

bled there, might not have had the hours pleasantly filled up at *home*,—for they were not homeless robbers, who had not the means of satisfying nature's cravings, but by theft or beggary. There was no palliation—no excuse for them.

The company having all assembled—sentinels having been placed in secluded and hidden places on the outside, but having communication with the interior, and the usual precautions taken to prevent eaves-dropping, had any accidental loiterer happened to be in the neighborhood—the head of the table was taken by Edward Craighton, upon either side of whom sat the landlord of the inn, and the man already introduced as Gray, who seemed to be held in some esteem, for his daring and reckless character.

The first business of the meeting was to make arrangements for the disposal of the accumulated heaps of booty, with which the cavern was overstocked. It was a singular mixture of valuable articles with heaps of rubbish, for nothing was too mean for their greedy spirit—nothing, however valued by the owners, that if a chance occurred, they would not appropriate. With these were indiscriminately mingled weapons of every kind in use among the early settlers. Many things had to be sent to distant parts of the country to be disposed of, the neighbourhood itself having been laid under contribution, and part of the system was to sell every article far away from its owner's residence, in order that detection might be difficult, if not impossible.

For all such purposes the internal economy of the gang was complete. There were among them appraisers regularly appointed, whose duty it was to place a money value upon every article; and at the prices named, purchasers among themselves were generally ready. These made their profit by retailing them in the various sections of the Province, where stolen articles were ordered to be sent, for which purpose initiated agents were resident in almost every section of the country.

This was "routine business." After it the new expeditions to be undertaken were discussed, —new schemes of plunder proposed and argued and agreed upon. In this the knowledge each man possessed of his neighbour's affairs was of material use, and the more hardened members scrupled not, in the guise of friends, to find out whatever was worth the stealing, and the easiest and least guarded method by which it could be reached.

"What do you say, my lads," said Gray, looking round him, "to a regular cleaning out of some of your village banks. They seem the only place in this miserable country where money is. I suppose

there wouldn't be much risk in doing it, if a dozen or two of *men* would try."

"No, no," said Whitley, "that won't suit us. There must be some other plan of getting at the banks. There's no use in putting our necks in danger for so rash a venture. There's law and lawyers here, and when money's on their side, its strict enough. Such a thing might do in *your* country, but it won't do here."

A general murmur of assent gave Nathan Gray to understand that his proposal would not be supported.

"Hang the law!" said Nathan. "Money's what we want; I don't like this trucking and trading. But, never mind. If you haven't the spirit for a bold stroke, let us hear what you have to say in your own petty larceny fashion. I hope you'll propose something a man might have a hand in—something not quite so shabby as is usual with you."

Whitley was angry, and with difficulty suppressed the expression of his rage. But he had no wish to quarrel with Gray, who was a dangerous man to deal with. He therefore curbed his rising passion, and replied with an air of humility:

"Me!" said Simpson, "it's not for me to propose; but I may tell the company that I know a man—a gentleman I mean—called Captain Willinton—"

Craighton started at the mention of the name, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself, and Whitley proceeded:

"This gentleman has a couple of span of the finest horses I ever saw,—regular bloods they are—and he has money too. I sold him some oats last Wednesday, and as he pulled out a drawer to get the money to pay for them I saw a whole heap of gold—how much I cannot say, but it was worth looking at! If there's no objection I think it might be worth while to visit him before he has spent it all."

"There can be no objection," said at least a dozen voices.

"I have already," said Whitley, "been speaking with one of his men—Greene—you know him. He will assist; and will get the other servants away on some spree—some bee, perhaps. He'll leave them there—come and help, and then return. It can be done easily."

"I don't like encouraging treachery," said Craighton. "Is there no way of doing it without him?"

"None half so easy," returned Whitley. "If it is done at all, Greene should have a share in it. Is the meeting willing to try?"

It was of course decided upon that the Cap-