

"This ere hoss thief just writ it hisself," said Dave, in answer to Berry's look.

"The body of the receipt is in Mr. Allen's handwriting, but the signature is undoubtedly that of Tim Berry."

"Let me see it," said Mrs. Berry, snatching at it.

"No; you will pardon me. I will show it to these gentlemen." And she went up to the table and spread it out before them, keeping her hand upon it. The men glanced from it to each other doubtfully.

"Listen again," she said, "This morning Martha Wiggins told me that Tim Berry had passed our place before daylight, when she was attending to some out of door work, that he rode on a big black horse she had never before seen, and he gave her this letter for me;" and she took it from her pocket and spread it out so that the two signatures should be brought together.

"Shameless," said Mrs. Berry, looking at the girl reproachfully.

Cecile turned sharply upon her, "Surely a most shameless letter, as you say, madame."

"Let me see it," said the father, suspiciously, "read it to us."

"Very well, if you desire it:

'Deer Mis Weer:

'Beggin yer parding for the libburty I takes in addressin ye, as I know ye air stuck up like, as why shouldnt ye be with a face like a angel an' me a worshippin it day an night, ever sence that day down by the alders when ye cum bye and me wantin to kis ye, but ye was so cool and mity lookin that I didnt menshun it; I hant no chans to spek to ye, but if ye will just give me a little ray of hope, tell me mother, and I will cum some night and fetch ye, fer I am goin out west; I am sick of this; I am goin to start a salon, and ye kan have yer karridge just like a ladie.'—

"There is more of it, but there is nothing in common between this letter and this receipt, save the signa-

tures which are identical, as you see—the same inability to keep a straight line, and the same humility in the use of capital letters. Now men, consider this matter clearly: I have no wish to throw a suspicion of blame upon any innocent man in order to shield another, even Mr. Allen, whom I esteem above all men; but here is a man who has gone from among you without one word of his intention to go—a man many have suspected; who has given a receipt for a horse sold, whereas you know he has taken no horse from his father's place." (Mr. Berry never had one.)

But Mr. Berry had been admonishing his companions by various winks and whispered words, and they, in their present state being more susceptible to such method of reasoning, looked, with one or two exceptions, quite unconvinced by Cecile's words; and Mrs. Berry was wailing "Oh Tim, me poor lad; to think the gurl ye luvd should hev turned upon ye like this—after all ye have done for her—after all ye have done for her; like a snake in the grass; Tim, Tim, me poor bye—" and so on.

And Mr. Berry spoke, looking for approval to the men: "It is too bad entirely that this worthless hoss thief should have used ye so, like he did—likely now he was to see ye after he stole the hoss, and put ye up to this yarn. Why Tim—why, Tim is—gone to Kansas City to buy me some likker, as I tould ye, didn't I, byes? That's all nonsense about Tim. He never went near Pumpkin Hill," and he looked with ponderous defiance at the girl. "And," he went on, after a solemn pause, to give his words their terrible effect, "now that we know all the things this hoss thief has been up to (looking meaningly at Miss Weir) "Why I say,—why, say," scowling fiercely around the circle, "the sooner we settle his hash the better." And he whispered, "We'll get the gurl away and then we can shoot him—hang him after—it will be safer · we'll