

going away, the man happened to casually remark that Mrs. Robinson had been summoned to London about a week previously, he believed, in consequence of alarming reports concerning her sister's health; a piece of news which so hurried and agitated Mabel, and so completely drove all thoughts of the diamond from her head, that it was not till the brother had been ransacking the shop for several minutes in search of the missing treasure, that she remembered to tell him it had been sent home. The intelligence literally dumfounded him; he stared and trembled as if utterly overwhelmed with surprise and dismay; and, when he had somewhat recovered from the shock, he went about the house moaning and lamenting as if he were demented, or had sustained some grievous irreparable loss; and all night long his sister heard him pacing up and down his chamber, as restless and perturbed as during the day.

About three o'clock on the following afternoon Jonathan Reeves arrived at Clifton, and asked to speak with Mr. Charles Robinson; his request was complied with, and he told the young gentleman that he had called to place a foil beneath the diamond; it should have been done before it left his shop had he been at home when it was called for, and would add greatly to its brilliancy. The young man carelessly consented, and told Reeves to go into his dressing-room, where he would find the ring on a toilet table. The job did not occupy much time, for scarcely three minutes elapsed before the jeweller re-appeared, bowed hurriedly to Mr. Charles Robinson, said it was all right, and hastened away. "How deuced queer the man looks!" thought Charles Robinson. "Surely he has not stolen the ring! but no, that is out of the question, I should think; I will see, however." The ring was safe enough, and the young man blushed for his suspicions. "A droll improvement, though," he presently muttered, "he has effected; my judgment and eyes must be strangely at fault, or—" Charles Robinson rang his dressing-room bell, and desired the servant who answered it to go instantly to an eminent lapidary, in Wine Street, Bristol, and request that he would come and speak with him, Mr. Charles Robinson, immediately. In less than an hour the lapidary arrived, and what followed thereupon we shall presently see.

It was just dark when Jonathan Reeves reached his home, and had not his sister been herself in a state of great excitement she must have noticed that he was deathly pale—nervous almost to fainting, and fell with abject helplessness into his chair like to a drunken man. "Mr. Randall has just left," began Mabel, her usually meek, calm eyes, ablaze with light; "and has brought strange news,—news just arrived. Our grandfather's widow, Mrs. Reeves, is dead,—has died intestate. Mrs. Robinson will be here to night or to-morrow morning to communicate with her son, and accompany him back to London,—her son, the rightful heir-at-law you know." These last words Mabel pronounced with exultant emphasis. Her brother hardly appeared to hear her; the nervous terror that possessed him visibly increased, and a slight scuffle at the door by some passers-by increased it to frenzy. "Shut—bar the door, dear Mabel," he hoarsely ejaculated, "or I am ruined, lost! O God! that ever I was born!"

The violence of his terror startled Mabel, she hastily bolted the door, and then demanded an explanation of his frightful words. "I have been mad during the last fortnight," he answered; "mad with greed and drink,—I must have been so, Mabel; but no sooner was the crime effected, and I inextricably meshed in the toils, than the wretched, drunken illusion, promising success, impunity, vanished at once, and I saw that detection was inevitable—the gallows sure—and swift as sure."

"The gallows! Oh my brother!"

A loud knock at the door interrupted them. "They are come!" gasped the criminal, with white lips. "Here, Mabel, quick, take my purse, the accursed thing is there."

Mabel had hardly time to conceal the purse about her person, than the frail door-fastenings were burst in, and several constables entered.

"We were expected I see," remarked the chief of them, glancing at the fear-stricken man. "We have a warrant," he added, civilly addressing Mabel, "for the apprehension of your brother, on a very serious charge, but we need not unnecessarily intrude upon you. There is a coach at the door; come Mr. Reeves."

The instant Mabel found herself alone, she drew forth and examined the purse. The true diamond was there! Alas! alas! And that this calamity should have happened now—now that—but not a moment should be lost. Mr. Randall must be seen instantly. Perhaps,—and the thought which glanced across her brain sent the hot blood in swift eddies through her veins,— "perhaps he may yet be saved."

It was about half-past nine o'clock when Mr. Randall reached Clifton. Mrs. Robinson, who had not long arrived, was busy for the moment, but would see him presently if he could wait. Certainly he could. "Mr. Charles Robinson is not at home, I believe," he blandly added; "but I daresay I shall find Miss Murray in the drawing-room." Mr. Randall briskly ascended the stairs, and as he opened the drawing-room door, said—"Be sure to let me know the instant Mrs. Robinson is disengaged." In about a quarter of an hour he was informed that the lady was expecting him in the library.

"It is a very unfortunate affair," said Mrs. Robinson,—after a few preliminary sentences. "Had I been at home there should have been no prosecution. But it must I suppose now go on."

"Your son must appear either to confirm his accusation, or, by absenting himself, admit it to be false."

"I am very sorry for it, but the prosecution shall be leniently urged. Poor Mabel Reeves, too! You are aware, I know, how much I risked by taking her daughter when neither of them had hardly bread to eat. Had my sister heard of it, it is quite possible my son would have been disinherited. But that danger is now past."

"It is true, then, that Mrs. Reeves died intestate."

"Yes, and as the two Messieurs Halliday died without *legitimate* male or female issue, my son is, you are aware, the heir, under the original will settlement."

"That would be as you say. By-the-by, who has the custody of this unfortunate ring?"