WILKIE COLLINS

THE MOONSTONE

Wilkie Collins

The Moonstone

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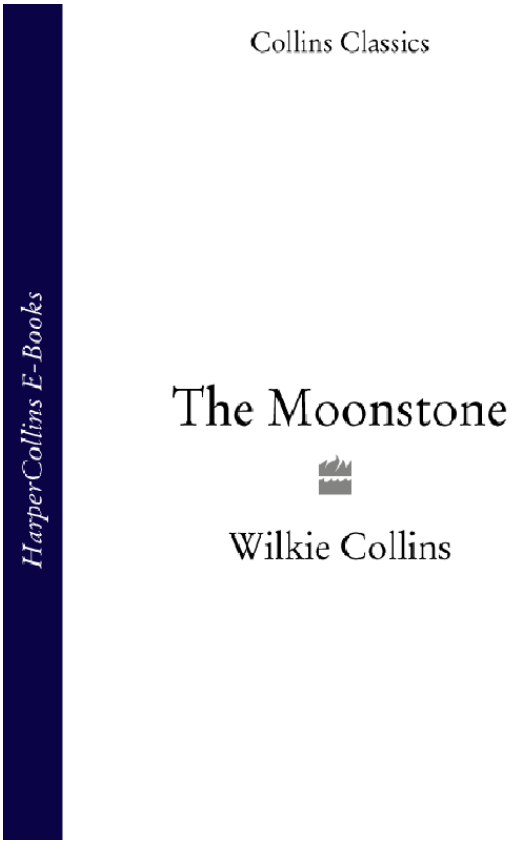
The Moonstone / W. Collins — «HarperCollins»,

HarperCollins is proud to present its new range of best-loved, essential classics.‘The horrid mystery hanging over us in this house gets into my head like liquor, and makes me wild.’Centred around a glorious yellow diamond that carries with it a menacing history, The Moonstone tells the story of Rachel Verinder, who inherits the stone on her eighteenth birthday. That very evening, the diamond is stolen and there begins an epic enquiry into hunting down the thief. At the same time, three Indian men, Brahmin guardians of the diamond are attempting to reclaim the stone in order to return it to their sacred Hindu Idol.Told from the perspective of 11different characters, Wilkie Collins’ tale of mystery and suspicion was considered the first modern English detective novel at its time of publication.

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 1928, when the boom in â##seriousâ## detective-novel writing which began round about the first world war was nearing its height, and the â##art and scienceâ## of it was being very seriously discussed, an eminent detective novelist, in a forty-five page introduction to a vast collection of stories, let fall the opinion that â##*The Moonstone* is probably the finest detective story ever written.â## Until that date, Wilkie Collins had been slightly regarded by connoisseurs, unless they were specialists in lesser Victorian fictionâ##â##In the British Museum catalogue,â## discovered the shocked author of this encomium, â##only two studies of this celebrated mystery-monger are listed: one is by an American, and the other by a German.â## Thereafter, however, he became great; he was almost canonised as the direct ancestor of Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Thorndyke, Hercule Poirot, Lemmy Caution, and all the tribe.

It is interesting, therefore, to observe that Collins himself did not think of *The Moonstone* as a detective story at all. This was not because the *genre* had not yet come into existence. The solution of a crime by the exercise of pure ratiocination on the part of a single mind had been set out in classic form twenty years before by Edgar Allan Poe in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*â##in which, incidentally, the character-scheme of Dupin *plus* adoring chronicler set the convenient pattern which was repeated in Holmes *plus* Watson, Poirot *plus* Hastings, and many other subsequent combinations. In France, also, the *roman policier* was developing fast in the hands of Gaboriau and Du Boisgobey. Collins, if he had wanted to write, â##the finest detective story,â## had no lack of models; but he did not. What he himself thought of the intention of his own novelâ##and he presumably knew what he meant to doâ##he set out in the preface:

â##The attempt made, here, is to trace the influence of character on circumstances. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl (Rachel Verinder) supplies the foundation on which I have built this book.â##

He goes on to say that he has endeavoured to make his subsidiary characters behave as they would have behaved; and adds that his account of the â##physiological experimentâ##â##the dosing of Franklin Blake with laudanum in order to induce him to repeat his sleep-walking actions on the night of the disappearance of the Moonstoneâ##is based on a careful study of books and of living authorities. Clearly what interested the author of *The Moonstone* was not the detail of the theft of the gem and the subsequent tracking down of those responsible, but the effect of the whole series of events on the behaviour of his characters. That is to say, he was writing a novel with a plot, not a cross-word puzzle.

