[A rich man who had no children proposed to his poor neighbor, who had seven, to take one of them, and promised, if the parents would consent, that he would give them property enough to make themselves and their other six children comfortable for life.]

Which shall it be? Which shall it be? Which shall to be? Which shall to be?
I looked at John, John looked at me,
And when I found that I must speak,
My voice seemed strangely low and weak;
"Tell me again what Robert said;"
And then I, listening, bent my head—
This is his letter:

"I will give A house and land while you shall live, If in return, from out your seven, One child to me for aye is given."

I looked at John's old garments worn;
I thought of all that he had borne
Of poverty, and work, and care,
Which I, though willing, could not share;
I thought of seven young mouths to feed,
Of seven little children's need,
And then of this.

"Come John," said I.
"We'll choose among them as they lie
Asleep." So, walking hand in hand,
Dear John and I surveyed our hand;
First to the cradle lightly stepped,
Where Lilian, the baby, slept.
Sofity the father stopped to lay
Hisrough hand down in a loving way.
When dream or whisper made her stir.
And huskily he said, "Not her!"

We stooped beside the trundle bed And one long ray of lamplight shed Athwart the boyish faces there, In sleep so beautiful and fair. In sleep so beautiful and fair.
I saw on James' rough, red cheek
A tear undried. Fre John could speak,
"He's but a baby, too," said I,
And kissed him as we hurried by,
Pale, patient Robbie's angel face
Still in his sleep bore suffering's trace;
"No, for a thousand crowns not him!"
He whispered, while our eyes were dim.

Poor Dick! bad Dick! our wayword son-Poor Dick! But Prock! on way words a Turbulent, restless, idle one—
Could he be spared? Nay, he who gave Bade us befriend him to the grave;
Only a mother's heart could be Patient enough for such as he;
"And so," said John, "I would not dare To take him from her bedside prayer."

Then stole we softly up above,
And knelt by Mary, child of love,
"Perhaps for her 'twould better be,"
I said to John. Quite silently
He lifted up a curl that lay
Across her cheek in a wilful way,
And shook his head: "Nay, love, not thee,"
The while my heart beat audibly.

Only one more, our eldest lad, Trusty and truthful good and glad, So like his father. "No John no! I cannot, will not, let him go." I cannot, will not, let him go."
And so we wrote in a courteous way,
We could not give one child away;
And afterward toil lighter seemed,
Tainking of that of which we dreamed,
Happy in truth that not one face
Was missed or its accustomed place;
Thankful to work from all the seven,
Trusting the rest to one in heaven.

RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE

By MRS. HENRY WOOD: Author of "East Lynne," " Oswald Gray," &c.

CHAPTER XXIII-CONTINUED.

While they converse, let us turn for an instant to Miss Bordillion's, where Mr. Lydney was presenting himself for a morning call. "Not at home," said the servant; but at

that very unlucky moment who should present her unconscious self at the window but Miss Bordillion. Lydney looked at her, and then at the servant, a half smile upon his face. The girl felt angry and confused, and attempted a justification.

It is not my fault, sir; I have only to

obey orders. Though it is not my mistress general custom to say she is not at home niss pordillion desired you to deny her it

I called ?" "Yes, sir, she did."

He wrote a few words on a leaf of his book, tore it out, and sent it in to Miss Bordillion. "I pray you, as a favor, see me for a few

minutes; I will not ask it again." "Once more can't matter," said Miss Bordillion to herself, as she read the words. " Show Mr. Lydney in, Ann."

"I thank you for admitting me," he began, as he entered. "I find, Miss Bordillion, that within the last day or two some strange rumors to my prejudice have been circulating in Danesheld, with Lord Dane, I never was in favor; but others were triendly with me. Will you tell me candidly what these rumors are, and whence they arise? I apply to you because I believe you are truthful and sincere, above petty prejudice, and II had learnt to believe that, of all in Danesheld, you

esteem me as a friend !" Miss Bordillion hesitated in perplexity. She was, as he designated it, truthful, and sincere; but she was also kind, and revolted at the thought of giving pain. Mr. Lester, had favored her with his version of the reports against Lydney, asserting that they were indisputably true—as Lord Dane had asserted to him-and, Miss Bordillion felt that she could not again receive one who lay under so dark a cloud.

"You probably heard that Mr. Lester turned me from his door?" he proceeded, finding she did not speak.

