Oh," she cried, blushing, "I didn't mean to say that! I was thinking it, and it came out. I mean, I was wondering if you were a great man of some kind—a great Government official, perhaps; because you seem to know everybody, and seem confident of this all ending easily for James—Mr. Graham. Do you mind my asking what you are?"

He laughed a little—a deep bark or two—and pulled his moustache, and pushed back gently the crest of black hair from his forehead.

"I am," said he, with that odd smile, "—er—a Socialist, Miss Clemance."

"Oh," she cried with enthusiasm; for, being a girl of warm heart and active opinions, she had cultivated an admiration for that kind of person, "are you? Then you know Mr. Bernard Shaw?"

"Shaw? Shaw? The Fire Brigade?—I know whom you mean: a man that writes; no; I don't know him."

"But he is a Socialist!"

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"Ah," said Townshend, and again that smile fluttered, "I am a practical Socialist; he's a theoretical one."

These were the words which hung in Nelly Clemance's ear after she had left this man who so strangely interested her, with his mystery and his politeness, his kindness, and his evident sense of power. As she descended the stairs she felt pleased and satisfied with him and her interview; and yet, when she came to reflect she had gained nothing but a large though vague promise of help.

As Nelly descended the stairs she met ascending a tall and fashionably dressed lady who stared at her, and she wondered if she also were about to visit Mr. Townshend.

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CHAPTER VII.

SENTENCED.

"MISS BOLSOVER, sir," said Mortimer, ushering at once the fashionably dressed lady into Mr. Townshend's presence.

"Oh!" said Townshend, looking at his watch.

"Don't—please don't—look at the time, Fred," pleaded Miss Bolsover, who came pat upon Mortimer's soft and furtive announcement; "it makes me feel as if I were intruding, and I'm sure you don't wish me to feel like that." And she laughed a gay ripple of laughter, like Mrs. Bancroft in the part of Lady Teazle, or of Lady Fairfax in "Diplomacy." She put up her veil, and threw open the high collar of her sealskin coat, showing a well-featured face, touched with colour which was not native, a pair of fine full grey eyes, and a mass of bright hair, which in its exceeding dryness and fluffiness seemed not innocent of the dyer's art.

"My dear Florence," said Townshend, "in half an hour I ought to be sitting down at dinner in the Savoy."

"And, my dear Fred," said Miss Bolsover, again laughing, "in half an hour I must be in my

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place on the stage; so that I am even in a greater hurry than you. By the way, who was the little person I met on the stairs? She seemed rather pretty: I fear you're a sad fellow, for all your pretended indifference to ladies' society."

"Ah, yes," said he, glancing at her without embarrassment. "I suppose you must have met her. That was the young fellow Graham's sweetheart—Bob Graham's son, you know, who is in prison on the charge of causing his father's death. She came to me, quite unexpectedly, to beg me to help to clear up her lover's case."

"Dear girl!" exclaimed Miss Bolsover, her manner changing to seriousness. "How sweet and devoted of her!" And there came the suspicion of a tear in her eye. "But how did she know anything about you?"

"Well," said Townshend, "I happened to send him a note of admiration—admiration of his conduct. I have good reason to believe, you know, that he's innocent of the whole thing, and that he took it upon himself to shield a woman—his mother, in fact."

Their looks met, Townshend's eye-glass shining like a lamp, something in the gaze of each holding the other.

"How odd!" said Miss Bolsover. "I have suspected the same sort of thing myself. But it is odder still that I should have come on much the same errand as the young man's sweetheart! I don't mean I'm in love with him. God forbid

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that I should be in love with any man! But it is monstrous that the young man should suffer even if he had put an end to such a poisonous sweep as Bob Graham was!" Her face grew pale with vindictive passion, her voice rang loud and clear, and her lips in their stage habit shaped every word with distinct and vibrating energy. Townshend's eyeglass glimmered and shone as he regarded her and pulled his moustache in thought. "I am growing very angry, you think, Fred," she said, with a laugh, and her tones lost their ringing steely hardness and became soft as the flow of milk. "But Bob Graham was not a nice man, now was he?"

"Bob Graham," said Townshend quietly, "had some useful qualities, but he wasn't a gentleman."

"It is true, Fred," said she, plainly putting a restraint on herself. "He was not a dear, kind creature like you; he had the eye of a vicious horse, I know. But let us say no more about him. Where's the good? The point is," and she laughed a little forced laugh, "that I come to the dear, good, clever man now and say, 'Please, Fred, get that young man off.'"

"Get him off!" said Townshend, still pulling his moustache.

"I have an unaccountable, unreasonable desire to see him out of this trouble, though I don't know him from Adam!" she ran on. "And I shall die of a miserable, wretched, broken heart if you don't get him off."

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"My dear Florence," said he, surreptitiously looking at his watch, "I may talk to you more frankly than I could to that girl who has just gone."

For an instant she looked troubled; and then she said: "Certainly. You have known her five minutes; you have known me as many years."

"Well, young Graham can't be got off. The cleverest pleader in London couldn't get him off. You have read the latest facts of the case, of course?" She nodded. "Well, don't you see, granted the situation in which he puts himself, he must have fired that shot? He was there all the time, by his own account; he must, therefore, have been there when the gun was used, and yet he said nothing about it. Why? Because he used it himself!"

"Oh, dear me!" she exclaimed with concern; "I didn't think of that. But what about the letter?"

"He got his sweetheart to write it, stupidly thinking in that way to set the police off on a wild-goose chase after another person—I mean that is the official view," said he.

"Oh!" she cried. "You really think so?"

"I am sure of it," said he.