There are, of course, elements in *The Moonstone* which have since become classic detective-story-componentsâ##so classic, indeed, that later writers seeking to avoid monotony have drawn especial attention to the fact that they are *not* using the established formula. There is the very stupid policeman, in this case Superintendent Seegrave, who is a worthy ancestor of Lestrade, Inspector Japp, and of all the police officers whom Dr. Thorndyke bewildered in his day. There is the crime brought home, after suspicion has been well distributed to the most unlikely persons; although, on the other hand, Collins is scrupulously fair and makes no attempt to confuse the reader by presenting the real criminal as a person too attractive to be mistrusted. There are some clues, notably the paint-stained nightgown, though the paint-stained nightgown does not solve the mystery; it is, in fact, not much more use to Sergeant Cuff than a blood-stained nightgown was to that unfortunate Detective Whicher whom some suppose to have been the real life model for the Sergeant. (The Constance Kent case, as a matter of fact, except for the incident of the nightgown, bears practically no resemblance to the plot of *The Moonstone*.) Finally, there is the clear attempt to build up Sergeant Cuff into a â##character,â## by stressing his peculiar physical appearance and his reiterated interest in the growing of roses. This might legitimately be regarded as a foreshadowing of the long array of

detectives noted for personal idiosyncrasiesâ##Sherlock Holmes above all, but including also Lord Peter Wimsey, with his collectorâ##s mania, the blind Max Carrados of Ernest Bramah, Baroness Orczyâ##s Old Man in the Corner, who fiddled with string, and a dozen others, as well as some whose distinguishing characteristic is proudly stated to be that of possessing none whatever.

The creation of an idiosyncratic and therefore easily-memorised detective is one of the established tricks of the trade, enabling the detective to last out a course of thirty to fifty novels, and so to fix himself in the publicâ##s mind that at the circulating library counter the inveterate asks for â##the new Poirotâ## or whatever it may be. Sophisticated moderns may, however, observe that Sergeant Cuffâ##s roses are rather over-stressed, and have very little relevance to the matter in hand; and, more devastatingly, that Sergeant Cuff, though doing in the course of the book, some pretty detection, was quite wrong in his conclusions, and did not solve the mystery in this, his first recorded case. He does not appear, in *The Moonstone*, likely to earn his creator the modest competence which writers of detective stories expect by solving twenty or thirty problems in the future. He is no omniscient, no Great Brainâ##Poeâ##s Dupin is a far more plausible prototype for the twentieth-century paladins. Sergeant Cuff is what his creator intended him to be, a character in his own right, a policeman playing a part in a story of real people with a mystery at its heart.

This type of story was extremely common in the mid-Victorian eraâ##a fact which the sudden glorification of *The Moonstone* tends to obscure. The Victorians loved a mystery, or a crime, or both, set in the ordinary development of plot. The greatest of them all has made his contribution in the unsolved *Mystery of Edwin Drood*; but few people appear to remember nowadays how many of the popular Victorian novels had a mystery (often involving a policeman) as their main or subsidiary plot. Leaving aside other books of Collinsâ## own, such as *No Name* or *Armadale*, we may turn to Trollope and note, among many possible candidates, *Is He Popenjoy?*, a mystery of inheritance, the murder of Mr. Bonteen, which takes up so much of the space of *Phineas Redux, Orley Farm*, and the theft story in the *Last Chronicle of Barset.*

