

## THE MALHERB AMPHORA

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receptacle within two hours, he found the amphora was no longer there. All that man could do men did to recover the treasure; but not one sign of the amphora nor one shadowy clue as to its situation rewarded expert search. 'Then that nine days' wonder waned, and only the sufferer still smarted under his loss. He called upon his brother to make good this grave decrement of fortune, but the heir refused to do so, and a breach in the family widened from that hour.

Maurice Malherb alone of all those interested in this theft had suspected the old servant, Lovey Lee; yet knowledge of her character and peculiar propensities led him most stoutly to believe that she was the thief of the amphora. His father had trusted and honoured this gaunt creature. He had admired her remarkable physical courage, thrift, and common sense; and while Mrs. Lee always annoyed and disgusted the family, Sir Nicholas himself professed open respect for her, and found her secretly useful in ways not published to the world. Yet, upon his death, Lovey declared herself beyond measure shocked and disappointed at a legacy of one thousand pounds which the knight bequeathed to her. She fumed and fretted, spoke of unknown services, and loudly cried that the dead had inflicted upon her a cruel wrong.

Presently she vanished unregretted from the home of the Malherbs; and after her departure Maurice began to associate the old servant with his loss. The woman was traced and surprised. She posed as one deeply injured, and proved to demonstration that she knew nothing of the amphora. Yet its owner was not convinced, and within a year he himself sought out Lovey Lee in hope to make a bargain with her and recover his property by paying a generous sum and promising to take no step against her. She had, however, forfeited her life if guilty, for men and women hanged on light accusations a century ago. But Malherb never found the opportunity he desired, because Mrs. Lee had quite disappeared when he made search for her. During ten years he heard nothing of her fate; then chance threw him into the old woman's company again under this fury of a Dartmoor storm; and his first thought was the lost treasure.

In answer to the straight question, Lovey revealed both power of words and subtlety of mind. Her eyes glittered; each