"You are far too clever!" she exclaimed. "But," she continued quickly, "if he can't possibly get off if he comes to trial, he must never come to trial!" Townshend flashed the light of his eye-glass on her. "You must get him out of

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prison by hook or by crook, by force or stratagem! Don't tell me, Fred, that you can't do it! You can do anything you like in those ways. I know you can. I think you are Vautrin, Monsieur Lecoq and Sherlock Holmes rolled into one!"

"You flatter me, Florence," said he, rising. "But both your time and mine is absolutely up. I must think the whole thing over. Come again to-morrow; or, better, I shall come to you in the afternoon."

"Do," said she. And they shook hands and parted.

Mr. Townshend proved to be right. The February sessions had begun at the Old Bailey, and the trial of James Graham was set down for an early date. There was no whisper that the prosecution had discovered another person implicated, or even the writer of the anonymous letter; nor was there any sign that the police were trying to make any such discovery.

"I told you," said Mr. Townshend to Miss Bolsover—"I ventured to prophecy because I believed I knew—that the police are satisfied they hold in James Graham everybody that is really concerned in R. G.'s death."

And to Nelly Clemance he said: "It seems hopeless to try to find that other person—all the more hopeless that nobody but ourselves believes in the existence of any other person."

Did he mean by that, Nelly asked herself, that he had been trying to find that person and had

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failed! Or, had he not tried? But had he the means or the desire to try?

Whether or not he had the means or desire to effect that result, he at least presently showed he had both strong desire and adequate means to defeat the intention of the Law. He had promised Miss Bolsover, and he won Miss Clemance to the design, that Graham should not come to trial. His plan was ready, and it was a sufficiently daring and simply one; nothing less than to abstract Graham, by a crafty device, from the prison van when being driven to the court for his trial, and his agents were prepared to carry the plan out, when it came to nothing through the refusal of Graham to bear his share in it.

"No. I'm going to face the trial, Nelly," said Graham doggedly to his sweetheart, when she had, in one of her periodical interviews at the prison, set Townshend's scheme before him. "If I escape like that I shall be a hunted outcast for ever. I shall go through with it," he said, "and take my chance of acquittal by an intelligent judge and a sensible jury."

"Oh, acquittal, Jim?" moaned his despairing sweetheart. "Are you still hoping for that? Everybody says that is impossible."

Prison had already had its due effect upon a man like Graham. He had become obstinate and morose, and alternately doggedly hopeful and hopelessly downcast.

"Does everybody say so?" he asked bitterly.

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"Then everybody is wrong; for nothing is impossible, not even my condemnation. But I don't believe it, Nelly! I can't believe it! You know the truth, Nelly. Do you think, if there is a good God that counts every hair of your head and that knows every dead sparrow, that He can possibly let me be condemned?"

Nelly was moved to the bitterest tears to see and know her Jim was changed—like an utter and irredeemable bankrupt—so desperate, and at the same time clinging so obstinately to the hope of a deliverance, which to occur would be a miracle.

"My poor dear!" said she weeping. "My poor Jim! I haven't the heart to press you to accept Mr. Townshend's kind arrangement—not even for my sake or your mother's—for what could we do? Even if we escaped to America, I suppose that in these days they could easily find us and bring us back!"

"Of course they could!" said he. "Mr. Townshend's kind arrangement, indeed!"

"Oh, Jim!" she cried deeply hurt. "Surely he is kind!"

"I don't want Townshend's kindness. Why should a stranger like him want to be kind to me? No, Mr. Townshend is under suspicion; he was a friend ot my precious father!"

"Oh, Jim, Jim!" cried Nelly. "It's not like you to talk like that! Whatever Mr. Townshend had to do with your father, he is a truly kind gentleman! And he admires you: isn't that enough

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to make him kind? No, no, Jim dear; though you are in prison, and it is all a horribly dark business, don't forget, my dear, there are good people in the world yet!"

"There is one at least!" said he, pressing her hands to his lips, and well-nigh weeping himself. "I am a pig, Nelly! an ungrateful hog! Forgive me! But I'll go through the trial," he maintained. "I believe, Nelly, in the justice of my country," he continued more gently, "in the common sense of an English jury, and in the goodness of God!"

And nothing could move him from that.

But when the day of his trial came, Graham had reason to be astonished how the justice of our country and the common sense of a jury may be perverted and confused by stupidity and prejudice—prejudice which in his case took the monstrous form of a foregone conclusion.

There is no need for us to linger over that trial which Graham would face, in spite of more prudent and cunning advice. The prosecution—the Crown—urged all its points with the sharp and narrow wisdom of those who are up to that kind of business—dwelling little on the candlestick and more upon the gun, declaring both wounds might have been fatal, but giving priority to the needle-shot, and finding motive for both in the blinding and vindictive passion of the virtuous son against the disreputable father. It seemed all simple and clear enough. There was no suspicion—how should there have been?—that here was something that

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criminal courts are not commonly called upon to consider—the noble and voluntary self-sacrifice of one human being for another—the self-sacrifice of a son for his mother—the mother who still lay exhausted and ill, with no memory of all that had happened! Had the truth been known the court would have found on its hands a stranger, more complicated and farther-reaching tragedy than it suspected.

The counsel for the prisoner urged what he could—but what was the good of anything he could urge, when he was not able to say (he had not even been told) that his client had been absent when the deed was done.

The jury took a fairly lenient view, considered the extreme provocation given to the young man, and returned a verdict of "Manslaughter."

"I can only repeat, my lord," said James Graham, when asked by the recorder if he had anything to say, "that I did not raise a finger against my father, and that I do not know how or by whom that gun was used against him!"

