

certainly. I remember it perfectly. I have seen it a hundred times.'

'I believe I may say the same,' added the chairman. 'Yet how account for the way in which Mr. Langford asserts that it came into his possession?'

'I can only repeat,' I replied, 'that I found it on the floor of the carriage after Mr. Dwerrihouse had alighted. It was in leaning out to look after him that I trod upon it; and it was in running after him for the purpose of restoring it that I saw—or believed I saw—Mr. Raikes standing aside with him in earnest conversation.'

Again I felt Jonathan Jelf plucking at my sleeve.

'Look at Raikes,' he whispered,—'look at Raikes!'

I turned to where the under-secretary had been standing a moment before, and saw him, white as death, with lips trembling and livid, stealing towards the door.

To conceive a sudden, strange, and indefinite suspicion; to fling myself in his way; to take him by the shoulders as if he were a child, and turn his craven face, perforce, towards the board, were with me the work of an instant.

'Look at him!' I exclaimed. 'Look at his face! I ask no better witness to the truth of my words.'

The chairman's brow darkened.

'Mr. Raikes,' he said sternly, 'if you know anything, you had better speak.'

Vainly trying to wrench himself from my grasp, the under-secretary stammered out an incoherent denial.

'Let me go,' he said. 'I know nothing—you have no right to detain me—let me go!'

'Did you or did you not meet Mr. John Dwerrihouse at Blackwater station. The charge brought against you is either true or false. If true, you will do well to throw yourself upon the mercy of the board, and make full confession of all that you know.'

The under-secretary wrung his hands in agony of helpless terror.

'I was away,' he cried. 'I was two hundred miles away at the time! I know nothing about it—I have nothing to confess—I am innocent—I call God to witness I am innocent!'

'Two hundred miles away!' echoed the chairman. 'What do you mean?'

'I was in Devonshire. I had three weeks' leave of absence—I appeal to Mr. Hunter—Mr. Hunter knows I had three weeks' leave of absence! I was in Devonshire all the time—I can prove I was in Devonshire!'

Seeing him so abject, so incoherent, so

wild with apprehension, the directors began to whisper gravely among themselves, while one got quietly up, and called the porter to guard the door.

'What has you being in Devonshire to do with the matter?' said the chairman. 'When were you in Devonshire?'

'Mr. Raikes took his leave in September,' said the secretary; 'about the time when Mr. Dwerrihouse disappeared.'

'I never even heard that he had disappeared till I came back!'

'That must remain to be proved,' said the chairman. 'I shall at once put this matter in the hands of the police. In the meanwhile, Mr. Raikes, being myself a magistrate, and used to deal with these cases, I advise you to offer no resistance, but to confess while confession may yet do you service. As for your accomplice—'

The frightened wretch fell upon his knees.

'I had no accomplice!' he cried. 'Only have mercy upon me,—only spare my life, and I will confess all! I didn't mean to harm him! I didn't mean to hurt a hair of his head. Only have mercy upon me, and let me go!'

The chairman rose in his place, pale and agitated. 'Good heavens!' he exclaimed, 'what horrible mystery is this? What does it mean?'

'As sure as there is a God in heaven,' said Jonathan Jelf, 'it means that murder has been done.'

'No—no—no!' shrieked Raikes, still upon his knees, and cowering like a beaten hound. 'Not murder! No jury that ever sat could bring it in murder. I thought I had only stunned him!—I never meant to do more than stun him! Manslaughter—manslaughter—not murder!'

Overcome by the horror of this unexpected revelation, the chairman covered his face with his hand, and for a moment or two remained silent.

'Miserable man,' he said at length, 'you have betrayed yourself.'

'You bade me confess! You urged me to throw myself upon the mercy of the board!'

'You have confessed to a crime which no one suspected you of having committed,' replied the chairman, 'and which this board has no power either to punish or forgive. All that I can do for you is to advise you to submit to the law, to plead guilty, and to conceal nothing. When did you do this deed?'

The guilty man rose to his feet, and leaned heavily against the table. His answer