"I must acknowledge that I did." "And you have given orders to be denied to me. Well, now, Miss Bordillion, would it not be fair to acquaint me with the grounds for that line of conduct? A man cannot fight

".swobada "It might be fair, Mr. Lydney, but it would be a task by no means agreeable. That there are tales abroad to your prejudice, it would be

folly to deny; but I think the removing of them rests with yourself." "In what way? I cannot, I say, combat

shadows?"

"It appears to me that you should declare who you are. You have said that you are of good family-a family of some note in England. I am sure I received the assertion with perfect reliance on its truth, as I make no doubt others did. But, now that these prejudices against you have arisen, it is incumbent on you to declare more particularly who your family are, and of what country. I think if you could do this, the feeling against you would, in a measure, be removed. You perceive I speak openly,"

Something like amusement twinkled in his

eye as he listened. "I suppose, since the prejudice has spread people have been searching through the peerage and baronetage, and all your other red books, to find the name of Lydney," said he. "Something very like it, I believe," replied Miss Bordillion. "Do you not see that it is necessary you should declare yourself?"

"Will you tell me what the rumors are, and

whence they arise?" "Whence they arise, I do not know; from your own conduct, I believe. People talk of your being friendly with the poschers-of your frequenting the woods at night. For myself, I do not credit that; I do not, indeed, Mr. Lydney; I have better faith in you." "Yet you have ordered your doors to be

closed." "I-I could not do otherwise," she answered, quite distressed at having to give the explanation, yet deeming it better to speak

freely, now it was entered upon. "Squire Lester insisted upon it; or else Maria's visits here must be ceased.".

"I am accused; I hear, among other heinons sins," he proceeded, dropping his voice to a lower key, "of entertaining covetous designs on the fortune of Miss Lester."

"Who, could have told you that?" uttered

Miss Bordillion.
"It is patent to all Danesheld. You may Miss Bordillion. hear it as you pass along the street. Lam supposed to be doing my best to delude Miss Lester into a Gretna-Green escapade, or some such unorthodox marriage, for the sake of touching her fourteen thousand pounds. Allow me to assure you, Miss Bordillion, that whenever I do marry, it will be of no moment to me whether my wife shall possess fourteen thousand pounds, or not fourteen hundred pence."

"I wish you would not mention these things, Mr. Lydney, for they only pain me to hear them. For myself, I cannot but have confidence in you; there is something about you that I have trusted from the first, and trust still. But, put yourself in my position, and reflect how impossible it is that I can act against the stream, and continue to receive you here-especially with Miss Lester visiting me as usual. If you would be more open, as to yourself, and declare who you are, it

might be different." "The fact is," said Lydney, but in a good natured tone, "that you do doubt me. You like me personally, you have a sort of faith in me, at least you had; but, you cannot overget the budget of innuendoes against me, now opened. I do not know that I blame you for it, Miss Bordillion; in your position, as you observe, I might judge as you do. I will not intrude longer on you," he added, as he arose, but I must express my hope that the time will shortly come when you will welcome me

to your house again." Miss Bordillion held out her hand in token

"Were I you, Mr. Lydney, I would no longer remain in Danesheld; it cannot be a pleasant spot of abode to you now."

"That proves how you share in the general prejudice," he laughed, as he released her " Farewell."

"Not a word about his family-or who he is," thought Miss Bordillion, as she turned to ring the bell. " I don't know what to think.'

The servant had the street door open as he approached it, admitting Maria Lester. Mr. Lydney caught her hand, and drew her into a small room or study, where in past days she and Edith used to do their lessons. He closed the door, and stood before her.

to the proof. Dark tales are abroad to my prejudice, insinuations that I am not what I appear to be, that I am no gentleman; nay, worse, that I am a bad character. Do you believe them ?"

"No," she quietly said, lifting her trusting eyes to his.

"I will not thank you; it appears to me that if you could believe such accusations, cast on me, would not be worth my thanks. Bold you will say. Yes I am bold in this moment. It is not convenient to me-you shall know why, sometime-to declare anything more of myself than people know at present. The tales of my nefarious doings will right themselves; I do not fear them, or cast a word to them; but when you hear it said that I am no gentleman, that I am an adventurer, believe it not. Will you trust me?" "With my whole heart and faith," she

answered, the tears rising to her eyes. "I do thank you now," and somehow he contrived to possess himself of both her hands. Holding them between his, he looked her steadfastily in the face. "It has been brought against me that I have been striving to gain honestly avow that she has gained mine. I say no more; I must leave it to the future; to the time when I can present myself before Mr. Lester and ask that his daughter may be given to me for my own. In that hour Mr. Lester will find that fortune is certainly no object to me, and that he is heartily welcome to retain any she may possess. I have not offended you in saying this?" he added in a tone of the

deepest tenderness. No, he had not offended her; far from it: her heart only beat more responsively to the avowal. It was an instant of agitation; her feelings were nearly beyond control, and her wet eyelashes rested on her crimsoned checks.

