

The Duke Decides

kind to me, and I don't see why I should range myself on its side. Yes, I'll do it; and if I'm caught, stone-breaking at Portland won't be any worse than adding up figures in a subterranean counting-house. Let me have the particulars, Mr. Jevons, and I'll see it through to the best of an ability that hasn't much to recommend it."

"You shall have the particulars," said the other; then stopped, and laughed rather nervously. "You must understand that I am but a subordinate in this matter, and we have reached the only unpleasant part of my task," he went on. "It is not congenial to have to use a threat—even a confidential one; yet I am instructed to do so, before I enlighten you further."

The rascal's concern was unmistakably genuine; and Hanbury, with the good-humored tolerance of his class, hastened to reassure him.

"Go on; I can guess what you have to disclose—the pains and penalties for breach of faith, eh?"

Jevons nodded, and bent his shiny, perspiring face nearer. "It is a big thing, involving enormous outlay and the interests of an or-