

"What do you mean? The will is properly signed and witnessed!"

"Yes, witnessed—but unfortunately by people who were dead by 1870, and therefore could hardly have signed their names in 1874, before which time the paper on which this valuable document is written was not in existence!"

He pointed to the fatal mark as he spoke; and, carried away by the madness of the moment, Laurence exclaimed—

"How could I ever have been such a fool?"

He saw the slip next moment, but it was too late—both his auditors had heard and nothing remained for him but to throw himself on the clemency of his generous cousin. His suit was not rejected, for Wilfred, when telling first Mr. Joyce and then Constance of his altered prospects, merely said that there had been a mistake, and made no allusion to Mr. Markham's schemes for supplanting him.

As for Laurence Markham, Wilfred's kindness made a deep impression on him, and led him to think that, after all, there was something in the world better worth living for than riches. This reflection too made his disappointment with regard to Constance the less bitter, as the prospect of the merchant-prince's thousand had had its weight with regard to her, although he had also loved her for her own sake. However the wound was not incurable; for—having gone abroad a month or so after his cousin's wedding—he soon yielded his heart captive to the daughter of a settler in Australia, whom he shortly afterwards married.

THE END.

#### A Story.

The inhabitants of Seymour and vicinity are said to be much exercised in mind over the existence in that town of a veritable haunted house, and those who have occasion to pass the place after night-fall do so with quickened pulses and a fear that they may see something that would cause fright at least. It is believed that in the little brown house where John Sullivan and his wife were found dead last winter, after having been undiscovered for at least 36 hours, there is some strange and terrible secret, and that instead of its being, as some supposed, a case of double suicide, perhaps both Sullivan and his wife were murdered in cold blood. For some time past timid people have hinted that all is not right in the lonely little place. Two or three families have occupied the place since the tragedy, and they at once move out and away, and are reticent as to the causes, only saying that they do not care to live there. Finally it transpired that the first family were annoyed by strange noises. The second family heard all sorts of supernatural sounds, and so did the third family, and it would be extremely difficult now for the owner to get a tenant. Very recently a young man was riding along in company with a young lady, when she suddenly gave a shriek of terror and convulsively seized him by the arm. He hastily asked her what she meant, and as soon as she could regain her composure she said she saw the form of a woman on the roof wildly waving its hands. Her companion tried to make her believe that there was nothing in it, but she insisted, and still insists, that she saw the startling spectre. He made up his mind that he would sift the mystery to the bottom, and the next night, in company with three or four reliable friends, he visited the spot. While they saw nothing, they assert that they heard many noises that in their opinion must be ascribed to supernatural causes.

#### What It Would Cost.

It is fearful to think what an enormous expense it would be for Patti to bring up a child. She would have to sing it to sleep every night for about three years, and at the regular rates this would amount to £1,000,000. Then if she should have to sing one or two extra verses to it each night, the amount would rise to £1,500,000, providing that the child was always in good health. Allowing the usual third for sickness, she would have to sing to it all night for 365 days, say five hours at a time. £800 for a few minutes singing is her usual price. One night of sickness would therefore cost £18,000.

#### A MYSTERIOUS MARK.

"Roll on, then deep and dark blue ocean—roll!" shouted a cheerful-looking passenger, casting a patronizing glance at a billowy waste on whose heaving bosom our good ship was tossed like a plaything.

"Roll, and be hanged to it, if only it wouldn't roll me!" grumbled I.

It was my first acquaintance with Neptune, and we didn't get on well together. To say the truth, I was in no amiable mood. I had disagreed with the steward about the quality of the steak he had sent me for breakfast, and, finally had disagreed with my breakfast itself, and then had parted company with it. While leaning over the taffrail at this point, my feelings were harrowed by the poetical passenger's quotation.

"You're sea-sick," he remarked.

"I see I am," I replied, gruffly, intending no pun, but a slight criticism on the self-obviousness of the statement.

"I've a sovereign specific for that malady," said the stranger.

"You're a lucky man!" groaned I.

"I would be most happy to furnish you with it," he replied. "I have an abundant supply of it with me."

"Anything! I—I'll take anything—even arsenic, if it's only enough to put me out of my misery," I said.

"Come below," said he, taking my arm.

