

dragged the document from the envelope and coolly perused it. Joe himself had now no qualms as to reading it also.

"You are on the high road to 'making good'," said Hank. "There ain't no reason now in waiting longer. Read! It aer as clear as daylight that Hurley had made up his mind to wipe you out and then to make for England with the idea of passing himself off as your father."

When they were able to gather all the details, this, indeed, proved to be the crux of the whole conspiracy, and the death of Hurley had alone put an end to it. It is not for us to raise doubts here as to his prospects. Doubtless there was many a slip which he might have made, for criminals are ever careless; but matters were decidedly in his favour. That receipt, still within the envelope, would obtain for him all the proofs of Mr. Bradley's birth and life and parentage. The signature, doubtless, he would learn to copy, while the very fact of Joe's father having kept so much to himself would have made Hurley's non-recognition at the Bradleys' old home of no moment. The weak point, however, arrived when he expected residents in the little provincial town where Joe had spent his early existence to recognize in Hurley the cycle maker who they knew had died quite lately.

"He'd have been had there," said Joe thoughtfully, "unless, of course, he had declared that he never lived in England after he was twenty years of age. Ah! that was his game; he had become a colonist.