

motioned Robert forward, whilst he remained in the background, anxious to hear the result of the interview. In an old-fashioned arm-chair sat the invalid, supported by pillows. An account-book lay on his knee, and his face, usually stern, wore an expression of unusual severity. Beside him stood a table to which Robert advanced, and finding he was not addressed, said, after an awkward pause, "You sent for me, uncle?"

The old man fixed a keen gaze on his nephew's countenance, and pointing with his finger to a row of figures in the book before him, replied, "How do you account for this?"

Robert glanced at the place indicated. "What is it, sir?"

"Do you observe the date, and the amount of this sum? Mr. Bunker tells me the money in the till was five pounds short when he counted it next morning, and as he was out most of the day, while you were left in sole charge, of course it is natural to suppose you are the only one capable of explaining the matter. What have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir. I was out part of the evening after Mr. Bunker's return, so I do not consider myself wholly accountable."

"You admit it looks suspicious?"

"I think you have very slight grounds for suspicion, sir."

"Indeed! Do you deny having procured a post-office order for exactly the amount of the missing sum on the following day?"

"No, uncle, I do not wish to deny that. I enclosed the order to my sister, who wrote to me that my mother was ill, and in want of money to purchase comforts."

"It is scarcely likely that you had so much money in hand since last quarter."

Robert was silent.