That was felt by everybody to be too absurd a statement for belief. Perhaps it tended to aggravate the feeling of the judge against him. The judge took occasion to read the young man a sermon on his criminal iniquity—(judges are too fond of thus going beyond their office, which is to administer law, not to preach)—and then pronounced upon him the sentence of "penal servitude for fifteen years!"

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"My God!" exclaimed James Graham, in a low but audible voice, turning pale with deadly horror; he was too overcome with amazement to be angry. "My God! Fifteen years! Fifteen years!" He gazed at the judge—at the jury—all round the court. Were these really men, with heads to understand, and bowels to feel compassion, or were they devils let loose from hell to torture and destroy?

His warders touched him on the arm and led him away, while the officials of the court were fussing and babbling around in their preparations for the next case.

If any of my readers should pause here to exclaim that it is incredible that a man like James Graham should have been thus convicted and heavily sentenced on such narrow grounds of circumstance and suspicion, I can only declare, with emphasis, that I am relating a case which actually occurred.

A few days later poor, faithful Nelly Clemance was at Wormwood Scrubs, having, by special permission, her last interview with her lover before his removal to Dartmoor or Portland. His mind was wrapped in the blackest melancholy: he would scarcely speak. Nor was there any opportunity for free speech; for a warder was set near by, within ear-shot and hand-touch of the convict and his sweetheart.

But Nelly was there, trembling with a desperate commission she had set herself to fulfil: she was the bearer of a carefully written note from Mr.

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Townshend to her lover, containing a plan of escape for him. She had received instructions from Townshend as to the best way of conveying the note into Graham's possession, and she had determined to carry them out. Townshend's plans were always characterised by simple audacity, and Nelly was an agent worthy of him.

"You will write to me, Jim, as soon as you can," Nellie was saying, while her hands trembled within her muff, and her knees felt as if they would give way: for the lovers were not allowed to touch each other, nor to come within less than two feet of each other.

"I will, Nellie," said Graham sadly.

"Here, Jim," said she, and made openly to hand an obvious letter to him; but it dropped on the floor between them.

"Come, miss," said the warder, starting forward, "that's not allowed!" And he stooped to pick up the letter.

Quick as lightning, a meaning glance shot from Nelly to Jim; her hand went out over the warder's head and was met by Jim's hand, and a quill toothpick passed from the one to the other.

When the warder arose, with severity in his eye and the letter in his hand, she said: "Mayn't he have it? It is only about his mother's illness!"

"Not till the governor has seen it, miss," said the warder severely. "And this having happened I must stop your interview. Sorry, miss; but it's our orders."

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"Good-bye, Jim," said Nellie with a sob in her throat. "You will do as you are bid, Jim," she said, with another meaning glance.

The warder heard no harm in that; it sounded like wise advice to obey constituted authority—warders and the like.

"I will, Nelly," said Jim. "Good-bye, dear. God bless you!"

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CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE NIGHT EXPRESS.

THE Great Western night mail was humming and quivering on its appointed way like a "sleeping" top. It had taken more than its five minutes' rest at Reading, and had worked up again to that high speed which is like the ideal of standing still. In a reserved third-class smoking compartment were James Graham and two warders. The night, the smoke, and the humming motion combined to make them drowsy; moreover, the warders had no anxiety about their prisoner: he was quiet and docile, a new "lag," handcuffed, and far too "down in the mouth" to give any trouble.

"Do you mind my having this window open?" asked the prisoner. "I'm not much used to tobacco smoke, and I should like a breath of air."

Oh, no; they did not mind his having the window open; a breath of fresh air was little to ask for, poor wretch!

So the window was let down—the window on the left side of the train—and the handcuffed prisoner sat by it, let the soft night air play upon his face, and gazed out upon the dark, flat landscape,

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while the two warders smoked and talked together, like good comrades.

For a man who was merely refreshing himself with the cool air, James Graham's manner and attiture was curiously tense, watchful and alert. Why? The problem of escape was confronting him. The little quill so cleverly passed to him by Nelly contained a closely written, pregnant scrap of paper (which having committed to memory he forthwith committed to digestion) to the following effect: he repeated to himself the points again and again: "When the train has got up speed after Reading, ask to have left window down, and sit by it. Wait till right window is broken by stone or something, then get through your window." (An undertaking! Nelly must have told Townshend he was an active jumper.) "Creep along footboard forward to first-class compartment. Find bundle hanging out of its window. Take bundle and leap. Bundle will have all you need. On right side of line is a road where Mr. T. will wait with a trap. He will do the rest." The arrangements, though in Nelly's hand, were plainly "Mr. T.'s." Why should "Mr. T." take such an interest in him? Such questions, however, were more than useless at the moment; they obstructed attention and shook resolution. And the desperate chance of escape he was firmly, unswervingly resolved to try.

Suddenly the signal came! A stone, or some similar missile, crashed upon and broke the window on the right. Both the warders jumped up

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to open the smashed window and look out. On the instant, the handcuffed prisoner rose, drew back a step, and then without hesitation, with hands out like a diver, he plunged through the open window on his own side. At the sound he made, the warders turned swiftly, to see all of their prisoner gone head downward—all but his legs.

"That was his game!" they cried. "Well, I'm blowed! No, you don't!" That last in answer to a fierce kick administered to the warder who had managed to seize hold of an escaping foot.

One foot was gone through the window with the rest of the prisoner; but the warder kept tight hold of the other, and by main force endeavoured to haul the prisoner in again. But that was more than any one man was equal to, and before the second could do anything to aid him, with a fierce wriggle the foot was gone, leaving the boot in the warder's hand.