Let us go a little further afield. Mrs. Henry Wood is chiefly known, to this generation, for the sensational sentimentalities of *East Lynne*â##itself in some sort a mystery novel. But a very much better book of hersâ##*The Channings*â##which deserves a revival, contains within its 450 pages no fewer than three mysteries. It begins with the problem of a choristerâ##s surplice found stained with ink, to the great disgrace of the cathedral schoolâ##it is only close to the end of the book that this ill-deed is finally brought home to the most disagreeable of a disagreeable family, Gerald Yorke. It continues with the theft of a twenty-pound note, for which the noble Arthur Channing long bears the blameâ##the situation being further confused by speculation as to how Hamish Channing, Arthurâ##s brother, was suddenly in a position to pay off his small scale creditors; and further chronicles the complete disappearance of Charley, the youngest Channing, after having been frightened by a bogus ghost in the cathedral cloisters. It must be admitted that the eminent authoress, having landed herself with a slight over-plus of plot, shows a lamentable lack of interest in Charley Channing, only restoring him to life, with a minimum of explanation, in time for the happy reunion at the end of the book; also that Mr. Butterby, the representative of the law, is exhibited as singularly incompetent. Nevertheless, *The Channings* is a novel which, like *The Moonstone*, traces â##the influence of character on circumstances,â## and particularly of characters in contact with crime. The long *Johnny Ludlow* series, by the same author, is also very much concerned with crime and its detection and (or) punishment; and to enter yet more respectable precincts, it should be remembered that Charlotte Yonge, whose saga-volumes of Victorian family life now fetch such high second-hand prices, devoted the whole of one book, *The Trial*, to a murder-mystery, and that a large part even of *The Daisy Chain* turns on the questions â##who inked the school-masterâ##s book?â## and â##will Norman Mayâ##s character be re-established?â##

The list could be extended almost indefinitely. Henry Kingsleyâ##s once very popular *Ravenshoe* is written around a mystery of parentage which dictates most of the plot. The point

to realise is that the Victorian story-tellers, and the Victorian story-readers, accepted crime and punishment as things that might happen to anyone in the course of lifeâ##and made the life-story that much more readable if they did happen. But these crimes and punishments happened to real charactersâ##or characters as real as the novelistâ##s ability could compass. The characters were not subordinated and compelled to dance around to the exigencies of a plot which demands a body in a country-house library, a number of resident guests and servants each with their own discreditable and penetrable motives for murder, a paraphernalia of scientific instruments of detection, and a veneer of literary erudition to cover up the lack of any human interest; they were not imprisoned in a depressing mechanistic pattern. As counterbalance, of course, the Victorian novels tend to lack the puzzle fascination; they know little of the natural habitat of duck-weeds (Freeman) or the technique of electro-plating a murdered corpse so as to serve as a studio couch (Sayers). And the suspense they engender is not so much suspense about the identity of the criminal as suspense about how the innocently-accused is to be vindicated and the happy ending brought about without too many broken homes and death-beds on the way. (It must be admitted that Mrs. Henry Wood overindulged in death-beds as much as Trollope did in inheritance problems.) By all these criteria, *The Moonstone* is a Victorian novel, and not a detective story.

Not that it is any the worse for that. As a story, it is a very good one, excellently deployed, and it dispenses with any adventitious sensationalism. The death of Rosanna Spearman arises directly out of the character and past history of Rosanna Spearman; and in view of the date at which the book was written, the absence of any sentimentalising over that unfortunate girl is quite remarkable. Subsequent detective novelistsâ##not, fortunately, Conan Doyleâ##were too often constrained, either by their publishers or by their own conception of what the public wanted, to insert a â##love-interestâ## into their novels. â##Love-interestâ## not fitting very well into mechanistic plots, the result was often deplorable. There is no need to particularise, only to mention that the introduction of a young lovely burning to avenge the corpse, or devoted to the chief suspectâ##or in any other capacityâ##tends seriously to hamper the activities of a detective who is working out the possible permutations of Bradshaw, or the chemical composition of a piece of tarred rope, or the significance of quotations from the works of T. S. Eliot scattered in unlikely places. It is not without significance that the English fictional detectives who have stayed the course best have been those expressly immune to amorous adventureâ##Sherlock Holmes, an egocentric neurotic, Dr. Thorndyke, a handsome kindly â##block of teak,â## Father Brown, a priest, Dr. Priestly, a disagreeable elderly scientist, and several policemen happily married to undistinguished wives: their French counterparts fall in and out of love with the victim, the criminal, or bothâ##but that is Gallic levity frowned upon across the Channel.

