

Hannington had slightly loosened his hold. Kingscott wrenched his hand free and thrust it into an inner pocket. He kept his eyes fixed on his enemy's face: the savage hatred in them fascinated Hannington's attention for one moment and in that moment he was lost. For Kingscott was now a desperate man.

The report of a revolver rang out to startle the silence of the lonely hills. To the man who fired that shot it seemed as if its echo would never die away. Although the lonely lane in which he stood was far removed from the habitations of man, he could not but fancy that the sound would rouse the avengers of blood and bring them from scores of nooks and corners to punish the murderer for his crime.

For Hannington had fallen to the ground and lay as one dead, while, for a moment or two, Ralph Kingscott—crouching beside him—watched and waited for any sign of life. But none came.

Kingscott rose to his feet. With a shaking hand he put the revolver back in his pocket, picked up his bag, and stood still, looking and listening. There was not a sound to be heard, save the chirp of a startled bird in the hedge. The grey sky seemed suddenly to have grown darker; the wind was rising and rustled among the leafless branches of the gaunt brown trees. Kingscott shivered, and then laughed. He wanted to convince himself that he was not afraid. "The sooner I'm off the better," he said, eyeing the body at his feet with strange invincible reluctance. "*Is he dead?* I'll look—no, I will not. What does it matter to me whether he is dead or alive? My business here is done. At any rate I have paid him out for what he has made me suffer. I knew all the time that it was he who shot me at Torresmuir." He turned to go, but after taking a few steps, he returned to Hannington's side. "I might as well *know*," he muttered, "how much mischief I have done."

He moved the inanimate form, of which the face was hidden in the roadside grass, laid it on its back and placed his hand carefully on the man's heart. At first he thought that there was no movement of the pulse: but a faint throb made manifest by and by that life had not departed. In spite of his callousness, Kingscott felt relieved—not on Hannington's account, but on his own. To have com-