When we had descended the stairs he inquired, "Where is your state-room?" I led the way to it. "Now lie down, and I'll fix you up directly," he said. I threw off my coat and boots and tumbled into my berth. The benevolent gentleman went out and returned quickly with something which he put into a glass with some water and gave me to drink. I swallowed it without a question. The effect was almost instantaneous. A gentle languor stole over me, and then followed what a little before I should have hailed as the acme of all bliss, complete unconsciousness. Whether it was the effect of the medicine, or because it was the weather—much obliged to the weather, if it was it—had changed, I know not, but when I awoke I found myself, if not recovered, at least convalescent. Next day I gained my sea-legs, and felt no inconvenience.

Mr. Rollickson—by which name I learned to know my Byronic benefactor—and myself grew to be great friends. He was an inexhaustible talker. With men he was an agreeable companion; with ladies he was captivating, fascinating. We had an exquisite young creature on board, scarcely out of her teens, on her way to join an elderly maiden aunt in an English town, said to have testamentary designs upon her, which, if carried out, would place her in the front of matrimonial prizes. To this young lady Mr. Rollickson paid especial court. He read, talked, and quoted poetry to her, till her pretty little head was turned; and before the voyage was over their engagement began to be the talk of the ship. Storms of weather made the passage a slow one. It was more than two weeks after we lost sight of the highlands of Neversink before we landed at Liverpool. I had hardly set foot on shore, and hadn't had time to congratulate myself on the fact, when a hand was laid on my shoulder.

"You must go with me," said a determined voice in my ear. I turned about quickly and found myself confronted by a man who might have sat for a Dickens' portrait of Inspector Bucket.

"The fewer words here the better," he said, as I was about to speak. "Will you come quietly, or shall I summon assistance?"

I demanded an explanation.

"You shall have it in due time," was the answer. "Do you intend to come peacefully or not?"

A short staff surmounted by a crown, produced by the speaker, convinced me he had authority to enforce my obedience, and I walked along by his side. "Your name is Roach," said a thin, sharp man, into whose presence I was ushered.

"It is not," I answered.

"Probably you will also deny having three stars tattooed on the back of your left arm, just below the elbow?" he added, sardonically.

"I do deny it; I bear no such mark," I said.

"That is easily tested," was the reply.

"Turn up his sleeve, Jarvis." The assistant obeyed.

"I think we have the right man," said the latter.

"Quite sure of it," replied the sharp man, after glancing at the exposed member. I

twisted my arm so as to get a view of the part in question, and was utterly amazed to find the mark described by the officer.

"I—I never saw it before," I stammered confusedly.

"Such statements will do you but little good," said the officer. "First, you deny your name, and next the existence of a mark, which it is impossible for you to have borne upon your person without knowing it. It so happens that this is the very mark by which we are instructed to identify Roach, the famous bank robber, for whose arrival we have been some time watching. It further happens that your appearance tallies with his description in other respects."

"All this is inexplicable," said I, helplessly.

"Except on the theory that we've got the right man," the other answered.

I was a total stranger, had no friends to call on for assistance. If I could only find Rollickson! A thought flashed upon me. He had gone ashore before me, and I had seen him in private conversation with a man whom I now identified with the one who had arrested me. I remembered, too, that after awakening from the sleep into which I had been cast by the drug with which he had relieved me from sea-sickness, my arm had felt sore and stiff for several days. Might not Rollickson be the real Roach, and might he not have taken advantage of my stupor to place upon me a mark similar to that borne by himself; and had he not on landing pointed me out to the detectives as the object of their search, for the purpose of averting attention from himself? To this conclusion my mind came by one of those sudden intuitions, which oftentimes instantaneously produce deeper conviction than the most careful process of reasoning. Just then a cab passed the window, and in it came Rollickson himself.

"Stop that man!" I exclaimed, starting up, and pointing him out. The exclamation astonished those present.

"Quick, quick, for heaven's sake!" I cried.

Impelled by my earnestness, a couple of policemen darted into the street. The cabman stopped in answer to their call, and soon Rollickson was escorted into the room in which I was a prisoner. He turned pale at the sight of me.

"Strip his arm!" I cried eagerly.

He drew back as an officer approached, and it was only after a struggle, and by main force, that he was compelled to submit to the inspection, which revealed a mark the exact counterpart of that found upon myself. Before I had finished the narrative of my acquaintance with Rollickson, and the circumstances under which it began, an American detective entered the office, and fully identified my late friend as the criminal for whom I had been singularly mistaken. I may add that when the blonde wig and the whiskers were removed, with which he had disguised himself, the likeness between Rollickson and myself was quite marked.

I was released from custody, and the real Roach detained in my stead. The next steamer carried him back to America, to stand his trial for numerous burglaries. And the young lady, it is to be hoped, was cured of the romance of falling in love with strangers at first sight.