Imagine the giddy and perilous situation of James Graham out there clinging close to the footboard with all his might, while the train still hummed and oscillated and spun at its highest speed through the night! To remain where he was would be speedy recapture; for he could not doubt but that by means of the communication cord the train would be drawn up in a few seconds! To fling himself off would probably mean death, or broken bones, and still capture! But there was hope in the "probably"—certain recapture if he stayed, probable death if he leaped. What man

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of spirit and courage would hesitate to leap? But first (in fulfilment of his secret instructions) he must get forward to the nearest first-class compartment. He lay flat for an instant on the dusty footboard, clinging to the supporting iron rod with the fingers of his manacled hands, and gripping the wood with knees and feet. His hope was that thus lying close in the dark the warders would not see him, and would think he had already leaped off. He began to crawl like a serpent, slipping forward his hands to pull himself and pushing himself with knee and foot. He approached a wheel, and it roared at him like a ferocious brute whose den was invaded, pouring over him a furious stream of dust and dirt and stones. He came to the gap between one carriage and another. In the horror and noise of the occasion it seemed an unfathomable raging gulf. But he must bridge it over with his body. Slowly he came to another roaring and furious wheel. My God! was that the hiss of the brake being applied? Were they drawing up already? And would he be found thus and ignominously taken again? No. The hiss of the brake ceased. There had been a touch of it in bending round a slight curve. Then forward again with hand, and knee, and foot, with the heart of desperate hope in his mouth, and urgent fear behind like a demon of the pit, he crept, and crept, with scarce a conscious breath. How long it seemed—and yet he spent but a few seconds thus!

He reached the desired door. Out of its win-

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dow hung a bundle. He could not spare his hands, but with his teeth he tugged at it as well as he could. A head that was on the watch peeped out a little farther.

"Right!" said a voice.

Graham felt that the hold on the bundle was let go. Then, with a glance out at the run of the ground, he commended his soul to God, clasped the bundle against his breast, and launched away like a shot from a cannon, flying through the air with his knees doubled up, a little outward, but mainly forward, with the same swiftness as the train, of which he was merely a detached fragment. He was a practised long-jumper; but never before had he taken so long, swift, and breathless a jump as that! He shot away over the low boundary fence of the railway, far into a ploughed field. He rolled over and over in the soft mould, and finally was buried deep in a furrow.

In a second he picked himself out of that soft bed, astonished to find he was unhurt, though somewhat dazed, and still more astonished to hear the rush and hum of the train diminish in the distance, with no apparent slackening of speed. Could it really be that he had escaped with such comparative ease? Not altogether yet was he out of the wood: there was still a difficult part of it to pass. If the warders had failed to stop the train, he knew it would not draw up till it reached Didcot, and there, he was certain, the news of his escape would be flashed far and near. He prepared to make the

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most of his time. With dizzy, buzzing head, hatless, half-bootless, and pasted up with mud, he clutched his precious bundle with his manacled hands, and sought with all possible speed the nearest side of the field, which was that at right angles to the railway. In the ditch he sat down and hurriedly undid his bundle. The first thing he sought for there was a file. Nor was it difficult to find, being the hardest thing of all.

He tested the file with his tongue (it was a tool he was familiar with), and he found it excellent. He guessed that a hinge cut would be the quickest way of release; and taking the end of the file in his teeth he tried so to use it. But there was no resistive force in that hold. The gnarled stem of an old hedgetree was close at hand. He went to it; stuck one end of the file in the bark and the other in his mouth; and then, with the practised skill of his craft, worked the chosen hinge to and fro on the biting edge. He could not see, but he could feel with unerring judgment; and after a few seconds of his skilled application he bore upon the hinge, and it broke away. One wrist—the right—was thus left free and bare. He hesitated whether he should spend precious seconds in freeing the other; but a vision of himself accosted, in daylight, perhaps, with a manacle dangling from his hand, determined him. He set to with energy upon the other hinge. Speedily it gave; and he took the pieces, and flung them over the field, this way and that.

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"If I ever submit to wear such things again," he declared to himself, passionately "may my hands rot off!"

Then to the other contents of the bundle he went with a will, and nimble, free fingers. He had occasion to admire the attention and foresight which must have been bestowed on the choice of these things. There was a complete suit of his own from home, a pair of socks, and a pair of boots. Also there was a soft, felt hat, of the wide-awake sort—a hat which actually fitted him!

"This must be Nelly's doings—like the rest!" said he to himself. "She knows my size, bless her!"

In a few hurried minutes he had exchanged his muddy garments for these; and completely arrayed from head to foot, with the dirty clothes now in the bundle, he set off to meet Townshend.

It was with a great reluctance that he returned to the railway; for who knew but searchers might already be speeding back to seek him? But to find Townshend the line must be crossed. He trudged forward on the edge of the ditch, and, as he approached the line, observed that he was close to a road, which, dipping deep into the land, ran under the railway. With a thrill of horror he considered that a second longer on the footboard, and when he leaped he might have launched himself into that road, and broken his neck! But the horror was surmounted by a kind of superstition of hope; for, if he, providentially, had escaped that, he might,

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providentially, escape other and perhaps worse things!

He descended into the road, and so passed under the railway. The road led back along the line, and he had barely got into the straight of it when he saw a horse and trap hovering down upon him, with two glowing lamps like monstrous eyes. When they met, it stopped, and he stopped. A man in a bowler hat and a thick driving-coat leaned down from his perch in the dog-cart.

"Can you tell me——" he began in a voice of sonorous deliberation.

But recognition was mutual; the light of the lamp fell full upon Graham's face, and its upward rays revealed the unmistakable visage of Townshend—the fleshy hawk nose and heavy moustache, and the flashing eye-glass.

"Mr. Townshend?" queried Graham.

