

order stood upon its head, the young man laughed dazedly. But he kept tight hold of the old one's hand, and fell to patting it with wild reassurance.

"Everything's all right — all right! Yes, indeed, sir. Of course! But I don't understand — I don't grasp — I came here looking for — Are you — *you* — Mr. Higginson?"

"Ah, you had n't guessed then? And yet who could wonder, such a terrible, frightful mix-up as it all became! You see," the old gentleman hurried on, lowering his gaze, yet already recovering something of his normal composure, "you had scarcely started before I — I became strangely uneasy over the — seriousness of the matter and the possible consequences, and — and decided that I had best come on myself in — in a private manner, merely to have an eye on things. Believe me, that was all I meant. But I did not dare let you know that I was here, even in that way, having promised you that I would not interfere, and besides — I feared that you might think I had — ah — withheld the full facts about — her age."

In an access of nervous self-consciousness, the old man's voice trailed to an uncertain pause; and Varney comforted him with a burst of bewildered laughter.

"Forgive my glassy stare — no offence intended, but my head's going around, Mr. Higginson! It's all still nebulous, you know — topsy-turvy — incredible! That day of the luncheon, now — the mysterious warning — the bribe to Ferguson to smash up the yacht —"

A fine flush spread over the old man's face to the