

to himself, and was now sipping some spirit and water, and glaring over the glass at the fair Samaritans who had befriended him. His natural colour had not returned to his face, which was greenish-grey, instead of yellow parchment—otherwise, at first sight, there did not seem to be any marked difference in his personal appearance.

"Now, will you tell us, Mr. Scone, what has happened to bring you here in so much haste and excitement?" asked Mabel.

"You wanted me to call to-night."

"I answered your letter, which was full of mystery," was the reply; "I expected you earlier in the evening, but I was certainly unprepared for the way in which you announced your presence. You have given me and Dorcas a great fright."

"If you had had such a fright as I have, I doubt if you would have survived it," said Peter; "just feel the left side of my head, ma'am."

Mabel did so, and found a lump as large as a walnut very speedily.

"You have had a fall."

"I have had a blow. I believe it has been done by a small crowbar, but it will not be easy to prove that."

"Who has done it?"

"That girl's father—William Halfday."

"William Halfday!"

"But I'll have the law of him—I'll have my revenge of him—I'll let him know what it is to attack an honest man whose age should have brought him reverence, not violence. If I had my way," he hissed between his closed gums, "I'd hang that devil. He deserves it—he meant to kill me—he meant to leave me in the Close for dead—he tried to kill me—he did, he did—'ll swear it!"

Peter's excitement was great now; he hammered his stick upon the floor, he stamped his feet, his eyes blazed in their sockets, and his whole face was convulsed with rage.

"To think I should be served like this at my time of life," he cried, when he had recovered a sufficient amount of breath to speak again; "to think I might have been murdered and nobody the wiser. The man who picked me up in the Close would not believe me, and told me I was drunk. Drunk—I, Peter Scone!—think of that now!"

"What can we do?" asked Mabel; "you do not explain to us—you do not give

us any news. What of this William Halfday?"

"He must be followed—and found out at once. It's for your sake, Dorcas, for you are a rich lady."

"A rich lady!"

"I make no terms with you—but you won't forget me," he entreated; "I always liked you very much, Dorcas—I persuaded your grandfather to do this for you—but all I want is to foil that wretch, and see him, before I die, begging for bread in Penton streets."

"He is raving mad," said Dorcas, "or, yes—he *is* drunk!"

"I'm as sane and sober as you are, you young cat—you unkind child, I mean!" cried Peter Scone; "but you will not listen to me. There's a will; I tell you there's a will—drawn up by your grandfather, and leaving all his money to you—and that means the twenty thousand pounds which this lady paid away."

"Where is the will?" asked Mabel.

"Go on, Peter, go on. Oh! great Heaven, if this man should die before he tells us where it is," exclaimed Dorcas, as excited as the old man now.

"Ah! I thought I should interest you presently," said Peter Scone.

"Go on," cried Dorcas, "you don't know—you can't imagine—what all this means to me. Go on, Peter—I will make you rich, too, if you will tell me where to find the will."

"Patience, Dorcas, patience," said Mabel.

"Madame, I have no patience," answered Dorcas peevishly.

"Your father wanted to bribe me," but I wouldn't have it," said the mendacious Peter. "I was for justice to the orphan. When he found I was not to be talked over, he offered me two thousand pounds, as true as I'm sitting here—and he knocked me down with an iron crowbar when I wouldn't take it."

"Had you the will with you?"

"No—but in my pocket-book, which he stole along with my key—I'll get him two years for that too!—there is a memorandum where the will is," said Peter. "I don't know for an absolute certainty, of course, but I fancy the will's there. He was fond of hiding things away from Dorcas."

"In the old church? behind the panel and under the oaken seat where he used to