

My wrath at this foul accusation, and daring attempt to frighten me, was kindled so that I could not speak; and if this had happened in the open air, I should have been certain to knock him down. However, I began to think, for Perkins was a litigious fellow; and however strict a man's conduct is, he does not want his affairs all exposed. Therefore I kept my knit knuckles at home, but justly felt strong indignation. Perkins thought he had terrified me, for perhaps in that bad light I looked pale; and so he began to triumph upon me, which needs, as everybody knows, a better man than Hezekiah.

"Come, come, brother Dyo," he said, in a voice quite different from the Chapel-Scriptural style he had used; "you see, we know all about it. Two dear children come ashore, one dead, and the other not dead. You contrive to receive them both, with your accustomed poaching skill. For everybody says that you are always to be found everywhere, except in your chapel, on Sabbath-day. Now, David, what do our good people, having families of their own, find upon these children? Not so much as a chain, or locket, or even a gold pin. I am a jeweller, and I know that children of high position always have some trinket on them, when their mothers love them. A child with a coronet, and no gold! David, this is wrong of wrong. And worse than this, you conceal the truth, even from me your ancient friend. There must be a great deal to be made, either from those who would hold them in trust, or from those in whose way they stood. For the family died out, very likely, in all male inheritance. Think what we might make of it, by acting under my direction. And you shall have half of it all, old Davy, by relieving your mind, and behaving in a sensible and religious manner."

This came home to my sense of experience more than all Hepzibah's divine predictions or productions. At the same time I saw that Hezekiah was all abroad in the dark, and groping right and left after the bodily truth. And what call had he to cry shares with me, because he had more reputation, and a higher conceit of himself, of course? But it

crossed my mind that this nasty fellow, being perhaps in front of me in some little tricks of machinery, might be useful afterwards in getting at the real truth, which often kept me awake at night. Only I was quite resolved not to encourage roguery, by letting him into partnership. Perceiving my depth of consideration—for it suited my purpose to hear him out, and learn how much he suspected—it was natural that he should try again to impress me yet further by boasting.

"Dyo, I have been at a Latin school, for as much as three months together. My father gave me a rare education, and I made the most of it. None of your ignorance for me! I am up to the moods and the tenses, the accidents and the proselytes. The present I know, and the future I know; the Peter-perfection, and the hay-roost——"

"I call that stuff gibberish. Talk plain English if you can."

"Understand you then so much as this? I speak in a carnal manner now. I speak as a fool unto a fool. I am up to snuff, good Dyo; I can tell you the time of day."

"Then you are a devilish deal cleverer than any of your clocks are. But now thou speakest no parables, brother. Now I know what thou meanest. Thou art up for robbing somebody; and if I would shun Satan's clutches, I must come and help thee."

"Dyo, this is inconsistent, nor can I call it brotherly. We wish to do good, both you and I, and to raise a little money for works of love; you, no doubt, with a good end in view, to console you for much tribulation; and I with a single eye to the advancement of the cause which I have at heart, to save many brands from the burning. Then, Dyo, why not act together? Why not help one another, dear brother; thou with the good luck, and I with the brains?"

He laid his hand on my shoulder kindly, with a yearning of his bowels towards me, such as true Nonconformists feel at the scent of any money. I found myself also a little moved, not being certain how far it was wise to throw him altogether over.