

"No blood was shed," replied the clergyman in his deep, rasping voice, "but the villains seized and bound all the servants, plundered the store-room of provisions and spirits, and openly told Mrs. Feilding that had they found her husband at home they would have cut off his ears and given him a flogging! Little did they dream that Mr. Feilding himself was concealed above the ceiling of the very room in which they sat carousing! Hum, ha!"

Lathom uttered an angry exclamation of contempt. "Do you mean to say, sir, that Mr. Feilding played the coward, and left his wife to face a gang of escaped convicts? 'Tis monstrous. I have no sympathy with him. 'Twould have served him but rightly had they carried out their threat."

"I fear, Fred, that you are rather too hasty in asserting your opinion," said Mrs. Lathom coldly. "What could one man do against seven?"

"Nothing, perhaps. Much, most probably. But then one must not expect too much from a creature of Feilding's calibre in time of danger. How such a contemptible person was given a responsible position passes my comprehension. He is utterly unfitted for it—not one single qualification does he possess."

The clergyman's fat face darkened, and something like a scowl gathered on his coarse fleshy forehead. Haldane leant his elbow on the table, and gave his host an encouraging nod of interest and sympathy to proceed, for he knew that "flogging Feilding" had received his appointment as a magistrate of the territory through Marsbin's influence alone, and he was inwardly smiling with delight at the clergyman's discomfiture.

"Go on, Fred," he said. "I, as you know, am deeply