

come to herself, only see how she trembles when he draws nigh!"

"I verily believe," said I, "poor Bessie Hobson owes her life to your kindness and your wife's."

"Well, do you see, sir, we do pity the poor creature heartily; but it's not only from pity we've kept so closely waiting on her. You must know that it's my own brother, William, that Bessie was keeping company with, and many and many in the town believes he did it out of jealousy of that ere Frenchman. But Will's as innocent as the babe unborn, and that will be proved soon, though the police are after him. Still, if that poor creature had died, it might have gone very hard with my poor brother when he did come back, as I expect he soon will. Now there's good hope we shall hear the whole truth from the lips of one who's sure to know who did it."

Great interest continued to be excited in Deal by Bessie's state. That a woman should live after having her throat cut almost from ear to ear, seemed little short of miraculous.

But live she did, and daily she gained strength and flesh. A collection was made for her, and she was soon surrounded with every comfort. About a month after the horrible occurrence, she was able to get up, and take her meals seated by the fire; but, to the great disappointment of all around, she had not recovered the powers of speech. This I attributed to the dreadful shock the nervous system had received, and, as month after month passed away, and in this respect there was no improvement, I began to fear she would remain permanently dumb. However, she no longer lived on charity. She was very clever at her needle, and the proceeds of her work more than supported herself. She had left the rude cot in which I first found her, nearly floating in her own blood, and had taken up her residence with her kind friends, Tom Blake and his wife.

One fine afternoon, Bessie was seated with Mrs. Blake in the honeysuckle arbour at the end of the little garden, both busy with their needles. Who should suddenly appear before them but William Blake.

"William!" exclaimed the poor girl, who had been so long speechless; "thank God, you have returned!" and, almost beside herself with joy, she was clasped in her lover's arms.

Yes, joy and love had restored the power of which terror and agony had bereft her.

William told her that, in a fit of jealousy, he had determined to leave his native country, and try to push his fortunes in America. But he soon repented of the step he had taken; not only he found he could not be happy far from Bessie, but one of his fellow-passengers turned out to be the identical French sailor, who had driven him nearly mad with jealousy. William returned in the ship that had conveyed him from England. We know the reception he met with from the being on earth he loved the most.

On Bessie's part there was now no hesitation in confessing the whole truth. Had not William returned, she would have spared the memory of her wretched brother; but now a full confession was necessary to vindicate her lover.

To me, and to the magistrate, Bessie related how, as she was returning one night, much later than usual, from a house where she had been working at her needle, she lost her way, and, instead of taking the road to the town, followed the one which led to the beach, and how she had suddenly come upon her brother, as, with a ruffianly set of well-known smugglers, he was rolling barrels of contraband spirits into a cave, through a door painted so as to resemble the cliff, and of which the good people of Deal had not the least suspicion.

Bessie was dreadfully terrified, and hoped to retrace her steps before she was perceived. She did not so much fear her brother, but she had a great terror of his companions. So great was her agitation, she hardly knew how she got back. Her brother did not return for a couple of hours. He found her pondering over the embers of their scanty fire. She was a thoughtful, God-fearing girl, and it seemed to her wicked to allow her brother to go on in his wicked ways, without one word of warning or exhortation. She found it rather difficult to approach the subject, and she almost relented having done so at all, when,

by Tom Hobson's start of surprise, she discovered that he had not seen her that night at the cave.

Unfortunately for herself, Bessie threatened Tom with telling the minister of the parish if he did not give up his wicked associates and lawless practices. Bessie says she shall never forget the expression that came over her brother's countenance when, hoping to deter him from utter ruin, she had recourse to this threat.

But Hobson made no answer at the time, and Bessie went to bed. She was roused by the sound of the terrible words. "You shan't live to peach upon me," uttered by Hobson, rushing at her with a broad, sharp gardener's knife, which he used when he went out occasionally as journeyman gardener.

Bessie remembered no more; but Blake told me that he happened at the very time to be returning from sitting up with his mother, who was dangerously ill; that hearing shrieks he burst open the door of Hobson's crazy dwelling, and met the master of it, with the bloody knife in his hand, uttering loud lamentations, and declaring that his sister had cut her own throat, as he believed, through a quarrel with his (Blake's) brother Will, if he had not got in at the window and done it himself, to serve Bessie out for walking with the Frenchman.

"Run for the doctor," says I; "she mayn't be quite dead yet," continued Blake when relating the facts to me; "and while he did so, I tore up one of the old sheets, and bound up poor Bessie's throat in her own blood. I must have been helped from on high, for you yourself say sir, you couldn't have done it better yourself. Blake added, he did not believe one word of what Hobson said, for that Bess was too good a girl to lay violent hands upon herself, and that he believed Will was half way to New York; but one thing I said and I stuck to, Tom shan't have this poor creature in his power again, so I, or my wife, or the police, have watched her ever since, but this you know as well as I do."

"I know," answered I, "that under Providence you and your wife have saved this excellent young woman's life, and perhaps your brother Will's into the bargain. So many murders have been committed under the influence of jealousy that it would have gone hard with him, and he might not have been able to get hold of those who could prove an *alibi*."

