

why does that sur-

tain Prendergast,
the lowest whisper,—
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hundred and fifty thousand
pounds, money, and has

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hundred and fifty thousand
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money, and has
absconded three
hundred and fifty thousand
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Questions
themselves to the
at which admitted
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et had not even a
Nathan Jelf, who
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that night, when
and we talked the
of view without
ing at any kind of

said, 'whether
ir man. That if
should mistake

ooks of voice, but
have alluded to
proof enough of
y. How did he

considerably older,

make him look
friend gloomily;

that he is inno-
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, and no uneasi-
ound. His con-
fault. I might
too freely of the

or I know no one
st. He actually

told you that he had the seventy-five thousand pounds in his pocket?

'He did.'

'Humph! My wife has an idea about it, and she may be right.'

'What idea?'

'Well, she fancies,—women are so clever, you know, at putting themselves inside people's motives,—she fancies that he was tempted; that he did actually take the money; and that he has been concealing himself these three months in some wild part of the country—struggling possibly with his conscience all the time, and daring neither to abscond with his booty nor to come back and restore it.'

'But now that he has come back?'

'That is the point. She conceives that he has probably thrown himself upon the company's mercy; made restitution of the money; and, being forgiven, is permitted to carry the business through as if nothing whatever had happened.'

'The last,' I replied, 'is an impossible case. Mrs. Jelf thinks like a generous and delicate-minded woman, but not in the least like a board of railway directors. They would never carry forgiveness so far.'

'I fear not; and yet it is the only conjecture that bears a semblance of likelihood. However, we can run over to Clayborough to-morrow, and see if anything is to be learned. By the way, Prendergast tells me you picked up his cigar-case.'

'I did so, and here it is.'

Jelf took the cigar-case, examined it by the light of the lamp, and said at once that it was beyond doubt Mr. Dwerrihouse's property, and that he remembered to have seen him use it.

'Here, too, in his monogram on the side,' he added. 'A big J transfixing a capital D. He used to carry the same on his note-paper.'

'It offers at all events a proof that I was not dreaming.'

'Ay; but it is time you were asleep and dreaming now. I am ashamed to have kept you up so long. Good-night.'

'Good night, and remember that I am more than ready to go with you to Clayborough, or Blackwater, or London, or anywhere, if I can be of the least service.'

'Thanks; I know you mean it, old friend, and it may be that I shall put you to the test. Once more, good night.'

So we parted for that night, and met again in the breakfast-room at half-past eight next morning. It was a hurried, silent, uncomfortable meal. None of us had slept well, and all were thinking of the same sub-

ject. Mrs. Jelf had evidently been crying; Jelf was impatient to be off; and both Captain Prendergast and myself felt ourselves to be in the painful position of outsiders, who are involuntarily brought into a domestic trouble. Within twenty minutes after we had left the breakfast table the dog-cart was brought round, and my friend and I were on the road to Clayborough.

'Tell you what it is, Langford,' he said, as we sped along between the wintry hedges, 'I do not much fancy to bring up Dwerrihouse's name at Clayborough. All the officials know that he is my wife's relation, and the subject just now is hardly a pleasant one. If you don't much mind, we will take the 11.10 to Blackwater. It's an important station, and we shall stand a far better chance of picking up information there than at Clayborough.'

So we took the 11.10, which happened to be an express, and arriving at Blackwater about a quarter before twelve, proceeded at once to prosecute our inquiry.

We began by asking for the station-master,—a big, blunt, business-like person, who at once averred that he knew Mr. John Dwerrihouse perfectly well, and that there was no director on the road whom he had seen and spoken to so frequently.

'He used to be down here two or three times a week, about three months ago,' said he, 'when the new line was first set afoot; but since then, you know, gentlemen—'

He paused, significantly.

Jelf flushed scarlet.

'Yes, yes,' he said hurriedly, 'we know all about that. The point now to be ascertained is whether anything has been seen or heard of him lately.'

'Not to my knowledge,' replied the station-master.

'He is not known to have been down the line any time yesterday, for instance?'

The station-master shook his head.

'The East Anglian, sir,' said he, 'is about the last place where he would dare to show himself. Why, there isn't a station-master, there isn't a guard, there isn't a porter, who doesn't know Mr. Dwerrihouse by sight as well as he knows his own face in the looking-glass; or who wouldn't telegraph for the police as soon as he had set eyes on him at any point along the line. Bless you, sir! there's been a standing order out against him ever since the twenty-fifth of September last.'

'And yet,' pursued my friend, 'a gentleman who travelled down yesterday from London to Clayborough by the afternoon express testifies that he saw Mr. Dwerrihouse