

the breakfast old Ruth had provided; but, mounting a horse, he rode full speed to Ashton. Long before he reached the village, he learned the dreadful tale of the murder; and though he did not like to believe Anthony guilty, he knew not how to get over the great mass of circumstantial evidence which even his own letter contained against him. Every person with whom he talked upon the subject, held the same opinion; and many, who before had execrated the old man, and spoke with abhorrence of his treatment to his son, now mentioned him with pity and respect, and decried the young man, as a monster, for whom hanging was too good, who deserved to die a thousand deaths.

Deeply grieved for his unfortunate relative, Wildegrave defended him with some warmth, and urged, as an excuse for his conduct, the unnatural treatment which he had received from his father.

"Sir," said an old farmer who had attended the inquest, "with all his faults, the old squire was an honest man; and, doubtless, he knew the lad better than we did, and had good reasons for acting as he did, as the result has proved."

"It has not been proved yet," said Frederick; "and I believe, however strongly appearances may be against him, that Anthony Hurdlestone never committed the murder."

"Mr. Wildegrave, I'm sorry to contradict a gentleman like you; but did not Grenard Pike see him, with his own eyes, fire at the old man through the window, and has he not known the lad from a baby?"

"He will be hanged," said another, shrugging his shoulders.

"I hope so," said a third.

"He was a queer little boy," said a fourth; "I never thought he would come to any good."

"His uncle was the ruin of him," said a fifth. "If he had never taken him from the old man, the squire would have been alive this day."

"The old squire is to have a grand funeral. He will be buried on Monday," said the farmer. "All the gentlemen in the country will attend."

"It would break his heart, if he were alive," said another, "could he but see the fine coffin that Jones is making for him. It is all to be covered over with silk velvet and gold."

"How old was he?" said a third.

"Just in his sixty-fifth, and a fine hale man for his years. He might have lived to have been a hundred."

"Did they find any money in the house?" whispered a long nosed, sharp visaged man. "I heard that he had lots hidden away under the thatch. Old Grenard vows that a box containing several hundred gold guineas was taken away."

"Then the Devil or old Grenard must have flown away with it," said the sexton of the parish, "for

I was there when they seized the poor lad, and he had not a penny in his possession.

"Will they bury him by his wife?" asked the farmer.

"He'd never rest beside her," said a fourth. "He treated her about as well as he did her poor boy."

"Do you think he'll walk after he's put in the earth?" said the first speaker.

"How can the like o' him rest in the grave?" said the second voice. "I've no manner of doubt but he'll haunt the old Hall, as his father did afore him."

"Was old Squire Anthony ever seen?" said voice third.

"Aye, man! scores o' times. I have heard that the Miser met him one night himself upon the staircase, and that that was the reason why he shut up the Hall."

"Who will bear the property?" asked number four.

"Algernon's son, a fine, handsome fellow. He'll make ducks and drakes of the Miser's gold; we shall have fine times on it, when he comes. He'll lower the rents and the tithes upon us. Come, my lads, let's go into the house and drink his health."

The worthy group instantly acceded to this proposition, and Frederick set spurs to his horse and rode off, disgusted with the scene he had witnessed, and returned to his home with a sorrowful heart.

By the light of a solitary candle at a small table in the attic of the public house, and close to the miserable bed, in which Mary Mathews was tossing to and fro, in the restless delirium of fever, two men were busily engaged in dividing a large heap of gold, which had been emptied from a strong brass bound box which lay upon the floor.

"Well, the old fellow died game," said Mathews. "Did you see how desperately he clenched his teeth, and how tightly he held the key of his treasures. I had to cut through the fingers before I could wrench it from his grasp. See! it is all stained with blood. Faugh! it smells of carrion."

"He took me for Anthony," said Godfrey shuddering. "And he cursed me. Oh! how awfully. He told me we should meet in hell—that the gold for which he had bartered his soul, had purchased us an estate there. And then he laughed—that horrid, diabolical laugh! Oh! I hear it yet. It would almost lead me to repent, the idea of having to pass an eternity with him."

"Don't feel squeamish now, Godfrey. This brave sight should lay all such nervous fancies to rest. The thing was admirably managed; and, between ourselves, I think that if we had not pinked him, that that same virtuous son of his would. What did he want with pistols? It looks queer."

"It will condemn him."