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towards the shrivelled anatomy behind the desk.

"It's you that's in a scrape," he said, "If you don't do just what I tell you I'm going to have you locked up."

Mr. Trehawke sat back in his chair, and, placing the tips of his talon-like fingers together, surveyed the boy with a gaze intended to be judicial, and at the same time tolerant.

"I am afraid that you are getting yourself into trouble, but before I send for a constable I may as well hear what your grievance is," he said.

BILLY laughed—a frank, boyish laugh that made that rotten limb of the law wince at the sheer delight of the merry jingle.

"You to talk of constables!" he jeered. "I'm come about my sister, Miss Marigold Craze, out to St. Runan's—her as you pretended to marry Wilson Polgleaze. You ain't the registrar, and you know it as well as I do."

This was a bolt from the blue. For a moment the attorney was staggered and blinked at his accuser from under his horrible hairless brows. But he was himself again directly, adroitly attributing his emotion to astonishment.

"Really, my good youth, you take one's breath away," he piped. "What bee is this that has got into your bonnet about your sister and a registrar? I never, to my knowledge, heard of your sister, and I certainly never pretended to marry her or anyone else to Mr. Polgleaze."

"You lie!" Billy persisted. "If you don't own up I shall go round to the police-station and tell Mr. Grylls."

Trehawke pricked up his ears. There was a suggestion of an alternative in the boy's words. "And supposing I had done this wicked thing and was fool enough to own it what would you do then?" he asked, leaning forward eagerly.

"I should make a bargain with you, rejoined the boy with a sullen insistence.

"I see," rejoined Mr. Trehawke with undisguised relief. "What is commonly called blackmail. And what might be the figure your juvenile Highness has fixed upon?"

"I don't want money. You'd just have to tear up that hold you've got—a mortgage, ain't it—on Miss Carlyon's property. Then me and my sister would cry quits," Billy presented his ultimatum.

It was no affectation of astonishment that contracted the attorney's mean features now. He stared at the boy for over a minute, then suddenly broke into a cackling laugh.

"My dear little chap," he said in a tone of unctuous benevolence that fitted him ill, "that proposition is so silly that I think you must be honest. I believe that your sister, whoever she is, has been deceived, though not by me. It is a case for the police, and I will send a note to Superintendent Grylls, and ask him to step round and hear your complaint. I gather from your misplaced abuse of myself that there has been a mock marriage by a bogus registrar. If so the parties to it ought to be punished, and Mr. Grylls will see to that. Come! that's fair isn't it?"

"I can't say as it isn't," was the grudging admission.

Mr. Trehawke drew paper to him, and while Billy looked out of the dust-grimed window at the traffic of Market Strand, wrote a letter which must have shaped itself in his brain before he began, so short was the time in which it was finished compared with its length. His pen fairly raced. As soon as it was finished he rang his bell, and gave it to his clerk.

"Run round with that," he said, and Billy was too interested in a dog fight on the pavement to notice that he did not mention the recipient. "And when you have delivered it," continued the attorney, "you need not come back. You can knock off for the day."

After the messenger had departed, so amazed at the unprecedented con-

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