"Ah, Mr. Graham," said Townshend. "Very good. Very good indeed. Jump up here. We've hit it off beautifully. Toss that bundle under the seat first," said he, flinging open the apron. "And feel in there; you'll find an overcoat. You'd better put it on; we have a long drive before us."

Graham did as he was bid without a word, and drew out the overcoat. It proved to be a fur coat—probably Townshend's own, which he had worn on the only other occasion on which Graham had seen him.

"Do you mean this?" asked Graham.

"What? Of course," said Townshend, adding

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in his impressive and sonorous fashion, "this is not a tailor's shop, to give you much choice. On with it. We're losing time."

Graham put it on, and jumped up into the vacant seat beside Townshend; and with a flick of the whip they were off.

"Not hurt anywhere?" asked Townshend. "Not broken any bones? But I need hardly ask; you wouldn't be so active if you had got much damage."

"No damage at all," said Graham, his spirits rapidly rising with the growing sense of freedom, and complete escape, which the self-possession of Townshend and the swift pace of the horse much contributed to. "I shot into a ploughed field as if it were a pit of sawdust; it was a bouncing bang —nothing more."

"And you have got the darbies off?"

"With the good file you supplied me," answered Graham showing his bare wrists.

"Really," said Townshend proudly, "it's a very neat job—the very neatest job of the kind I've ever known."

"And I have to thank you, Mr. Townshend," said Graham, "for contriving the whole business. I don't know why," he added bluntly, "you have taken so much interest in me, but I thank you all the same—I may say all the more."

"The devil, man!" exclaimed Townshend, sonorously, flicking the horse with the whip. "Don't let us begin thanks and congratulations yet; it

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might be unlucky. Wait till we've done the business. You are not clear off yet. Look at that engine and brake coming up the line. I'll wager that brings a search party from Didcot."

They had passed under the railway again by the arch through which Graham had come, and were spinning along the road which now clung to the left side of the line.

"Where are we going?" said Graham.

"To Oxford," answered Townshend promptly. "I have a very good and learned friend who is a don of one of the colleges. We'll put up with him for a day or two; he'll be very glad to have us; he is usually very dull."

Graham was silent, half-troubled, half-amazed. Who was this strange man, who was apparently a clever man about town, who had known his father, and who yet consorted with learned college dons? For Graham knew that these two kinds of men usually lived at opposite poles of the world of gentility.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE MAN WITH THE BURNT SCAR.

GRAHAM trusted completely to Townshend; he could do nothing else, not even if he wished to. And they drove steadily through the night, occasionally drawing up by a sign-post to read the directions by the light of one of the lamps. Townshend was choosing cross and little frequented roads, and meant to strike that upper highway into Oxford which enters by St. Clement's.

As soon as it was light enough Townshend suggested that Graham should be shaved; would he prefer to shave himself?

"I have never used a razor in my life," answered Graham.

"Ah, then," said Townshend, "I had better do it. I have all the appliances."

The trap was stopped; Townshend got out from under the seat a dressing-case, and Graham brought some water from the flowing ditch.

"A cold-water shave is not an undiluted joy," said Townshend, "but it is better than to be seen again with that black mat about your cheeks."

The shaving was done with pain, but it was done

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—Townshend making a clean sweep of the whole of Graham's virgin beard.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Townshend. "What a change! That ought to do it! Your sweetheart wouldn't know you! By gad!" he went on, "you are your father's son. Look at that obstinate jaw and chin! I shouldn't like to have to work against you in anything! You look like a Roman medal! They'll want a cast of your head for their classic collection in the Bodleian. You look like the Emperor Trajan, or Napoleon, or like Cecil Rhodes, by gad!"

"You're a capital barber, in word as well as deed," said Graham.

"My friend," said Townshend, with distinction and dignity, "I am proud to be able to do anything that is necessary; if it were necessary, I think I should have a try at carving your leg off."

They rose from the bank where they had been occupied, and were about to remount the dog-cart.

"Come out!" Townshend suddenly exclaimed, frowning in a terrible manner. "Come out of that and show yourself!" And he pointed a threatening forefinger across the road.

A young man—plainly a tramp—dishevelled, dirty, and of generally wretched aspect, crept through the opposite hedge, came forward a step or two, and stopped, frightened but scowling. He had the scar of a burn over his left cheek-bone, which made his appearance still more sinister.

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"Now kindly inform me who you are!" said Townshend.

"Can't yer see?" said the man. "I'm a working man on the pad for a job."

"What is your trade?" demanded Townshend.

"Are you a bloomin' beak?" demanded the man.

"Well, yes; in a sense I am," said Townshend.

"Well, yes; you are!" said the man, nodding with emphasis. "And a proper beak, too, you've got, mister!"

"No cheek, my friend," said Townshend; "you'll find it best. What's your trade, my padding friend?"

"Blacksmith—engineer," he answered sulkily.

"Show your hands to this gentleman," said Townshend. "Out with them."

The man showed his hands to Graham.

"Has he ever worked?" asked Townshend.

"Oh, yes; he has worked," said Graham. "Perhaps he is a blacksmith."

"Now, my friend, look here," said Townshend finally, with his forefinger out. "If you really are a blacksmith, and want a job, I'm disposed to be kind to you. Get on to London as fast as you can; go to the Fly-on-the-Wheel Inn at Turnham Green——"

"I know it," said the man.

"You know it; very well. Ask for Mr. Nares and say you were sent by F.T., Number One. He'll

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give you something to do that will be worth your while."

"Right you are, sir," said the man, with apparent heartiness, but his look was sidelong and suspicious.

