

no impetus to trade, it don't. The new fellow's a very different sort. We shall have fine doings soon.'

'Aye!' struck in another, 'a meddlesome, priggish sort of chap, he was, always aworritting us about clean houses, and such like. What right's *he* got to interfere, I'd like to know?'

'Down with all kings! says I,' put in a third; 'but if we're to have 'em, let 'em behave as sich. I like a young fellow as isn't afraid of his missus, and knows port wine from sherry.'

'Wanted to abolish capital punishment, he did!' cried a fourth. 'Thought he'd get more work out of the poor fellows in prison, I suppose? Depend on it, there's some reason like that at the bottom of it. We ain't so very perticular about the lives of our subjects for nothing, we ain't;' an expression of opinion in which all the rest heartily concurred. The clock struck again as the king turned away; he felt as if a storm of abuse from some one he had always hated would be a precious balm just then. He entered the state prison, and made for the condemned cell. Capital punishment was not abolished yet, and in this particular instance he had certainly felt glad of it.

The cell was tenanted only by a little haggard-looking man, who was writing busily on his knee. The king had only seen him once before, and he looked at him curiously.

Presently the gaoler entered, and with him the first councillor, a man whom his late master had greatly loved and esteemed. The convict looked up quickly.

'It was not to be till to-morrow,' he said. Then, as if afraid he had betrayed some cowardice, 'but I am ready at any moment. May I ask you to give this paper to my wife?'

'The king is dead,' said the first councillor gravely. 'You are reprieved. His present majesty has other views. You will, in all probability, be set at large to-morrow.'

'Dead?' said the man with a stunned look.

'Dead!' said the first councillor, with the impressiveness of a whole board.