

"I am not sure of that."

"I should think he would remember me," he went on, "for—Is Peter Scone alive?"

"Peter Scone—what of him?"

"He was cashier in my father's firm; he would remember me at once," replied William Halfday; "and I must prove my identity very clearly to get the money."

"For Miss Westbrook?" added Brian.

"For Miss Westbrook, yes. I wonder," he added, "what the amount is."

He glanced at his son, who did not answer him, who was staring intently at the empty firegrate as at a new problem which had arisen there to vex him. Brian had taken his father into his confidence, but he was not satisfied with the result, despite his sire's promises. All looked dark and ominous ahead, and there were vague doubts on every side of him. After all, he did not trust his father, whose manner had been against him from the first. There was no power to prevent William Halfday's action in the matter; the law would side with the father despite the feeble opposition that might be offered by the son, and Brian was almost helpless now.

"Twenty people might be found in Penton to swear to me," said William, "if any one were inclined to oppose me, which is not likely, Brian—eh?"

"Probably not."

"That Peter Scone must be dead, now I come to think of it; he was an old man when I left the city."

Again Brian Halfday did not answer him. He turned more completely towards the grate, and in an absent fashion, and as though a fire were burning, spread out his hands as if for warmth.

"I am afraid I am keeping you up," said William Halfday suddenly; "you look tired and weary, as with a hard day's work."

"I have worked hard to-day."

"I must apologize for taking up so much of your time—robbing you, as it were, of what the poet calls 'balmy sleep;' but we had not met for many years, and I was anxious about you."

William Halfday picked up his hat from the floor, and rose to take his leave.

"Where are you going?" asked Brian, still deeply interested in the back of his stove.

"Down to Datchet Bridge again, of course."

"You had better remain here, I think."

"I don't see any accommodation, Brian; the house is small, and I should be very much in the way, and—and the room upstairs is occupied, you know," he added, as his shivering fit seized him again, and robbed him of composure.

Brian rose and stood with his back to the fireplace.

"You can go," he said.

"Thank you, thank you, Brian, and to-morrow, or the next day—"

"To-morrow completes the inquest," said Brian; "you will be there to listen to the evidence, and attend the funeral in the afternoon?"

"I suppose so—just so—very well," said William in some confusion.

"No one will believe you are the son very readily if you are not at your father's funeral, and I shall doubt it, and dispute it for one," said Brian meaningly.

"I am sure to be there, Brian," said his father; "though I shall present a very disreputable appearance as chief mourner."

"I will see to that."

"A long black cloak is out of the fashion, I believe, but it will come in handy for me. It will cover a multitude of sins—of omission."

To Brian's surprise, which, however, he did not betray, his father laughed spasmodically as he held forth his hand to his son.

"Do you think you know your way to the village?" asked Brian.

"Very well indeed. It is straight down the hill."

"Yes, but you might miss Datchet Bridge by five miles or so. And you will want refreshment when you get there, and board and lodging."

"Ay! God bless me, yes—and Brian, I really have not one penny in the world at present."

"I will give you money before you go."

"I—I am going now," answered his father.

"Not yet!"

"Not yet, do you say? Why?"

"Not till you have looked upon your father for the last time in this world," said Brian solemnly; "not till you have sworn to me across his coffin, that you will, as you hope for salvation, be true to all you have promised me."