"Off with you, then," said Townshend, putting a half-sovereign into his dirty hand, "and get some breakfast as soon as you can. Mr. Nares will be good to you if you go to him."

"Thank ye, sir," said the man, and drawing his coat about him he hobbled off.

Townshend with a frown jumped into his dog-cart, and Graham followed him.

"It's a deuce of a pity!" he exclaimed presently, flicking the horse. "And the worst of it is I've made a mistake over it. I should not have stayed and spoken to the fellow! But—hang it!—a man cannot always be wise! And this is the one wrong touch in an admirable performance! Well," he added with a smile, "you must just stick closer and longer in Oxford."

Graham said nothing; he only wondered and was anxious; he wondered why Mr. Townshend, evidently a man of some distinction and fashion—why he should have intimate relations with a publican, and should send to him a cryptic message, and he was anxious lest the sinister tramp should suspect presently who he was. He uttered something of that last by-and-by to Townshend.

"It's a new risk, of course," said Townshend. "But I think there's not much in it: a tramp doesn't

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read the papers, and if he hears anything he won't understand."

And so they drove steadily forward; and neither guessed that they were carrying with them the man they doubted, clinging to their axle-bar. Hidden by the high hedge he had cut across a field round which the road bent, and had slipped out behind them at the opportune moment. They drove into Oxford just before morning chapel at the colleges; and the man dropped on the road when they came among houses. Having put up horse and trap Townshend went to the rooms of his friend in one of the colleges. The kindly pedant (who had spent years on the construction of a monumental work on the Greek Irregular Verbs) received them with effusion and without a suspicion, and entertained them to a sufficient breakfast. After breakfast, the scholar, with many apologies that he must lecture, bade them be at ease in his rooms, and went his way. Then Graham, having turned the situation over in his mind, and looked around him, declared that before many hours he must clear out of that.

"Why?" exclaimed Townshend. "What for? You are in comfort; it must be an agreeable and extraordinary change; and nobody, not even the sharpest-nosed detective of them all, would think of smelling you out here!"

"But I have my work to do," said Graham quietly.

"Work?" said Townshend in amazement.

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"The man has had his life bust up; he has just escaped from prison and penal servitude; and his first thought is 'work to do!' What work? Blacksmithing? Engineering?—like our friend the tramp?"

"That, of course," said Graham promptly. "But my great work is to get my valve patented; I've been working on it in the prison—in my head. When I've got it fixed up for this country," said he in a tone of resolute matter-of-fact, "I'm going to take it to America."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Townshend, screwing his eye-glass into his eye to consider this phenomenon of a man. "I think," he continued solemnly, "you make a mistake, you know. To return to your old games will be to tempt discovery. You really can't afford to do that!"

"And how am I to live?" asked Graham bluntly.

"I thought," said Townshend, "that you might have been agreeable to joining me. I have taken an enormous liking to you—I have really," he insisted, quite honestly, doubtless, but with a tone as of patronage which Graham deeply resented. "I have some great schemes on hand; and if you stick to me, and help me in them—you can help—you will find yourself better off than as an engineer or the owner of a patent valve."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Townshend," said Graham. "And you will excuse me, but what

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is the business in which I could join, or help you? If it is fair to ask, what are you?"

"I am—er—a free banker," said Townshend, with that odd lifting of the heavy moustache which meant a smile.

"Oh," said Graham, "was my father a free banker, too?—at least, when you knew him?"

"We had financial transactions together," said Townshend lightly, as if the question were of no moment. "It was to find the money to meet a financial transaction of his that I accompanied him that afternoon to your neighbourhood. '*Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*'"

"This is a proper place, I suppose," said Graham, "for such quotation. I understand it, I think. But the point is, I must thank you very much for your interest in me, and still keep to my determination to go as soon as possible." And he felt for his watch, but there was no watch there.

"Oh," persisted Townshend, "you are bent upon going, then? I am certain you make a mistake. I'm your luck. Separate yourself from me and you are done for, I believe. I did think—yes, by gad, I did!—that we should go on together!"

Then compunction, and the dread of ingratitude smote James Graham.

"But, Mr. Townshend, what can I do with you?" he demanded. "I'm not a free banker! I'm not a banker at all!"

At that Townshend uttered aloud a sonorous peal of laughter.

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"I think," said he impressively, "I could soon instruct you in the doctrines of free banking."

"But," said Graham, "I can never bear to sit all day at a desk. I'd wilt and die of it!"

"I'd never think of setting you down at a desk," said Townshend; and again that odd smile lifted the heavy moustache.

"I owe you a great deal," said Graham, "and I should like to oblige you; but I should like to go on and settle my valve first. Look here, Mr. Townshend; you have heard or read of inventors starving and dying for their inventions; well, I'm like that. It may be a small invention, but it's all I have, and I must see it produced."

"Very well, my friend," said Townshend; "go your own way, in God's name! But—mark my words!—disaster will come of it! You don't know the world as I do! I'm not boasting, but you'll come to my view at last. I don't blame you; what is the good of blaming any man? He goes like a wound-up watch; he can't help himself. But when you run down think again of 'Townshend, 25 Jermyn Street.'"

That night, after dark, Graham and Townshend stood on the northern railway platform at Oxford. Graham had a third-class ticket to Birmingham in his pocket, and two pounds in money; he had refused to borrow any more, though much more had been pressed upon him. At the last moment, when Graham was bidding his distinguished and mysterious friend "Good-bye," neither observed a man

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with a burnt scar on his cheek rush from the waiting-room and enter the train.

. . . . . .

