

304 THE COTTAGE ON THE FELS

"He flung away all artifice, and became the old man he was. The removal of his false teeth alone gave him twenty years of age.

"He took the cottage at Sonning, determining to lie close. But the murder instinct was too strong for him, and he killed Bronson."

Then Freyberger told his own story.

"I was lying in the cottage listening to this monster digging my grave, when, suddenly, I heard him fall crash amidst the weeds. I fainted, I believe. Mr Hellier will tell you the rest."

"I had a reason for mixing myself up in this affair," said Hellier; "and, reading of the murder of Bronson I came down to Sonning to make inquiries. I asked, had anyone come to live there lately? and I was told by a woman that a gentleman had taken a cottage on the Henley Road. Fortunately, she did not say an old gentleman, or I should not have gone there.

"I went to the cottage, knocked, could get no answer, and went round the backway.

"In the back garden, by a newly-dug grave, I found a man lying, with a spade clutched in his hand; he was dead. I found Mr Freyberger bound in the cottage, and I released him."

"Klein must have dropped dead then?" said the chief.

"Yes," replied Freyberger. "He died of