

gas-lamp now glared fully on her features, and revealed to his utter astonishment the terror-stricken countenance of Bella!

Haggard, wan, with the weald the ruffian's fingers had made across her cheeks, her face looked up into his like some ghost's: she stared at him with a wild frightened look, and the next moment was gone.

She had disappeared in the crowd, and in vain he sought everywhere for her, and the man had meanwhile sneaked away, and Harold stood utterly amazed at the adventure. Had it not been for the presence of the crowd, he would have thought it some wild delusion of his brain that had conjured up a shadowy phantasy.

Feeling that Bella might have got into trouble through not having a sufficient allowance, he forwarded her fifty pounds, with a promise to pay that additional sum annually.

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On the day before the eventful day that was to bring Harold a visit from Mr. Abrahams, that respectable gentleman was an inmate of the inner temple of Mr. Gus Jackson's Billiard Establishment; the worthy proprietor was also there, and Bella graced the room with her presence. There was an unwholesome smell of yesterday's smoke, hanging about the place, that would not be overcome even by the strong flavour of kippered herring that pervaded the atmosphere from the remnants of Mr. Jackson's breakfast.

Presently there entered an oleaginous duplicate of Abrahams himself, who was facetiously introduced by that gentleman as "ma friend from the City."

The friend from the City begged that they would at once commence business, for business, he philosophically observed, was the soul of life.

Jackson thereupon took from a box some papers, and sat down at a round table in the centre of the room. "Gents," he began, after clearing his throat and apologizing for a bone that had stuck fast there, "tomorrow's pay-day at Milton; young Macfarlane 'll have to disgorge thirteen thousand pounds, and we must divide it among our home charities. Do you all understand that?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well then, what are our plans? Shall we all go down together from Euston by the nine train?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Isaacs," turning to the last comer, "is it understood that you are perfectly obdurate, and, notwithstanding our earnest entreaties, are determined to punish the unfortunate beggar?"

"In the interest of commercial rectitude, certainly," snuffed Isaacs.

"But that in consideration of his youth and natural verdancy you will consent to receive the sum of thirteen thousand pounds as a penalty for his transgression, and forgive him the proper punishment for his wickedness?"

"Certainly."

This very important matter being agreed upon, the trio went out together, leaving Bella alone in the room.