In *The Moonstone*, however, there *is* a love-interest, that of the relations of Franklin Blake with the two women who loved him, which is both interesting and relevant to the story; and the further device of narration in turns by the people directly concerned adds to the human interest. No matter that it is not very probable that Gabriel Betteredge would ever have succeeded in putting pen to paper so as to cover the pages which he is made to cover here; this is what Gabriel, being Gabriel, would have written if he could have written it at such length. Similarly, this is what Miss Drusilla Clack would have written had she been completely frankâ##as, with a pen in her hand, she would probably not have been. And so with the rest. The net effect of all of which is that, though the paraphernalia of the Indian temple and the Buddhist priests is rather hastily written in, and though *The Moonstone* cannot be regarded as the master-pattern of the modern detective story, it remains something much more permanentâ##a thoroughly good novel.

G. D. H. and Margaret Cole

PREFACE

In some of my former novels, the object proposed has been to trace the influence of circumstances upon character. In the present story I have reversed the process. The attempt made here is to trace the influence of character on circumstances. The conduct pursued, under a sudden emergency, by a young girl, supplies the foundation on which I have built this book.

The same object has been kept in view in the handling of the other characters which appear in these pages. Their course of thought and action under the circumstances which surround them is shown to be (what it would most probably have been in real life) sometimes right and sometimes wrong. Right or wrong, their conduct, in either event, equally directs the course of those portions of the story in which they are concerned.

In the case of the physiological experiment which occupies a prominent place in the closing scenes of *The Moonstone*, the same principle has guided me once more. Having first ascertained, not only from books, but from living authorities as well, what the result of that experiment would really have been, I have declined to avail myself of the novelistâ##s privilege of supposing something which might have happened, and have so shaped the story as to make it grow out of what actually would have happenedâ##which, I beg to inform my readers, is also what actually does happen, in these pages.

With reference to the story of the Diamond, as here set forth. I have to acknowledge that it is founded, in some important particulars, on the stories of two of the royal diamonds of Europe. The magnificent stone which adorns the top of the Russian Imperial Sceptre was once the eye of an Indian idol. The famous Koh-i-Noor is also supposed to have been one of the sacred gems of India; and, more than this, to have been the subject of a prediction, which prophesied certain misfortune to the persons who should divert it from its ancient uses.

Gloucester Place, Portman Square,
June 30th, 1868.

PREFACE TO A NEW EDITION

The circumstances under which *The Moonstone* was originally written have invested the bookâ##in the authorâ##s mindâ##with an interest peculiarly its own.

While this work was still in course of periodical publication in England and in the United States, and when not more than one-third of it was completed, the bitterest affliction of my life and the severest illness from which I have ever suffered fell on me together. At the time when my mother lay dying in her little cottage in the country, I was struck prostrate, in Londonâ##crippled in every limb by the torture of rheumatic gout. Under the weight of this double calamity, I had my duty to the public still to bear in mind. My good readers in England and in America whom I had never yet disappointed, were expecting their regular weekly instalments of the new story. I held to the storyâ##for my own sake as well as for theirs. In the intervals of grief, in the occasional remissions of pain, I dictated from my bed that portion of *The Moonstone* which has since proved most successful in amusing the publicâ##the â##Narrative of Miss Clack.â## Of the physical sacrifice which the effort cost me I shall say nothing. I only look back now at the blessed relief which my occupation (forced as it was) brought to my mind. The Art which had been always the pride and the pleasure of my life became now more than ever â##its own exceeding great reward.â## I doubt if I should have lived to write another book, if the responsibility of the weekly publication of this story had not forced me to rally my sinking energies of body and mindâ##to dry my useless tears, and to conquer my merciless pains.