About a month later James Graham was toiling up one of the steep and winding roads which lead over hill and moor from Yorkshire into Lancashire. He had reached his last shilling. After fruitless efforts to get employment in and around Birmingham, he had tramped from one iron town to another, but nowhere would they have him. He looked respectable, but he was without tools, he was without a character, and above all he was without a society ticket, and no employer dare even give him a chance Worn with hunger and anxiety, with sick heart and embittered soul, he was now about to try his luck in busy, generous Lancashire.

The way was long and stiff, for the wide Allerton Moor lies fair, and high, and fresh, and far above the din and smoke of both Yorkshire and Lancashire. At the top of the ascent is an insignificant village; a mere handful of poor grey cottages, clinging, as it were, by the eyebrows to the edge of the steep; but it is of some consequence, because it contains a police-station and a beer-house. When Graham reached the bare, wretched little village he was thirsty and hot, in spite of the shrewd March wind; and he entered the beer-house (which was opposite the police-station) to rest for a while and to spend a penny on a draught of home-brewed ale.

He had barely sat down by the window of the little tap-room, with his tipple at his elbow and his

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cheek sadly resting on his hand, when he heard a man's voice ordering a pint of ale. There was a pause which the man seemed to fill with drinking, for he presently spoke thus:—

"I say, missus, do folk ever get drunk on this?"

"Drunk, mon?" said the woman of the house—a solid, shrewd old dame. "Noa; but lots get brasted (burst)."

Graham was smiling to himself at the answer, when the man entered and stood before him.

Heavens! It was the tramp with the burnt scar on his cheek! He had scarcely time to wonder whether the man would recognise him or no, when —with a low and scoundredly leer—he spoke, while he proceeded to light up a very dirty and strong-smelling cutty pipe.

"A stiff pull up this 'ere bloomin' hill, mister," said he.

"It is," said Graham.

"And, by gum, you've made it a sweater for me."

"How's that?" asked Graham, with dread of what was coming fluttering about his heart to enter.

"Well, when I came acrost you I thought I knowed you. And now that I've come up so far, nothing could be primer. There's the station just exactly opposite; and there's a bill there on the board—One Hundred Pounds Reward!"

Graham knew there was; he had already seen it there as he came in, as well as outside other po-

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lice-stations. The man paused an instant, to let his words have their full effect.

"One hundred pounds is a tidy bit for a pore feller like me, and I think I could earn it. All I've got to do is to step acrost the road and say I can put my hand on the cove wot's wanted. And s'welp me, but I believe I will!"

He paused again, and looked at Graham; and Graham looked at him with set face, but without a word.

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CHAPTER X.

ALONE ON THE WIDE WIDE MOOR!

JAMES GRAHAM for some seconds looked steadily in the sinister face of the tramp. He did not speak, and the insolent gaze of the man quailed somewhat. But Graham's thoughts were not so firm or resolute as his bearing suggested; in truth they were going to and fro like uncertain flame and smoke in a green fire. The silence became oppressive. The slow ticking of the old clock in the sanded passage, and the going by of a woman in clogs in the quiet street sounded loud and threatening.

"You think you know me?" said James Graham.

"Think, mister!" said the man, evidently relieved to hear him speak. "I never lost sight on you—never mind how—since that morning I saw you getting a shave. Shall I tell yer where all you've been? You've been to Oxford, to Birmingham, to Wolverhampton, and all about there; and you've been to Coventry; and you've been to Sheffield; and you've been to Leeds; you've been to Darlington and to Newcastle; and you've been back again at Leeds; and now here you are; and I've

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never had a real good chanst before of having a word with you."

"You think you know my name?"

"James Graham," said the man; "there it is," he added, jerking his finger over his shoulder at the "Reward" notice on the blackboard of the police-station.

"I thought you were an honest workman," said Graham, changing his note, "that wouldn't do a wrong turn to another workman who had got into trouble."

"And so I am, mister," said the man uneasily. "But ain't I chivied about all over the place? And what fur? 'Cos why; I wonst got into trouble myself. A feller must live; and to live he must have the oof."

"Well," said Graham, "I'm only a workman——"

"Don't yer tell me that, mister."

"I'm only a workman; but as you said, I have rich friends. Look here," said he, jumping to his feet, and without hesitation striding from the room, and out into the street. "Come on a little way with me, and we'll settle something. I can't wait longer here. I must be over the moor before dark."

The man doubted in thought and hesitated in action. Graham's promptitude and resolute motion took him by surprise. He followed him out without a word—after him into the gusty, sunlit village street, and alongside of him out of the village away upon the wide moor—desiring all the while,

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but yet fearing, to lay an arresting hand upon Graham's arm.

"I suppose," said Graham, to hold the man in talk as they went on together, "that you never went to that publican at Turnham Green my friend recommended you to?"

"Not me! yer see, I ain't so nobby sure of the kind intentions of that friend o' yourn; and I spent his half-quid on another lift than that. He's got plenty of tin, I dessay?"

"Oh, yes," said Graham; "he has lots of money."

"And, my Gawd, ain't he got a konk! I don't like that konk of his! It ain't what you may call friendly—that it ain't!"

Spite of his resolute action and its success thus far Graham was not clear what to say or do next. Perplexity swung to and fro in his mind like a pendulum. The man had come out with the expectation of being bribed to hold his tongue. But how was he to be bribed? Could he (Graham) ask Townshend to give the man money which would be repaid as speedily as possible? Yet how could he ask Townshend to do that? Townshend had (for some strange reason) shown himself singularly friendly; but after all what did he know of Townshend? Might not Townshend think it impudence to have such a request urged—especially after the overtures of friendship and partnership made and rejected at Oxford?

No. He could not ask Townshend to give the

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man money. And he had no money himself to give the man. And, even if the man were bribed to silence with money—that would be of little use. What kind of warranty would he have that the man would not appear again, in a month—in a week—and demand more?

