

Some stones had rolled down from the coping, and the walking was difficult. But there was still a good deal of light, as soon as I had turned the corner. For the west was bright with a late golden afterglow. Quite useful it was.

I was just about the middle, just where the gates with their broken blazons had stood, for it had been a swell place once. Also there was a short cut across to the Bewick road. I passed between the damaged stone posts, which, however, still stood upright. As I did so, something sprang at me with the growl of a hungry tiger. I had hardly time to glance up, and even then I could see no more than a vaguely shining head, and an arm uplifted to strike, with something glittering in it like a crescent moon.

There was no time for defence. There was no time for escape. The Thing, beast, or man—more beast-like now than human—was upon me and bore me down. But even while the danger was in the air, I heard a sound which appeared to me not at all like a shot—more like a spit of fire when a log sparks on the hearth. And in a moment I was prone on my face, bruised and beaten down by the weight. I heard a jangle of steel. I supposed that I was wounded—that this was the end. And with the Thing heavy on the top of me, I fainted away.