The doctor concluded his sensational story with the information that Will Blake and Bessie Hobson were happily married.

"These details, my dear madam," said Dr. Simley, still addressing my mother, "are a warning to all who place too much reliance on circumstantial evidence. In former times, when human life was held less sacred than it is now, I fear there are many of those cases of which Pope, the great satirist, speaks—

"When wretches hang, that jurymen may dine."

In the course of this story, to which you have listened with such flattering attention, how often have circumstances pointed at innocent parties, and what a strange concatenation of circumstances was necessary to prove 'Who Did It.' L. G.

## TWENTY-FIVE DARK HOURS.

I'M what we call a ganger, and have so many men under me when we're making a new line o' rail. I passed best part o' my time in the country; but I have worked on the lines in France and Spain; but what I'm about to tell you happened in London, where we'd sunk a shaft right down, and then was tunnelling forwards and backwards—the shaft being to get rid of your stuff, and sometimes for a steam-engine to be pumping up the water. It's rather dangerous work, and a many men gets hurt; but then a great deal of it's through carelessness, for lots of our fellows seems as though the whole o' their brains is in their backs and arms, where they're precious strong, and nowhere else; but I'd got so used to it, that in cutting or tunnel it was all the same to me, and now I was busy supering the men digging, and sometimes brick-laying a bit, so that I thought werry little about danger when I'd seen as all the shores and props was well in their places.

It was just at the end o' the dinner-hour one day, and I was gone down the shaft to have a good look round before work begun again, and I'd got my right-hand man, Sam Carberry, with me. It was a new shaft, about thirty foot deep, with ladders to go down, and a windlass and baskets for bringing up stuff and letting down bricks and mortar.

We hadn't tunnelled more than p'raps some ten or a dozen foot each way, so as you may suppose it was werry fresh—green, as we call it; and I wasn't quite satisfied about the shoring up, and so on, for you know fellows do get so precious careless when once they've got used to danger; and as for some of our big navvies, why they're jest like a set o' babies, and for everything else but their regular work, they're quite as helpless. Tell 'em to fill a lorry, or skid a wheel, or wheel a barrer, they'll do it like smoke; but as to taking care o' themselves—but there, I needn't say no more about that—just look at the great, good-tempered, lolloping fellows! A man can't have it all ways; and if he's got it all in bone and muscle, why 'tain't to be expected as he's going to have all the brains too.

"That's giving a bit there, Sam," I says, a-pointing to one part o' the shaft where the earth was a-bulging and looked loose. "That ain't safe. There'll be a barrer full o' stuff a-top o' somebody's head afore the arternoon's over. That's the rain—that is. Take your melle and knock out that lower shore, and we'll put it a couple o' foot higher up. Mind how you does it!" Sam nods his head, for he was a chap as never spoke if he could help it, and then he gets up, while I takes a look or two at the brick-work, so as not to be done by the men, nor yet dropped on by the foreman. Then I hears Sam banging away at the bit o' scaffold-pole, and directly after it comes down with a hollow sound; and then there was a rattling o' loose gravelly earth as I peeps out, and then feels as though my heart was in my mouth, for I shouts out: "That's the wrong one!" But in an instant Sam dropped to the bottom, and as he did so, it seemed as though some one drew a curtain over the hole, and then I felt a tremendous blow on the chest, and was driven backwards and dashed up against the wood scaffolding in the tunnel, and I suppose I was stunned, for I knew nothing more for a bit. Then it seemed as though I was being called, and I sorter woke up; but everything was dark as pitch and silent as death, and feeling heavy and misty and stupid, I shut my eyes again, and felt as if going to sleep, for there didn't seem to be anything the matter to me. It was as though something had shut up thought and sense in the dark, and not a wink of light could get in. But there I was in a sort of dreamy comfortable state, and lay there perfectly still, till a groaning noise roused me, when thought come back with a blinding flash, and so sharp was that flash that my brain seemed scorched, for I knew that I was buried alive!

For a few minutes I stood where I first rose up in a half-stooping position, with my head and shoulders touching the poles and boards above me; but a fresh groan made me begin to feel about in the darkness, and try to find out where I was, and how much room I had to move in. But that was soon done, for at the bottom there was about a yard space, and as far up as I could reach it seemed a couple of yards, while the other way there was the width of the tunnel. I dared not move much, though, for the earth and broken brickwork kept rolling and crumbling in, so that every moment the space grew less, and a cold sweat came out all over my face, as I thought that I should soon be crushed and covered completely up. Just then, however, another groan sounded close by me, and for the first time I remembered Sam Carberry, and began feeling about in the direction from whence the sound came.

Bricks, bits o' stone, crumbling gravel, the uprights and cross-pieces and bits of board all in splinters, and snapped in two and three pieces, with their ragged ends sticking out of the gravel. But I could feel nothing of Sam, and I sat down at last, panting as though I had been running, and there was the big drops a rolling off me, while I drew every breath that heavy that I grew wild with horror and fear; for it