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On the next morning we were at the office fully an hour before opening time, and searched in every hole and corner for the missing bill, but all in vain, for it was nowhere to be found. Poor Hare was almost distracted. "I would not have had this happen for a thousand pounds. Mr. Grindley has again and again accused me of more interest in Gregory than mere sympathy instigated, and now I do not know what he will think."

He very soon did know what Mr. Grindley thought, for the two were closeted together in the inner sanctum, and I heard old Grab's voice speaking in a tone of bitter indignation, and Hare's in earnest remonstrance. Presently the door opened, and Hare came out with his face flushed with shame, whilst Grindley stood majestically on the threshold, and, like some patriarch of a transpontine theatre, declaimed,

"Go, ungrateful and miserable robber, but be assured that your ill gotten gain will do you no good, for the money that Gregory gives you will be a poor recompense for the loss of place and character. Go, but remember you go not punishmentless, for I will make honest men point their finger on you and call you THIEF, and I will follow you up to the very end."

To my surprise Hare answered nothing, he seemed dazed and horror-stricken, then collecting his little properties that lay about the office, he left without even a word to me, and I was too much affected to break in upon his trouble, even though it was to assure him of my belief in his innocence.

In a few minutes Old Grab called me into his room, and after a long diatribe against the immorality, ingratitude, and dishonesty of Hare, informed me that I was of course to be no longer an inmate of his house, but that other quarters would be prepared for me, and that I was from that time forth to drop all acquaintance with the Hares. To this I manfully replied,

"Mr. Hare never stole your bill, and I will sooner go home than obey you. I shall not give up his acquaintance until I know that he is a thief."

Mr. Grindley seemed vexed at my obstinacy, but muttering something about "the rash confidence of youth," evinced, to my surprise, no external anger.

I did not give up the acquaintance of the Hares, although my new whereabouts was at the other side of London. I was greatly pained at the sufferings they had to endure, for month after month dragged them into deeper difficulties. Baffled on all sides Hare could obtain no employment, and having first sold every available article of luxury, he at last disposed of his furniture, took his wife and little one into lodgings, and so step by step I watched with intense chagrin their progressive decay. Few could recognize in the seedy, shabby, broken down unfortunate, the light-hearted Archie Hare, who but a few months ago was in the prime of youth and buoyancy of spirit; Rose, too, sank into a haggard shadow of her former self, but, by her faint attempts to be cheerful, kept up her husband's courage.

Meanwhile a year had elapsed, and Christmas was again approaching. One morning to my surprise, Rose, so careworn and different from her former self, came into the office and desired to speak to Grindley. "I am going," she said, "to plead for Archie; he can get no work to do so long as Mr.