What could he do? What could he do? His mind began to grow tortured and maddened with the striving to find an answer. Had he escaped prison, and escaped the horrible dangers of his flying leap from the express train—had he escaped all to let himself be taken by the ear and given up by a wretched tramp? Or to be steadily threatened and blackmailed? And all the while he was fiercely thinking, the man's voice, harsh, mean, brutal, sounded in his ear, and the man's sinister face (he stole a look at it now and then) became a beastly offence to him.

"Now look here, mister," said the man suddenly, when they had walked about half a mile beyond the little village, "I think I've come fur enough. You do as you promised, and let me go back."

"What did I promise to do?" asked Graham grimly.

"You blooming well promised to give me money not to peach!"

"I have no money, and I made no such promise."

"You made me believe that you would get money from your rich chum. And if you've got me out here for nothink, s'welp me, but I'll follow

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you all the way to Milchester and give you up there!"

Rage, desperation and hatred leaped hot and high in Graham's heart and head. Fury drove him, and he sprang straight at the mean ruffian's throat.

"You miserable scoundrel!" he growled. "I'll strangle you! You'll give me up, will you? You'll betray another man!—an innocent man!" he cried. "Before God, an innocent man!—and all for a dirty pound or two! You dog! You beast? You low, sneaking cur! Followed me, have you?—all over England, to wait your chance! Well, now your chance has come! Your time has come!"

These words he poured out in a scarcely intelligible flood, while the man writhed in his grasp. They were but a few yards from the brink of a deep, forsaken quarry. Towards that deadly edge Graham in his frenzy dragged the man, who was now become as nothing in his hands.

"No," he murmured to his wretched victim, "I'll not strangle you! I'll break your neck!" And then, his eye noting that there was a great pool of water at the bottom of the quarry, he said, "No! I'll drown you! And God have mercy on your miserable soul—and mine!"

Graham had the wretched creature half bent over the precipice. He saw that the man was already tasting the terror and horror of death. His face was ghastly pale; a cold sweat was oozing upon it; his features were becoming sharp and rigid; and his eyeballs were starting from their sockets. The

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eyes suddenly, at the despairing last, turned upon Graham with the piteous appeal of a dog, and his throat uttered a cry like the dying squeak of a rat.

"No, no!" cried Graham. "I can't do it! I can't!"

He drew the wretch back from the dangerous brink, and flung him on the turf, while he himself sat down a step off, trembling and almost sobbing.

The man recovered quickly, and with a watchful, vicious eye on Graham, drew off swiftly over the grass. He stood up.

"All right, mister!" said he. "Now, ye're sorry! All right! Gimme an order for that there money to that konky friend o' yourn, and I'll 'ook it back! No more padding the 'oof in your company! No, thank yer!"

Graham looked at him, his mind half-dazed. Could it be that the fellow had so little feeling about his escape from imminent death as his words would seem to signify? He wondered—and he yielded in fear and horror of the base creature. He took a pencil and a scrap of paper from his pocket, and wrote:—

"To F. Townshend, Esq.,
"25 Jermyn Street, London.

"The bearer of this note knows all. He has followed me ever since I was shaved, and he threatens to give me up, unless he gets money. I have none to give him. Will you be so kind as to

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do me this favour? Give him money, and I will pay you back as soon as ever I can.

"Yours, JAMES GRAHAM."

He held out the pencilled note to the man.

"Take that," said he.

"Not me! What do you take me for? Here's a stone; put it under that."

He walked away a few yards, and Graham advanced and put the stone on the scrap of paper to keep the wind from carrying it away. Then he retired. The man came back and took the note.

"Look here, mister," said he, when he had read it. "Do me the faviour to put in this scrieve 'sender' instead of 'bearer.' There ain't no sense in my tramping to London to get the 'oof. Besides, I ain't spiling for a squint at Mr. Townshend, Esquire's 'ansome konk! Not me! Not much!"

Graham said nothing, but altered the word. The man returned and took it. He folded it away in his frowsy waistcoat pocket, saying:—

"There you are, my little 'oof-bird wot flies! Good for a tenner, I bet—and more'n that! And now, mister, you can go and pumice-stone your crumpet! Bye-bye! See you again one o' these bloomin' days!"

And off he set at a run, back towards the village.

"See you again!" Was the wretch already resolved to find him out again in a little while and hold the same threat over him? But even with that fear upon him, Graham felt nothing but the most

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grateful relief, the purest thankfulness, that he had let him go. He sat a while and wondered at himself—at the madness of his passion, the suddenness with which he had been tempted to murder a man. Yes. He who had been proud of his innocence of the charge of manslaughter in which he had become involved had been on the point of committing a murder to escape being taken again on the first charge! He would have committed a great crime to avoid punishment for a less crime which he did not commit! How absurd and contradictory! Above all, how humiliating that he could depend on himself and his temper so little!

"Thank God," he murmured, with his clasped hands between his knees, "that I did not do it! I thank God," he went on in a sudden burst of rapture, while tears flooded his eyes, "that I am still innocent of crime, that I have not cut myself off from the comfort and joy of all the sweet and beautiful and good and true things in the world! I thought I was unfortunate before, but how doubly unfortunate and oppressed and hunted I should feel if I had done that. Great God!" he said, looking round upon the rugged, solitary, vast expanse of wilderness, over which the brisk winds wandered, "how good it is to be alive and free. God is good, and beautiful! Let me be grateful, Great God! And let me always pity the sick in hospital and the wretched in prison! Amen. I thank God," he said again, after a pause of exceeding comfort and peace of heart, "I thank God for this fine, fresh air—the

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