"It has been told to me," he whispered, that another covets the prize for his-one whom I suspect to be my enemy-and that Mr. Lester favors his suit.

"But not I," she answered, in a moment's impulse. "I never can be his, though he has made it a condition of placing Wilfred beyond reach of want. Papa would like it. Lord Dane is rich and a man of rank."

"I will take care of Wilfred," said Mr. Lydney, "so tar as any one can take care of him. And it may be in my power to offer Mr. Lester a position for his daughter not inferior to that of Lord Dane. Only trust me, Maria," he concluded, as he lingeringly released her

and turned away. As the maid was showing him out a stranger passed the door and looked keenly at him-very keenly, Lydney thought. It was not, however, an offensive stare : but the eyes that gave it appeared to bave a peculiar power of their own for taking in all points of any

object on which they rested. "I hope he will know me again," said Mr. Lydney, good-humoredly. "I wonder who he

"I know, sir," said the girl. "He passed when I was in the tea-shop just now, and I heard it. It is my Lord's Dane's banker, come down on her visit. Good-morning Mr. Lydney,

The last sentence was uttered in a hearty tone, and in a raised voice, for Lydney had slipped half-a-crown into her hand, willing, perhaps, to prove to the girl that he cherished no resentment against her for obeying orders and denving him. The stranger evidently caught the tones, and turned to the maid.

"Did I hear you call that gentleman Lydney?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; that's Mr. Lydney." Mr. Blair looked after him-looked cur iously, as if Lydney did not answer to the picture he had mentally painted of him.

"He does look like a gentleman," were the words that seemed involuntarily to escape "He is a gentleman, if ever there was one,

cried the girl familiarly. "Ah?" soliloquized Mr. Blair, walking on. "Just the fellow to come into a country place, and ride the high horse. He might deceive

CHAPTER XXIV.

us if we trusted to his looks."

It was Sunday evening and several days subsequent to the arrival of Mr. Blair. In the large dining-room at Dane Castle he sat, Lord Dane with him. Both gentlemen had finished their wine, but the decenters and des- Lydney. sert remained on the table. They were in earnest conversation, when suddenly one of might be getting himself into hot water, "he | danger.

the windows was shaken, and Lord Dane rose said. The windows was shaken, and Lord Dane rose said. The windows was shaken, and Lord Dane rose said. The was tall. So I said as I in. Drake had entered by means up the hastly, pulled aside the white blind, the cur- Lester?" cause both was tall. So I said as I in. Drake had entered by means up the hastly, pulled aside the white blind, the back-door and adtains not being closed, and found himself face couldn't speak to neither of em for certain, mitted the rest. They waited and listened to face with Mr. Shad, the glass only between when I see it angered him. As if I didn't when they were fairly in; but not a money them. He had mounted the iron railings outside, and was standing on the spikes leaning forward, and holding on by the frame of the window.

"You young imp !" uttered Lord Dane as he drew back the window, which opened in the the deuce brings you here?"

"They're a-coming on this very night, my lord-I know they is," cried Shad, his face working with excitement. "They're in the wood now, and a-tying black crape to their hats; I see 'em a-tying of 'em on, and I thought I'd come and tell ye."

Mr. Blair was by the side of Lord Dane, and he seized the boy and deposited him inside the room.

"I see the 'lumination in this here parlor," blind hindered me. I was afeared to go to the big gates, for the servants would on'y ha druv me back again."

"How many did you see?" asked Mr. Blair. "I see four. Two tall, and two short," answered Shad. "There was the three what I heered a-planning of the thing days back, and the t'other, the tallest of all was like----: I did'nt see his face, though," he broke off. "He was a-sitting down all the time, and the black hung afore his nose."

"How can you tell that he was tall, if he were sitting down?" demanded Mr. Blair. "'Cause he was," was Shad's reply. twigged his long legs."

"Who were you going to say he was like?" "Well, I never heered him speak, and I Lester."

