

"Well, I am not certain that he will come by the coach, twelve is the hour he named to me."

"Oh! of course he knows best, and such a large sum of money. I would not venture upon the road of a night, with twenty shiners in my pocket. But eight hundred—the man's a fool—good day, Noah—don't raise a bad report against my poor dog. You know the old proverb—give a dog a bad name. Eight hundred pounds—my eye! what a sum."

Away he trudged with the game destroyer at his heels. I sat down upon the stile and looked after him.

"There go your way to Bill Martin, tell him the tale I have told to you, and between us, Mr. Carlos has little chance of sleeping on a feather bed to-morrow night. I will bet my life, that neither of us go to the cricket match at S——. Bill will have a different job on hand if I read that man aright."

I felt certain that an attempt would be made to rob Mr. Carlos, by these ruffians. I had only to be an hour beforehand, dispatch the victim, secure the prize, and return to the spot, and detect Martin and his accomplice in the very act, and for this purpose, I determined to secure the co-operation of another game-keeper, who might accompany me to the place and help me to secure the villains.

I was so elated with this plan, that I quite forgot my own share in the atrocity. The leaven of iniquity which I had introduced into the breast of another, was already fomenting, and two human beings were already subjected to the same temptation to which I had yielded. It is astonishing how a fellowship in guilt hardens the guilty. Many men like wolves are great cowards alone, but give them a companion and pusillanimity is instantly converted into ferocity. The coward is always cruel, the mean-spirited merciless. The consciousness that two of my fellow men premeditated committing the same crime, wonderfully strengthened me in my resolution to plunge my soul into the abyss of guilt.

The wish to overreach and disappoint them, became at last a stronger incentive to the murder than the lucre of gain. The burning hatred I had felt for years against Bill Martin, was on the eve of being gratified.

THE MURDER.

When I arrived home, I found two of the principal members of the cricket club, both respectable merchants in the village, waiting for my return.

I was their best hand, and they left no argu-

ment un urged in order to induce me to go. I took them separately aside and confidently informed them of my reasons for staying at home; this, I justly thought, would help avert all suspicion from me, as the real culprit. Of course they felt convinced that my going was out of the question, and took their leave with regret.

My mother was not very well, she had a bad headache, and complained of being very nervous, a fine word she had picked up from the parson's lady, and we passed a very dull evening together. I had never before shunned my mother's eye, but this night I could not steadily look at her. She at length noticed my agitation, and asked if any thing had gone wrong with the game.

I said "no," "that I was sorry that I could not go to the club, I had a great mind to send George Norton, the other game-keeper, to meet Mr. Carlos, instead of going myself."

"You must go yourself," she cried, eagerly. "If any harm happens to the squire, we shall lose our best friend, the only real friend we have in the world, you must not think of leaving him to the care of another, he will be angry, and it may mar your fortune for life."

"In what way, mother," I said, gloomily; "I think you place too much importance on the squire's good will, I could earn my own living if I were out of employ to-morrow."

My mother said, that I was proud and ungrateful, I retorted, she grew angry, and for the first time in my life, she went to bed without kissing and bidding me good night, or wishing that God might bless me. I felt the omission keenly, it seemed as if my good angel had forsaken and left me to my fate. For a long time I sat brooding over the fire, my thoughts were full of sin. I went to the cupboard where my mother kept a few simple drugs and a small bottle of brandy in case of accidents or sudden illness. I hated ardent spirits, and seldom took any thing stronger than a cup of tea or milk, or when very tired, a little home-brewed beer, but this night, I took a glass of brandy, the first raw liquor I had ever drunk in my life. Stupified and overpowered, I soon found relief from torturing thoughts in a heavy stupid sleep.

Breakfast was on the table when I unclosed my eyes. The brandy was replaced in the cupboard, and my mother was regarding me with a sad countenance and tearful eyes. You were ill last night, Noah?"

"Yes,"

"And you did not call me."

"You parted with me in anger, mother, I felt so miserable I took that brandy to raise my