

money was offered to the robber, and not the victim?" hissed Brian; "are you so dull of comprehension as all that?"

"James Westbrook might have wished to help his old partner at any cost," murmured the father.

"No. It was offered in atonement—in expiation for a son's imaginary crime—under the impression that my grandfather was an injured man. You see?"

"Oh yes, I see! Would you have any particular objection to let go my arm, Brian, before you proceed any further with the narrative?"

"I beg pardon," said Brian; "I have hurt you?"

"Well, you have, a little," replied his father, rubbing vigorously at the part which Brian had released; "but go on, please. What did the girl think? Does she know——"

"Everything. I told her the few facts of the case this evening, and she will take back the money offered in error to our family."

"Take it back! Then it was given to my father?"

"A certain sum of money——"

"How much?"

"No matter the amount," Brian continued; "a certain sum of money was unfortunately paid into Penton Bank to the account of Adam Halfday—and it is our duty, the great business of our lives, to restore it to its rightful owner."

"Meaning Miss Westbrook?" said the father.

"Whom else could I mean?" was the sharp rejoinder.

"Exactly, you could not mean any one else," replied the father; "it's particularly clear to me that—that you could not mean any one else."

"This is a task in which you will help us to the uttermost," Brian continued; "it becomes easy with you at our side, a man sent by Heaven at the right moment to do justice to a friendless woman.—What are you looking over my head at?"

"Was I?" said the father, with a little jump at the abruptness of the question; "I was not aware of it."

"You understand that you *must* help us?" Brian said again, persistently.

"Yes," replied the father.

"You will be heir-at-law to this money—nominally heir-at-law—and letters of admin-

istration will be granted readily to you; to you and me, I hope," said Brian, thoughtfully.

"Ahem! yes."

"There will be a heavy loss upon the money held in trust for Mabel Westbrook: deductions for stamp duty, probate duty; all the ugly exactions devised by the Government for the wholesale robbery of widows and orphans will be put in force," said Brian savagely, "and we have not the money to make it good at present. Some day, perhaps," he added, with a brighter look upon his face, "I may be able to say she has not lost a penny by us."

"All this is beyond me," said William Halfday, planting his elbows on his knees, and taking his head between his palsied hands; "my head aches terribly, and I feel confused and ill."

"Will you have some weak brandy and water?"

"I don't mind a little cold brandy and water—not too weak," he added.

Whilst his son was getting the brandy from the cupboard, he remained in the same prostrate condition, and when Brian stood by him with a glass he did not perceive him till the son asked if he would drink.

"Thank you very much, Brian," he said with his old politeness, as he took the glass from his son's hand; "it is kind of you to think of me like this."

He drank the brandy and water at one gulp, and sat back in his chair.

"Is there any news in Penton?" he asked.

"Not any of importance to you or me."

"Are they all dead whom I used to know?" he said musingly; "who were friends, after a fashion—who respected me and believed in me?"

"I don't know who were your friends."

"Is Eversham, the lawyer, still in Cloister Street? I liked young Eversham; he was just beginning practice for himself when I left the city."

"He is grey-haired now; why do you ask?"

"I don't know; he came into my head," was the reply.

"You have another reason, I think?" said Brian suspiciously.

"I should like to give him a turn, and we must have a lawyer in this case," said the father; "we can't do without one."