#### A Balloon in the Sea.

A balloon ascension was recently made at London which resulted in a most exciting scene. As soon as the balloon rose it at once drifted off to sea, and was descried on its way to the English Channel by watchers on the cliffs of Dover. Whether it would be blown off toward the German Ocean, or whether the aeronauts could descend before they crossed the land line was the question. They had deferred the descent too long, and when they opened the valve and the collapsing balloon came rushing downward it was seen that the descending curve would throw them well out to sea. It was so. Caught in an eddy of wind below the cliff the balloon was whirled sideways and further out to sea. At length when quite a distance from the shore it struck the water. Then the body of the balloon, still retaining a quantity of gas, fell over the car and almost smothered the unfortunate. While they were struggling to get free a number of craft bore down upon them, and the three occupants were with difficulty dislodged from their perilous position, half suffocated and half drowned. The balloon, on being relieved of its burden, rose from the water and whirled along in its career between earth and sky.

#### THE GREAT AFRICAN DIAMOND.

How it was Found and How Carried to London.

An Amsterdam correspondent of *The Manufacturing Jeweler* tells the story of the immense African diamond, weighing 457 carats in the rough, which is in process of being cut by Mr. Jacques Metz, one of the largest diamond-cutters of that city. The stone is said to have a somewhat curious history, and, though its exact birthplace is only a matter of conjecture, it is known that it was found by somebody in one of the four mines of Kimberley, in the Cape colony, South Africa. It is said that in June or July of last year one of the surveillance officers of the Central Mining company of the Kimberley mine found the stone, and, being exempt from search, carried it through the searching-house unperceived, and sold it to four irregular dealers for \$15,000. Before leaving the province the new owners had a night of drinking and gambling, which ended in two of them becoming its owners instead of four. The two owners escaped the secret police and reached Cape Town, where they found a dealer who readily paid them \$95,000 for the stone. There is an export duty on diamonds shipped from Cape colony of 1 per cent, but it appears that this stone was smuggled out of the colony by a passenger on the mail steamer and brought to London, where its presentation at Hatton garden created a great sensation. A former resident at the Cape mines managed to form a company of eight persons, who bought the stone between them for \$225,000 cash, on condition that the seller or sellers should receive a ninth share of the eventual profit. The real value of the stone has been estimated at London at above \$1,000,000. According to the rules of valuation of the famous Taverneir diamond, its value would be \$4,166,980. The correspondent says that the art of diamond-polishing existing in Amsterdam for more than three centuries has been brought to such perfection that it is expected that this stone, weighing in the rough 457 carats and said to be whiter and purer than any of its historical predecessors, will lose in working much less than other famous stones; that it will be more rapidly finished, and it has every chance of remaining the largest and finest diamond of the whole world. "To enter into comparisons," he says, "the Great Mogul, now in the Persian treasury, weighed in the rough 787 carats, but through the incapacity of the Venetian workman, the stone lost in cutting 507 carats. Shah Jehan, instead of paying for the work, made the workman pay him a fine of 10,000 rupees, and would have taken more if he had it. As it is, the stone is yet the largest of all known weighing now 280 carats. The next in size is the Orloff, forming the imperial Russian scepter, and weighs 195 carats. This stone formed one eye of a Brahmin idol, and was stolen by a French soldier who fell in love with the beautiful eyes of the Indian goddess. Next in weight follows the regent, one of the French crown diamonds. In its rough state it weighed 210 carats; it took two years to cut it, and 20,000 francs worth of diamond powder was used in its polishing. Its present weight is 136½ carats. Next we come to the Koh-i-noor, the property of her majesty, the queen of Great Britain. The stone was first cut in India holding 186½ carats, but it missed all the fire that such a magnificent stone ought to possess. Hence the queen had it recut in the brilliant form by the eminent cutter Voorzanger, especially ordered to London for the purpose. The cutting was performed in a masterly manner, and though losing 8½ carats in working, the stone was trebled in value. The Star of the South has also been polished here in Amsterdam, at the mills of the late Mr. Coeter. It is in the shape of an oval brilliant, and now weighs 125.7-16 carats.

A German technical journal tells how wolens may be prevented from shrinking and their color from changing. The fabrics, it says, are first soaked for several hours in a warm, moderately concentrated solution of soda, to which about a half tumbler of ammonia water has been added, more or less, according to the quantity of material treated. At this stage the fabrics are washed out, after the addition of some warm water, then rinsed in fresh water. The same result may be reached by adding a tumbler of ammonia to a small tub of water, soaking the stuffs for a half hour in this, finally rinsing them in pure water.