

something to do than for any other reason, he packed a handbag with a few necessities. As soon as the servant was stirring, he ordered her to make him a cup of strong coffee. After that, it was time to show himself as usual, on the opening of the shop. To his astonishment, he found his clerk taking down the shutters, in place of the porter.

'What does this mean?' he asked, 'Where is Farnaby?'

The clerk looked at his master, and paused aghast, with a shutter in his hands. 'Good Lord! what has come to you,' he cried. 'Are you ill?'

Old Ronald angrily repeated his question: 'Where is Farnaby?'

'I don't know,' was the answer.

'You don't know? Have you been up to his bedroom?'

'Yes.'

'Well?'

'Well, he isn't in his bedroom. And, what's more, his bed hasn't been slept in last night. Farnaby's off, sir—nobody knows where.'

Old Ronald dropped heavily into the nearest chair. This second mystery, following on the mystery of the anonymous letter, staggered him. But his business instincts were still in good working order. He held out his keys to the clerk. 'Get the petty cash-book,' he said, 'and see if the money is all right.'

The clerk received the keys under protest. *That's* not the right reading of the riddle,' he remarked.

'Do as I tell you!'

The clerk opened the money-drawer under the counter; counted the pounds, shillings and pence paid by chance customers up to the closing of the shop on the previous evening; compared the result with the petty cash-book, and answered, 'Right to a halfpenny.'

Satisfied so far, Old Ronald condescended to approach the speculative side of the subject, with the assistance of his subordinate. 'If what you said just now means anything,' he resumed,

'it means that you suspect the reason why Farnaby has left my service. Let's hear it.'

'You know that I never liked John Farnaby,' the clerk began. 'An active young fellow and a clever young fellow, I grant you. But a bad servant for all that. False, Mr. Ronald—false to the marrow of his bones.'

Mr. Ronald's patience began to give way. 'Come to the facts,' he growled. 'Why has Farnaby gone off without a word to anybody? Do you know that?'

'I know no more than you do,' the clerk answered coolly. 'Don't fly into a passion. I have got some facts for you, if you will only give me time. Turn them over in your own mind, and see what they come to. Three days ago I was short of postage-stamps, and I went to the office. Farnaby was there, waiting at the desk where they pay the post-office orders. There must have been ten or a dozen people with letters, orders, and what not between him and me. I got behind him quietly, and looked over his shoulder. I saw the clerk give him the money for his post-office order. Five pounds in gold, which I reckoned as they lay on the counter, and a bank-note besides, which he crumpled up in his hand. I can't tell you how much it was for; I only know it *was* a bank-note. Just ask yourself how a porter on twenty shillings a week (with a mother who takes in washing, and a father who takes in drink) comes to have a correspondent who sends him an order for five sovereigns—and a bank-note, value unknown. Say he's turned betting-man in secret. Very good. There's the post-office order, in that case, to show that he's got a run of luck. If he has got a run of luck, tell me this—why does he leave his place like a thief in the night? He's not a slave; he's not even an apprentice. When he thinks he can better himself, he has no earthly need to keep it a secret that he means to leave your service. He may have met with