

cruising about there's no counting on posts."

After all, however, there was no need to call him, or any other person but one, to afford evidence for Guy's defence. True that his counsel by-and-by stood up and commenced with great pomp an elaborate sketch of the line he intended to pursue. True that he took occasion to mention that early morning visit paid to Guy by the other two prisoners—a visit to which both his landlady and her maid would depose, and in the course of which their examination of the valid cheque had afforded opportunity to Mr. or Mrs. Smith for the substitution of the forgery, which Guy had unwittingly endorsed. True that he showed to his own satisfaction, if not to that of the jury, that the other defendants had a particular grudge against Guy, both because he had at least secured two thousand pounds from falling into their grip, and because of his open endeavours to circumvent their wicked designs; a more probable though less lover-like, solution of the mystery of their malice, by-the-bye, than that which Guy himself had offered to Mr. Keen. But the eminent Q.C. advanced no further in his arguments. For at that point there arose a sudden stir in the court, as the crowd round the door parted, to permit of the entrance of three or four persons whose appearance created a great sensation.

Nor was that any wonder. For there, amongst the new-comers, was not only to be seen Wynne Ryder, the prisoner's sister, who had astonished the whole family by declining to accompany them to Lowchester, but also—leaning upon the arm of her nurse and attended by Dr. Jaxon, who looked radiant with something more than professional triumph—the missing and sorely needed witness, Mrs. Brookes. She was, as of yore, attired in the most startling bonnet to be procured for money, and, except for a rather advantageous lack of colour, seemed much as usual. In a moment Sir Gregory Desson, whose eloquence had been thus unceremoniously interrupted, understood that his case was won. With prompt acuteness he wound up his remarks by there and then putting Mrs. Brookes into the witness box, to tell her own tale; which she did with a fluent directness that could scarcely have been pleasant even to such hardened evildoers as Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

She admitted, with amusing frankness, the attraction which the woman's assumed

title had been, both to herself and to her neighbours. She told in detail the many little schemes by means of which "Mr. Clive," as she still persisted in calling the male prisoner, had established his ascendancy over her. She explained about the blank cheque, which had been abstracted from the book she had entrusted for some hours to Clive's care. And she set at once and for ever at rest the vexed question as to the letter of acknowledgment, and the receipt given to her by Guy, and by her, exactly as the clergyman had stated, passed on to Mr. Smith.

"Has to a conspiracy," she burst out at last, in a fit of righteous indignation, breaking all bounds, amidst the delight of the spectators, "between Guy Ryder and them wretches, why, the *idea* is ridiculous, puffickly ridic'ous. Parson *has* 'e is, I believe 'e 'ated Caryl Clive most as much as Caryl Clive 'ated 'im, which is saying a deal. The times and agen as 'e's warned me o' their tricks, and I wouldn't listen!"

Altogether a more complete exoneration could scarcely have been afforded. Each word seemed to lift a fresh weight from Guy's mind; and upon the conclusion of Mrs. Brookes' evidence his counsel saw his way to apply for the immediate discharge of Mr. Ryder from the case. Upon the instruction of the judge, the prosecuting counsel offering no opposition, the jury acquitted Guy, and he left the court amidst cheers, with the welcome assurance still ringing in his ears that he did so with, if possible, a higher character than if the charge had never been brought against him.

The prisoners Smith, man and wife, were rightly sent into penal servitude for a term of years.

"I think *has* I've done you a good turn this time, Guy," was Mrs. Brookes' greeting.

"But it is to Dr. Jaxon that you owe everything," Dr. Baker assured the truly thankful clergyman that night. "It was his idea—he's a clever fellow for so young a man; there's no doubt about it!"

"I'll go and thank him," returned the other. "I have said something, though not half enough."

"He's in the drawing-room," observed Mary. "I left him there just now with Wynne." Neither to her nor to Guy did the conjunction of the two names bring enlightenment. But that was not to be delayed for long.

Standing by the conservatory door,