

see that bewilderment and something like panic seized him. The lay figure still stood there, evidently uninjured. He took a couple of steps forward, and fired again, and then he lowered his rifle.

The sound of the shooting had deadened my footsteps—even could they have been heard—so that I had come close up to him. I had actually snatched the rifle from his grasp before he was aware of my presence. When he wheeled round I was calmly regarding him, and my rifle was pointed at his breast. It was such an unexpected *dénouement* that, for the moment, I believe he thought I was the spirit of the man he was in the act of murdering. I did not speak, but kept my eyes fixed on him. He was grey to the lips, and trembled like one with the ague. At last I spoke.

“Hawker,” I said, “the gallows will surely get you after all. What have I done that you should want to murder me? Is this country not big enough for us both?”

The startled wretch was so taken aback by the way the tables had been turned upon him that he seemed incapable of either thought or speech.

Of course, even had I wanted to aid the law, I could hardly have taken such a desperate fellow back to civilisation unaided. I don’t think any man could have done it. I could see, desperate character that he was, that my action and words had impressed him, and I thought it would be possible to make a compact with him, though, of course, I knew how little I would be able to trust to his sense of honour. It would certainly be useless appealing to that problematical sense of chivalry.