"Nonsense!" angrily interposed Lord Dane. "What should Wilfred Lester want breaking into my house? The boy's a fool, Blair, and has always been deemed one. Do you think it was Lydney?" he sharply added, turning to Shad.

Now the boy was not a fool: he had a vast deal too much cunning to be a fool, and that cunning he was incessantly calling into requisition. It did not in the least matter to Shad whether the silent gentleman in the disguising crape might be Mr. Lydney or Mr. Wilfred Lester : his opinion was that it was the latter; but as the suggestion appeared to give offense to Lord Dane, who would evidently be better pleased to hear that it was Lydney, Shad's cunning prompted to veer around.

"Well, I dunno," said he, with admirable tation, by her Christain name, "I am going to put your friendship your confidence to me, to the proof. Dark takes are about 10 to the proof. Dark takes are about 10 to the proof. he looked more like Lydney. 'Twas the the leggins made me think o' Will Lester; but I see Lydney with a pair on, one day."

"Safe to be Lydney," murmured Lord Dane in the ear of Mr. Blair. And the latter nodded.

"What did you hear?" he asked of Shad. "I didn't hear nothing, sir. They warn't a tos talking, above a odd word bout the vails; on. and I cut off, and left 'em, to tell his lord ship."

Mr. Blair spoke for a moment in an undertone with Lord Dane, and then gingerly lifted Shad out at the window again, on to the spikes, telling him to jump down. Lord Dane addressed the boy : "You go home at once, to bed, Shad. You

are not wanted, and there might be a danger you know, of your getting shot, in mistake for one of the thieves, if you linger near the castle. If these men get dropped upon through your information, you shall have such a reward as you have never seen in your life. Make the best of your way home."

Away tore Shad, as if in a hurry of obedisecuring her fortune. Upon the state of Miss Lester's affections I will not enter, but I will honestly never that the latest of the castle, he stopped dead, threw up his ground with all possible haste and noise.

All norte of article may be viewed and more dead, threw up his ground with all possible haste and noise. Mr. Lydney looked out and encountered Shad. ence. But the moment he was beyond view all sorts of antice an his tongue:

"Go home to bed, my lord says! Not I I hain't a-going to bed; I'd like to see the fun. And as if I didn't know Will Lester, though he have got the black crape over his face! He-

Shad found himself pinioned. Strolling about and smoking a cigar, was Mr, Lydney close to whom Shad had unconsciously been

dancing, and who had heard his words. "What is that about Will Lester and black crape, Shad?" Shad began to howl. He was a-going home

to his granny's to bed, he was. "You little hypocrite!" exclaimed Mr Lydney, "do I want to hurt you, do you suppose? Look here Shad, you cannot play the simpleton with me, so just put off that idiotic folly. I ask you what you meant, when you alluded to Wilfred Lester's having black crape now to the police-station, and you shall tell them. What fun is going on to-night? I heard all you said, and that Lord Dane had

ordered you home to bed. Did you ever see a sovereign, Shad?" "I have seed 'em," returned Shad, with a

stress on the "seed." "Would you like to possess one? "Oh!" aspirated Shad in trembling delight,

his mouth beginning to water. "I said I would give you sixpence if you told me the truth about the box; I believe you did tell me the truth, and I gave it you. Tell me now the truth of what is agate, touching Mr. Wilfred Lester, and I will give you a golden sovereign.

For that tempting bate Shad would have sold Danesheld and everybody in it, himself included. But Shad was somewhat puzzled-If this was the night of the grand expedition, and Mr. Lydney was strolling about enjoying idleness and a cigar, he could not be in it. as had been surmised. Shad's cunning came to the rapid conclusion that he was not in it, and that they had been under a mistake in

supposing so.
"I daren't tell," said he, "I'm afeared as you'd tell on me again, and they'd kill me dead, some of 'em."

"You may trust my word, Shad, better than I can trust yours; I will not tell upon See how bright it looks."

Mr. Lydney struck a fusee, took a sovereign from his pocket, and held the light close to it. The attraction was irresistible, and Shad speedily made a clean breast of it, and put Mr. Lydney into possession of as much as he knew himself.

"The castle was a going to be broke into that night and the plate-chest stoled," was its substance. "It is not possible that Wilfred Lester would join in an expedition of that sort!" de-

bated Mr. Lydney in incredulity. "It's not possible, I say, Shad." "I see 'em; they be a-tying the black crape over their faces at this very time," was Shad's eager rejoinder. "There's Drake, and Nicholson, and Ben Beecher; and Will Lester was a-sitting down, ready. My lord broke out upon me sharp, a-saying it warn't him: he said it was you.'

