

"Yes," said the lady, "and if well done, I may double the sum. What would you do for such a price?"

"Rather ask me what I would *not* do."

"Well, the job is an easy one. 'Tis but to——"

She paused, and fixed her eyes on his face with such a wild sort of gleam that, involuntarily, he quailed before her.

"Pray go on, madam. I'm all attention," he said, almost fearing to break the dismal silence. "'Tis but to—*what?*"

"Make away with—a woman and child!"

"Murder them?" said the doctor, involuntarily recoiling.

"Do not use that word!" she said, sharply. "Coward! do you really blanch and draw back! Methought one of your profession would not hesitate to send a patient to heaven."

"But, madam," said the startled doctor, "you know the penalty which the law awards for murder."

"Oh, I perceive," said the woman, scornfully, "it is not the crime you are thinking of, but your own precious neck. Fear not, my good friend; there is no danger of its ever being discovered."

"But, my *dear* madam," said the doctor, glancing uneasily at the stern, bitter face before him, "I have not the nerve, the strength, nor the——"

"*Courage!*" she broke in, passionately. "Oh, craven—weak, chicken-hearted, miserable craven! Go, then—leave me, and I will do it myself. You dare not betray me—you *could* not without bringing your neck to the halter—so I fear you not. Oh, coward! coward! why did not heaven make *me* a man?"

In her fierce outburst of passion she arose to her feet, and her tall figure loomed up like some unnaturally large, dark shadow. The man quailed in fear before her.