

the task in utter hopelessness, for the lamp it would *not* burn, and turning to those he called his friends, he added—"never mind it, we can see to talk even if it should take a foolish freak into its head and die away entirely."

"Oh! no, no!" hurriedly exclaimed the poacher, as he saw

"The languishing lamp just flashing to die."

"Don't let it gang out, for I darn't be in the dark, and I niver had been sen——"

"Since when?" sternly interrupted Hudson, and added, *sotto voce*, "since you became a poor miserable driveller, I suppose. Whose fat buck have you slaughtered last? Or whose orchard have you broken—but it's too soon in the summer yet for that? Or whose hen-roost have you plundered that you make such a whimpering about? I wish your wife had been here. She is worth a dozen such puling wretches as thou art! Have you got the paper?"

"We have!" promptly replied the gipsy.

"Then let me see it," eagerly added the questioner.

"Hand out the forty guineas, then," said the gipsy.

"I must see the document first," calmly returned the other; "in order to ascertain if it be the very one I want and stipulated for."

"Good night to you, friend!" returned the other, rising to leave that den of thieves, worse, as he thought then, than any gipsy haunt which, in his chequered lot through life, he had ever visited; but ere he reached the seven, he returned again, remembering that the door was locked.

"And is it come to this?" despairingly exclaimed his comrade, "that we should thus have stained our hands in blood, and all for nothing?"

"Blood!" exclaimed the tempter, in feigned astonishment; "surely you have not committed murder!"

"And if we had, would it not have been at your instigation?" retorted the gipsy, his eyes flashing with rage.

"At mine!" returned the lawyer, with a hideous laugh.

The shrewd gipsy, seeing plainly they were both completely duped, sprang at him like a tiger on his prey—seized him by the throat, and would have strangled him in an instant, had there not been heard just then a knocking at the door. He paused and listened, relaxed his hold a little, not knowing who was there, and came to a parley with his enemy.

"Dismiss that man, whoever he is," he said, "and let us go in safety, and the paper shall be yours; and promise, if a villain's promise can be trusted, that you will not afterwards molest us."

"And what proof can I have that you'll fulfil your promise?" the all but breathless victim asked.

"Proof!" said the enraged gipsy, tightening his iron grasp upon his neck, until his face turned black, and as he slackened it continued with reference to his doing so; "that, for want of a better, is all the pledge I have to give; and gold, as highly as your sordid soul may value it, could not purchase one of half its weight and worth."

Thus was the treaty made between the tempter and his tools. His clerk, whose knee they had heard, was ordered home again, upon the pretext of some private business with a friend or two. The important document was then exchanged for the key, with which they immediately let themselves out, locked the door on the outside, and threw it into the Eden as they crossed the bridge. Their cunning accomplice was thus left to ruminate upon his narrow escape, the saving of his forty guineas, which indeed he never intended to pay, and the dismal prospect of spending a sleepless night, hungry and cold in that dark and dismal cell of the old cloister. The lamp had been extinguished in the fray. His fate was inevitable, unless he could make himself heard by some chance straggler in the street. To this end he applied himself most manfully to thunder at the door, and shouted and hallooed for almost half the night, but all in vain.

The next morning the clerk called as usual at his house for the key, but finding it not on its accustomed peg, he supposed his master had got the start of him, and had gone to the office before him. On his arrival there he found the door locked and the key not in it. He therefore concluded that his master had gone out and taken it with him. He then took up his position in a bookseller's bow-window, some distance up the street, which commanded a view of the office door. Here he patiently awaited his return, amusing himself with watching the noisy crowd as it passed up to the cross; for it was the market day. The breakfast hour would soon arrive, he would then be sure to come; but he did not. Hour after hour passed away, till the market carts began to rumble down the street again at a more rapid rate to their homes. Still the lawyer came not. His wife, or whatever she might be, for there were doubts and surmises concerning her, had gone to Shap Wells for the benefit of her health, so that no enquiries were made after him from his house. Any well known clients, and so few there were, that all were easily recognised, were turned away by his officious satellite.

The poor exhausted prisoner heard not the approach of his clerk to the office. He had sunk into a heavy and disturbed slumber, from which he woke not till the day was far advanced. He