"Lord Dane said it was I?" repeated Mr. "Leastways," cried Shad, retracting, lest he Wilfred Lester, his ill-conduct, and his

the windows was shaken, and Lord Dane rose said. Was it Mr. Lydney or was it Will Shad had not used deceit. The men were has lip Drake had entered by means of the win-lastly pulled aside the white blind, the cur- Lester " cause both was tall." So I said as I in Drake had entered by means of the win-

After some further collopuy, Shad was disknow Will Lester?" missed, and Mr. Lydney remained in a state; of the utmost perplexity and discomposure. Silently went: Wilfred Lester to his father's That Wilfred Lester had joined in certain study, the others with him; and silently, he night expeditions of the poschers, touching middle, after the manner of the French, what game, he had made himself only too sure; but that he would rush madly into crime, was incomprehensible. One of two things was certain: he must have lost his senses, to become utterly reckless.

How could he, Lydney, prevent its taking place? at any rate prevent Lester's joining in it? It was indispensable he should be prevented, not only for his own sake, but for his family's, and a deep flush rose to Mr. Lydney's brow, as he thought of the terrible disgrace it would reflect on Maria, should her brother be proceeded Shad, "and made bold to get up and look if it was your loidship was in it, but the blind bit was your loidship was in it, but the policemen were passing him, not together, but singly, and at different times, as if not to attract observation; the connection of their errand flashed into his mind-they were going up to guard the castle? All that he could do was to follow them, place himself in a position that would command the approach to the castle, watch for the appearance of the robbers, and intercept Wilfred Lester.

The only retainer of Lord Dane's who had been made privy to the expected attack, was Bruff. The rest had been suffered to retire quietly to rest, night after night, unconscious | and read it was great; he felt sure he was disthat any armed force was at watch in the castle. Suffer it to be known to them, and it would no longer be a secret in Danesheld, was the argument of Mr. Blair; in which case never seen him get up-but he was like Will the attack would not take place. On this Sunday night the police were admitted privately as usual; the household went to bed; but Lord Dane, Mr. Blair, and Bruff remained up. Mr. Blair told the officers that the attack was expected.

They waited and waited; the men at their appointed posts, Mr. Blair anywhere and everywhere, Lord Dane and Bruff in excitement; they waited, and waited on. The clock struck one.

"It is very strange they don't come!" mut tered Mr. Blair.

Suddenly shots were heard in the wood at a distance, and the men came stealthily out of their hiding-places; Lord Dane and Bruff also rushed into the hall.

"Back every one of you!" was the stern order of Mr. Blair. "It is coming now." "They have met with some obstacle, and are fighting it out in the wood," exclaimed

Lord Dane. "Hark at the shots." "Back, I say, all of you," was the reiterated order of the detective. "Those shots are a ruse to draw the attention of the keepers from the castle should any be near it. I expected something of the sort. They'll be here directly, now. Back; and silence; and whatever you may hear or see, let none stir forth till I give the signal.

Back they cowered, and the castle returned to silence. And still they waited and waited

Lydney also waited in his place of ambush. Like those within, he wondered what was

keeping the villains. · He heard the town-clock strike one; and, not long after, he heard the shots in the wood. It did not occur to him to take the view of them that the detective had done, and they disturbed him much; but he could not quit his present post. It was a muggy disagreeable, damp night; the early part of it had been clear, but the weather was changinganything but a pleasant night to remain on the watch in the open air.

Suddenly, a noise stole on his ear; not, however, a sound of the covert footsteps of more than one, as he was expecting, but of one pair of boy's feet scampering over the

home to bed." "Don't hold on me then, please sir," panted Shad, who was out out of breath. "Im a-going to the castle to tell Lord Dane.

I know he's up a-waiting." "To tell him what?"

"Taint the castle they be on to. It's the

"What?" screamed Lydney.

"They're a broke into it; they be in it now. I've been a dodging on to 'em all the night, and they be gone right into the hall, 'stead o' coming here. They took a pane out at one o' the winders.

