

"Yep; a pinch of chicken feed and wot felt like about four one-bone bills." The highwayman's accent was both ominous and contemptuous. "Say, wotcher mean drillin' round dis town in some kinder funny riggin' wit'out no plunder on you? I gotta right to belt you one acrost the bean."

"I'd rather you didn't do that," protested Mr. Leary in all seriousness. "If—if you'd only give me your address I could send you some money in the morning to pay you for your trouble——"

"Cut out de kiddin'," broke in the disgusted marauder. His tone changed slightly for the better. "Say, near as I kin tell by feelin' it, dat ain't such a bum benny you're sportin'. I'll jest take dat along wit' me. Letcher arms down easy and hold 'em straight out from yore sides while I gits it offen you. And no funny business!"

"Oh, please, please, don't take my overcoat," implored Mr. Leary, plunged by these words into a deeper panic. "Anything but that! I—you—you really mustn't leave me without my overcoat."

"Wot else is dere to take?"

Even as he uttered the scornful question the thief had wrested the garment from Mr. Leary's helpless form and was backing away into the darkness.

Out of impenetrable gloom came his farewell warning: "Stay right where you are for fi' minutes wit'out movin' or makin' a yelp. If you wiggle before de time is up I gotta pal right yere watchin' you, and he'll sure plug you. He ain't no easy-goin' guy like wot I am. You're gittin' off lucky it's me stuck you up, stidder him."