

"What then?" I demanded.

He burst into a loud, hoarse laugh. "Brand new—halfpennies—straight from the Mint," he cried; then he stopped, and, swinging me round, stood before me, his back to the hill.

"Now, Granville, face to face, man to man, tell me—am I mad?"

His eyes glared at me through the twilight, shining like coals of fire, and above his head I saw the glow of de Guira's funeral pile already painting the hilltop with a blaze of red. I shuddered in my soul; but his pistol confronted me, and I knew that my life depended on my answer.

"Nonsense," I said fervently. "You mad? You are the sanest, the wisest man on earth!"

He laughed a laugh of maniacal vanity, put up his pistol, and seizing my hands, wrung them violently. "Bless you, Rupert!" he cried; "from this moment we are no longer master and servant, but friends—friends. Only death shall part us!"

It was a prophecy that time and my evil fate fulfilled.