All that had been dark grew clear to Lydney. Wilfred Lester was after the DEED-the deed relating to his property which his father withheld from him. He had persuaded these men into the expedition, and they, no doubt, were after doing a little private business on over his face, and I ask to know. If you don't choose to tell me, I will take you off now to the police-station, and you shall tell had heard, or partially heard, the planning, he had mistakenly concluded that the castle was the object, never giving a thought to the hall. The castle, however, had never been threatened. And Wilfred Lester (but this need scarcely be observed) was not cognizant of the men's intention to steal. He purposed and believed that the abstraction would be confined to the deed. He looked upon that as his own, and deemed he was committing hall. no sin to take it, under the circumstances of its being unjustly and unlawfully denied

With a half cry of dismay, Lydney sped toward the hall; but, ere he had gone a yard, he stopped and grasped Shad.

"You must not go to the castle, Shad there's no need to acquaint Lord Dane with this. I will not have you go there."

Shad lifted his cunning and covetous eyes. "They be on the watch, they be; and if I goes and tells his lordship as that lot hain't a coming, maybe he'll give me half-a-crown." "And a pretty thing you'd do!" returned

Mr. Lydney, meeting cunning with cunning. You would put them off their guard at the castle; and how do you know 'that lot,' as you call them, may not take a turn up there, after they have done with the hall? Would Lord Dane reward you for that?"

Shad opened his eyes. The notion had not struck him. "You be quiet, Shad, that is all you have to do. Be entirely silent as to the things of this

night; and especially as to Wilfred Lester; if

I find that you are, I will do something bet-

ter for you even than the sovereign." He flew toward the hall, as he concluded, and Shad followed more slowly after him. Lydney seemed to gain the hall in no time. He passed through the gates, and stood there to reconnoitre, before approaching close. The house seemed silent as the grave; nothing could be seen, nothing heard; the blinds appeared drawn before the windows, and the inmates were no doubt sleeping peacefully. Lydney began to question whether that iniquitous Shad deceived him, when he was startled by the loud report of a pistol inside, and at the same moment some object seemed to come forth from the hall-door, and disappear among the shrubs; but who or what he could not decide. He darted forward

to the house and entered it, his head full of

Shad had not used deceit. The men were seemed stirring-nothing but the beating of.

their own hearts.
Silently went: Wilfred Lester to his tather's applied himself to open the safe, where his father had told him the deed was deposited. He had come armed with a key to unlock it harmlessly, so that no discovery should be made of its having been opened by unfair means. Drake kept the room-door against surprise, Ben Beecher held the light, and Nicholson did nothing. It may be wondered that Wilfred Lester should enlist three men in the expedition, when plunder was not the object, and there would be no booty to carry off; but the men had obstinately refused to go with him singly; all would risk it and stand by each other if surprised, or none. Young Lester yielded in his recklessness.

Strange objects they looked there, on that dark, midnight expedition, the black crape disguising their faces. The safe was soon opened; but there appeared a mass of papers within, and Wilfred could not get at the deed without search. Other deeds were there; other papers; some tied with red tape, some sealed, some unfastened. They were disposed of in order, and there was no difficulty in looking them over—only it took time. He came to one: "Will of George Lester, Esquire," and the temptation to tear it open inherited; that he, the heir by right of birth had been discarded for Lady Adelaide's children; but he resisted the impulse and threw it aside with an angry and hasty word. Presently he came to the one he wanted; his own name on the back guided him to the right parchment, and he clutched it with a suppressed shout of joy.

"All right, boys! I have it at last." There was a murmur of congratulation

given under their breath; and Wilfred began putting in order again the papers he had disturbed. While doing this, Robertson and Drake attempted to steal out of the room. Wilfred turned to them. "Where are you going? Stop where you

"Why, you'd never go to begrudge us snack of bread-and-cheese, and a draught of beer?" returned Drake. "We shall find it in

"You know the bargain," said Wilfred Lester, in suppressed anger. "Nothing must be touched in the house; no; not a crust of bread; they shall not have it to say that we came in like thieves, for common plunder." "I'll take a stroll through it, at any rate,"

the pantry, and 'twont be missed."

answered Drake, hardily. "And as to not touching a bit and a sup, if I see it-"I will shoot the first man who lays his finger upon anything in my father's house, no matter what it may be," was the stern interruption of young Lester, as he drew his pistol. "Drake! Nicholson! you know the agreement, I say. I have promised you a reward for helping me; and having secured the doed, I shall be able to pay you; but the house and its contents must remain in-

tact." They were callous, bold men, and not to be balked in that way. Having entered on the expedition with their own views of selfbenefit, it was little likely they would be turned from them. A low whisper of conversation went on between Drake and Nicholson; so to the effect that they must accomplish their purpose by stratagem, rather than come to an open broil with Wilfred Lester were and then: and they debated how best to work it. Wilfred, Meanwhile, continued to arrange the papers in the safe; it was soon done, and he clesed the door

again and locked it. "Now then," said he, "to get out as

cleverly as we came in. That was easier said than done, for more reasons than one. Wilfred Lester quitted the study, with his companions, and locked the door, leaving the key in the lock as he had found it.

