

"Look the facts in the face. Your uncle, as you see, was not so much as shaken in the accident; a man of your humane disposition ought to be delighted."

"Then, if that's so," Morris broke forth, "how about the body? You don't mean to insinuate that thing I schemed and sweated for, and colported with my own hands, was the body of a total stranger?"

"Oh no, we can't go as far as that," said Michael soothingly; "you may have met him at the club."

Morris fell into a chair. "I would have found it out if it had come to the house," he complained. "And why didn't it? why did it go to Pitman? what right had Pitman to open it?"

"If you come to that, Morris, what have you done with the colossal Hercules?" asked Michael.

"He went through it with the meat-axe," said John. "It's all in spillikens in the back garden."

"Well, there's one thing," snapped Morris; "there's my uncle again, my fraudulent trustee. He's mine, anyway. And the tontine too. I claim the tontine; I claim it now. I believe Uncle Masterman's dead."

"I must put a stop to this nonsense," said Michael, "and that for ever. You say too near the truth. In one sense your uncle is dead, and has been so long; but not in the sense of the tontine, which it is even on the cards he may yet live to win. Uncle Joseph saw him this morning; he will tell you he still lives, but his mind is in abeyance."

"He did not know me," said Joseph; to do him justice, not without emotion.