

kind that I could believe anything of him. But if it be not he—”

“It was not his voice,” Henry said positively.

“Then there is something here,” I answered, “still unexplained. Consider the oddity of the conception, sire, the secrecy of the performance, the hour, the mode, all the surrounding circumstances? I can imagine a man currying favour with the basest and most dangerous class by such means. I can imagine a conspiracy recruited by such means. I can imagine this shibboleth of the shutter grown to a watchword as deadly as the “Tuez!” of ’72. I can imagine all that, but I cannot imagine a man acting thus out of pure benevolence.”

“No?” Henry said, thoughtfully. “Well, I think that I agree with you.” And far from being displeased with my warmth (as is the manner of some sovereigns when their best friends differ from them), he came over to my opinion so completely as to halt and express his intention of returning and probing the matter to the bottom. Midnight had gone, however; it would take some little time to retrace our steps: and with difficulty I succeeded in dissuading him, promising instead to make inquiries on the morrow, and having learned who lived in the house, to turn the whole affair into a report, which should be submitted to him.

This amused and satisfied him, and expressing himself well content with the evening’s diversion—though we had done nothing unworthy either of a King or a Minister—he parted from me at the Arsenal, and went home with his suite.

It did not occur to me at the time that I had promised to do anything difficult; but the news which my agents brought me next day—that the uppermost