

mortified to the last degree to find that all his efforts in the trade which he really liked seemed now to fail, he became more and more unkind and morose to Ellen, just at the time when her health required the greatest tenderness and care.

At last the measure of his ill-luck seemed to be filled up. He was called, by one of the partners in the firm, to their private room, and there he was shown a desk, which had been ingeniously opened, and from which certain bills had been abstracted. No one but Spencer had been in the outer room since Mr. Bristow had left this private department; and the worst of the matter was, that some of the notes had been traced to a shop where they had been changed by a person of the same height and size as Spencer, and wearing, as he generally did, a grey coat and a blue cloth cap. The partners said that as this was the first sum they had lost, and the robbery was of course a first offence, they therefore meant to overlook it, and take no measures to convict Spencer of the theft; but all his protestations failed to shake their conviction of his guilt, and he was told that he could not be allowed to return there the next day. In order not to throw suspicion on him, in the eyes of the workmen, he was allowed to remain at the factory till all the hands left it; and in consideration of his previous good character, and of his wife's delicate health, the Brothers Bristow gave Spencer, when they paid him his salary, something more than was his due.

In confusion of mind, and in a state of wretchedness not to be described, Spencer tottered, rather than walked towards his home. A quick step echoed behind him, and a hand was laid on his shoulder. He turned round fiercely, and saw the face of George Freeman, looking sorrowfully and kindly at him.

"Spencer!" said George, almost tenderly.

"George, why have you done all this to me?"