

Christmas was over. The new year was at hand. One afternoon, Boden, oppressed in spirit, sallied forth from the Tower into the floods and mists of St. John's Vale. He himself had taken no part in the great pursuit. He believed now that the poor hunted creature would find his lonely end among the wintry mountains, and rejoiced to think it might be so. The adjourned inquest was to be resumed the following day, and no doubt some verdict would be returned. It was improbable, in spite of the malice at work, that any attempt would be made — legally — to incriminate Faversham.

It was of Faversham that he was chiefly thinking. When he had first proposed his companionship, the day after the murder, it had been quietly accepted, with a softened look of surprise, and he and Undershaw had since kept watch over a bewildered man, protecting him as far as they could from the hostile world at his gates.

How he would emerge — what he meant to do with Melrose's vast heritage, Boden had no idea. His life seemed to have shrunk into a dumb, trance-like state. He rarely or never left the house; he could not be induced to go either to Duddon or to the Cottage; nor would he receive visitors. He had indeed seen his solicitors, but had said not a word to Boden on the subject. It was rumoured that Nash was already endeavouring to persuade a distant cousin of Melrose and Lady Tatham to dispute the will.

Meanwhile, through Boden, Lydia Penfold had been kept in touch with a man who could not apparently bring himself to reopen their relation. Boden saw her nearly every day; they had become fast friends. Victoria too