

refer to upon this

touched the silver  
porter in attend-  
Raikes. From a word  
of the directors,  
Raikes was one of the

ght, sandy-haired,  
rager, nervous man-  
t beard and mus-  
himself at the door  
being requested to  
from a certain shelf  
and vanished.

moment, and the  
so great and sud-  
the door had closed  
oice to speak. He  
ever, than I sprang

'Is the same who  
on the platform at

ement of surprise,  
e and somewhat

rd,' he said, 'take

identity as of my

consequences of  
sider that you are  
gravest character  
'servants?'

upon my oath, 'if  
came to the door  
whom I saw talk-  
on the Blackwater  
times the com-  
neither more nor

again to the

s in the train, or

Raikes was not in  
certainly did not

xt to the secre-

ce, Mr. Hunter,'  
nber if he was

replied the sec-  
pared to speak  
away most after-  
Mr. Raikes might  
f if he had been

der-secretary re-

turned with the day-book under his arm.  
'Be pleased to refer, Mr. Raikes,' said the  
chairman, 'to the entries of the fourth in-  
stant, and see what Benjamin Somers' duties  
were on that day.'

Mr. Raikes threw open the cumbrous  
volume, and ran a practised eye and finger  
down some three or four successive columns  
of entries. Stopping suddenly at the foot  
of a page, he then read aloud that Ben-  
jamin Somers had on that day conducted  
the 4.15 express from London to Crampton.

The chairman leaned forward in his seat,  
looked the under-secretary full in the face,  
and said, quite sharply and suddenly,—

'Where were you, Mr. Raikes, on the same  
afternoon?'

'I, sir?'

'You, Mr. Raikes. Where were you on  
the afternoon and evening of the fourth of  
the present month?'

'Here, sir,—in Mr. Hunter's office. Where  
else should I be?'

There was a dash of trepidation in the  
under-secretary's voice as he said this; but  
his look of surprise was natural enough.

'We have some reason for believing, Mr.  
Raikes, that you were absent that afternoon  
without leave. Was this the case?'

'Certainly not, sir. I have not had a day's  
holiday since September. Mr. Hunter will  
bear me out in this.'

Mr. Hunter repeated what he had pre-  
viously said on the subject, but added that  
the clerks in the adjoining office would be  
certain to know. Whereupon the senior  
clerk, a grave, middle-aged person, in green  
glasses, was summoned and interrogated.

His testimony cleared the under-secretary  
at once. He declared that Mr. Raikes had  
in no instance, to his knowledge, been ab-  
sent during office hours since his return from  
his annual holiday in September.

I was confounded. The chairman turned  
to me with a smile, in which a shade of  
covert annoyance was scarcely apparent.

'You hear, Mr. Langford,' he said.  
'I hear, sir; but my conviction remains  
unshaken.'

'I fear, Mr. Langford, that your con-  
victions are very insufficiently based,' re-  
plied the chairman, with a doubtful cough.

'I fear that you dream dreams, and mis-  
take them for actual occurrences. It is a  
dangerous habit of mind, and might lead to  
dangerous results. Mr. Raikes here would  
have found himself in an unpleasant position,  
had he not proved so satisfactory an *alibi*.

I was about to reply, but he gave me no  
time.

'I think, gentlemen,' he went on to say,  
addressing the board, 'that we should be

wasting time to push this inquiry further.  
Mr. Langford's evidence would seem to be  
of an equal value throughout. The testimony  
of Benjamin Somers disproves his first state-  
ment, and the testimony of the last witness  
disproves his second. I think we may con-  
clude that Mr. Langford fell asleep in the  
train on the occasion of his journey to Clay-  
borough, and dreamt an unusually vivid and  
circumstantial dream—of which, however,  
we have now heard quite enough.'

There are few things more annoying than to  
find one's positive convictions met with in-  
credulity. I could not help feeling impa-  
tience at the turn that affairs had taken. I  
was not proof against the civil sarcasm of the  
chairman's manner. Most intolerable of all,  
however, was the quiet smile lurking about  
the corners of Benjamin Somers' mouth, and  
the half-triumphant, half-malicious gleam in  
the eyes of the under-secretary. The man  
was evidently puzzled, and somewhat alarm-  
ed. His looks seemed furtively to interro-  
gate me. Who was I? What did I want?  
Why had I come there to do him an ill turn  
with his employers? What was it to me  
whether or no he was absent without leave?

Seeing all this, and perhaps more irritated  
by it than the thing deserved, I begged  
leave to detain the attention of the board for  
a moment longer. Jelf plucked me impa-  
tiently by the sleeve.

'Better let the thing drop,' he whispered.  
'The chairman's right enough. You dreamt  
it; and the less said now the better.'

I was not to be silenced, however, in this  
fashion. I had yet something to say, and I  
would say it. It was to this effect; that  
dreams were not usually productive of tangi-  
ble results, and that I requested to know in  
what way the chairman conceived I had  
evolved from my dream so substantial and  
well-made a delusion as the cigar-case which  
I had had the honour to place before him at  
the commencement of our interview.

The cigar-case, I admit, Mr. Langford,  
the chairman replied, 'is a very strong  
point in your evidence. It is your only  
strong point, however, and there is just a  
possibility that we may all be misled by a  
mere accidental resemblance. Will you per-  
mit me to see the case again?'

'It is unlikely,' I said as I handed it to  
him, 'that any other should bear precisely  
this monogram, and yet be in all other par-  
ticulars exactly similar.'

The chairman examined it for a moment  
in silence, and then passed it to Mr. Hunter.  
Mr. Hunter turned it over and over, and  
shook his head.

'This is no mere resemblance,' he said.  
'It is John Dwerrihouse's cigar-case to a