"We'll go out at the hall-door," he whispered, pointing to it; "it is more handy and

I know the fastenings." Stealing over the oil-cloth, he gained it undid the bolts, drew it cautiously open about an inch, and looked around. The men stood as he had left them; not one following him; and Beecher was putting the candle on a bracket that rested against the wall.

"I tell you what it is, Master Lester," whispered Drake, who appeared to be more ready with the tongue than the others, " we have helped you on to your ends, and you must help us on to ours; or if you wont help, you must wink at 'em. We come into this house with a resolve to pay ourselves, or we shouldn't have come in at all. and you may as well hear the truth, and make no bones over it. If we takes away but a spoon a-piece, we will take it, for we don't go empty

Wilfred Lester's reply was to raise his pistol and cock it-not to fire upon them, but to coerce them to withdraw under fear that he would. Ben Beecher, believing life was in danger, stepped close and threw up Lester's arm. The pistol went off; the bullet shattering the glass of a door at the back of the

"Fools!" bitterly exclaimed Wilfred Lester; " save yourselves, and be quick over

it. Fools! Fools!" He sped through the hall-door, leaving it open for them to follow, and darted through the shurbs, on his right hand, whence he could readily gain the road by scaling the iron rails. Nicholson and Beecher would have escaped with him, but Drake seized hold

of both. "Don't show yourselves what he called ye-fools," cried he in a hoarse whisper. "We may get the forks yet; if they be sleeping sound, that shot mayn't roused 'em. Wait and see; plenty of time to get off then."

But an interruption took place at that moment that they did not bargain for. The hall-door was pushed wider, and in rushed a tall man. But that there was no crape on his face, they might have thought it young Lester come back again. He came close up

to them, and they saw it was Lydney. "You misguided, miserable men!" he ut tered in agitation. "Where's Wilfred Les-

Before they could frame an answer-whether it would bave been one of civilty, repulsion, or attack-Nicholson's eye caught sight of something white on the stair-case, and a before I can't be sure, a dreadful pistol weat human tace staring at them through the balustrades. It was in a croucking position, and might have been there some time. The sound of the pistol had also done its work; doors were opened and shut in consternation. "It's all over! stamped Drake. "A race

for it now, boys." "Wilfred Lester?" panted Lydney in emo tion. "Is he in the house, or not?"

"Not. I swear it. I won't deceive you Mr. Lydney; he escaped as you came in." It was Beecher who answered.

Now, all this, since young Lester's egress, had really been the work of but a few in- off faster than anothe." stants; but the noise was already great, for

the figure on the stairs a female, by her voice-began screaming and shricking fearfully. The men rushed through the door; and Lydney rushed after them, in his pursuit of Wilfred Lester.

"What in the name of confusion is the matter?" was heard above the hubbub in the voice of Squire Lester, as he descended in pantaloons and slippers, while a crowd of timid ones aroused out of their sleep-ladies, domestics children—cowered in the rear. And the female on the stairs, who was no other than Tiffle, sobbed out in answer:

"It's a crowd of villyans with blackened faces, broke in to murder us." With all possible speed, Squire Lester and

his men-servants made search. But the " villyans" were gone.

Exceedingly surprised, not to say discomfitted, was the great London detective, Mr. Blair, to find that while he had snugly made all preparations for the defence of the castle, that edifice had been left to repose in security, and the hall had suffered the attack. Lord Dane was far more confounded to hear of it: for it sent all his calculations out to sen: What could Lydney want at the hall? he could not expect to find his box there; and it was hardly to be supposed he broke in to steal Miss Lester. Nothing had been missed, nothing displaced in the house; Squire Lester testified that he did not believe a thing had been touched; therefore robbery had scarcely been the object. But of course the outrage must be investigated.

It is the custom in some parts of England for country magistrates to hold examinations of prisoners, when in a preliminary stage, at their own houses. Whether it be in strict ac cordance with law is another matter. Coun try justices, especially in remote districts, pay more attention to convenience than law.

About eleven o'clock on Monday morning, there was a gathering at Squire Lester's to inquire into the night's outrage. Lord Dane, Mr. Blair, a neighboring magistrate or two, and the squire himself, were present; Lady Adelaide and Maria, the latter with a face of emotion, now crimson, now white; Inspector Young and a policeman; Mr. Apperly, who had been sent for; and-having obeyed the mandate to attend, half request, half command, borne from Mr. Lester by Inspector Young-William Lydney. That it was not a strictly official inquiry, only an irregular one, the reader will understand, by the ladies being present. There was no appearance of a court; they came in as morning guests might do, and took their seats anywhere: some stood. Maria held some embroidery in her hand and made a show of working at it; Lady Adelaide did nothing, save hold a screen between the fire and her delicate face. Mr. Blair appeared merely as a friend of Lora Dane's. He took no part in the proceedings, and his real character was ansuspected. The last to enter was Lydney, accompanied by Inspector Young; he looked exceedingly grave, not to say troubled, as he approached Mr. Lester, though as little like a housebreaker as it was possible to conceive. His elegant form, in its plain, gentlemanly morning-costume, was drawn to its full height; it would seem that he might suspect the accusation to be made against him, and would not abate one jot of his dignity; very attractive did his high, pale features look that morning.

"I have been favored with a message from you Mr. Lester, desiring my attendance here," he began, after saluting Lady Adelaide and Maria, and the rest of the company generally. "May I request to know for what purpose?

"Yes, sir," dryly replied Mr. Lester. "You may be aware that my house was broken into early this morning. I am about
—in conjunction with my Lord Dane, and some of my brother magistrates—to make some inquiry into it; and, from circumstances which have transpired, we deem it right that you should be present at the sitting. Are you ready to be so, of your own free will?"

"Perfectly ready," replied Mr. Lydney. "Good!" said the squire.

must have compelled your attendance." Now, it must be remembered that none save those in the secret knew of the suspected attack on Dane Castle. Mr. Lester and his brother magistrates were in ignorance of it; the police, receiving their orders from Mr. Blair, did not mention it-Mr. Blair forbidding it at the earnest request of Lord Dane. Certainly the preparations for defense, and the posting the police inside, could have had nothing to do with the attack on the hall. Lord Dane strongly urged on Mr. Blair that the three men, spoken of by Shad, should not be told upon, and he spoke with all the high authority vested in the county's lord-lieutenant; to such authority the officer could do

little else but bow. In the first place, urged Lord Dane, nobody was sure that they were the men, they had only the word of that little liar, Shad, for it. In the second place, even if they were the men, they had, beyond doubt, been disguised by that traitor Lydney-whom it would be much more in accordance with justice to punish for the whole. Thus, it occurred that nothing was likely to transpire beyond the fact of the actual entrance into the hall. Shad was not alluded to in the business, and the only person who appeared likely to give

evidence was Tiffle. Tiffle was introduced to the drawing-room, curtseying, ambling, and shuffling. Squire Lester desired her to speak out what she knew to Lord Dane and the magistrates.

"I retired to rist last night, my lord, began Tiffle, choosing to address his lordship particularly, "and what the reason was, I am inable to say; but the more I tried to get asleep, the more pertineshously I lay awake. Well, my lord, it was getting on, I'm sure, for two o'clock, when I started up in bed, a-thinking I heard something down stairs. The flurry it put me in is undiscriptable, and I went out of my room, to listen. If ever I heered voices in the hall, I heered 'em then: I thought some of the household had gone down stairs at their pranks-for a tight hand I'm obligated to keep over the servants in this house—and I crept to the last flight and peeped through the bannisters. I never could have done it if I had known, but I no more thought of bulgatious robbers being in the

hall than-"What did you see or hear?" interposed

Lord Dane.
"My Lord, I saw this. I saw three horrid marauders with their faces blackened, and saw another which I couldn't distinguish nothing of but his coat-tails a-whisking out at the hall door. Then, or whether, it was just off, and I nearly fainted. I wouldn't faint, however; I come too: knowing the family's lives were at stake, and I looked down again and there I saw a man whisk into the hall again, and I'm sorry to say"-Tiffle coughed and dropped her voice-"that it was Mo

Lydney. There was a dead pause.

" What next?" said Lord Done. "My lord, nothing. Except that they all four, him, and the black bulgarians, talked together for a minute, and then they blew out the candle which had been flaring, level with though it may seem to take time in telling, their heads, and tore away, one trying to get

Mr. Lydney glanced around at Maria. She