The novel completed, I awaited its reception by the public with an eagerness of anxiety which I have never felt before or since for the fate of any other writings of mine. If *The Moonstone* had failed, my mortification would have been bitter indeed. As it was, the welcome accorded to the story in England, in America, and on the Continent of Europe was instantly and universally favourable. Never have I had better reason than this work has given me to feel gratefully to novel-readers of all nations. Everywhere my characters made friends, and my story roused interest, Everywhere the public favour looked over my faultsâ##and repaid me a hundredfold for the hard toil which these pages cost me in the dark time of sickness and grief.

I have only to add that the present edition has had the benefit of my careful revision. All that I can do towards making the book worthy of the readerâ##s continued approval has now been done.

W. C.

May, 1871.

PROLOGUE The Storming of Seringapatam (1799) *Extracted from a Family Paper*

1

I address these lines written in Indiaâ##to my relatives in England.

My object is to explain the motive which has induced me to refuse the right hand of friendship to my cousin, John Herncastle. The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. And I declare, on my word of honour, that what I am now about to write is, strictly and literally, the truth.

The private difference between my cousin and me took its rise in a great public event in which we were both concernedâ##the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799.

In order that the circumstances may be clearly understood, I must revert for a moment to the period before the assault, and to the stories current in our camp of the treasure in jewels and gold stored up in the Palace of Seringapatam.

2

One of the wildest of these stories related to a Yellow Diamondâ##a famous gem in the native annals of India.

The earliest known traditions described the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon. Partly from its peculiar colour, partly from a superstition which represented it as feeling the influence of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in lustre with the waxing and waning of the moon, it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this dayâ##the name of The Moonstone. A similar superstition was once prevalent, as I have heard, in ancient Greece and Rome; not applying, however (as in India), to a diamond devoted to the service of a god, but to a semi-transparent stone of the inferior order of gems, supposed to be affected by the lunar influencesâ##the moon, in this latter case also, giving the name by which the stone is still known to collectors in our own time.

The adventures of the Yellow Diamond begin with the eleventh century of the Christian era.

At that date, the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni, crossed India; seized on the holy city of Somnauth: and stripped of its treasures the famous temple, which had stood for centuriesâ##the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the Eastern world.

Of all the deities worshipped in the temple, the moon god alone escaped the rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans. Preserved by three Brahmins, the inviolate deity, bearing the Yellow Diamond in its forehead, was removed by night, and was transported to the second of the sacred cities of Indiaâ##the city of Benares.

Here, in a new shrineâ##in a hall inlaid with precious stones, under a roof supported by pillars of goldâ##the moon god was set up and worshipped. Here, on the night when the shrine was completed, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmins in a dream.

The deity breathed the breath of his divinity on the Diamond in the forehead of the god. And the Brahmins knelt and hid their faces in their robes. The deity commanded that the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men. And the Brahmins heard, and bowed before his will. The deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him. And the Brahmins caused the prophecy to be written over the gates of the shrine in letters of gold.

One age followed anotherâ##and still, generation after generation, the successors of the three Brahmins watched their priceless Moonstone, night and day. One age followed another until the first years of the eighteenth Christian century saw the reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls. At his command havoc and rapine were let loose once more among the temples of the worship of Brahmah. The shrine of the four-handed god was polluted by the slaughter of sacred animals; the images of the deities were broken in pieces; and the Moonstone was seized by an officer of rank in the army of Aurungzebe.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by open force, the three guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed; (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still, through all chances and changes, the successors of the three guardian priests kept their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem. Time rolled on from the first to the last years of the eighteenth Christian century. The Diamond fell into possession of Tippoo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armoury. Even thenâ##in the palace of the Sultan himselfâ##the three guardian priests still kept their watch in secret. There were three officers of Tippooâ##s household, strangers

to the rest, who had won their masterâ##s confidence by conforming, or appearing to conform, to the Mussulman faith; and to those three men report pointed as the three priests in disguise.

3

So, as told in our camp, ran the fanciful story of the Moonstone. It made no serious impression on any of us except my cousinâ##whose love for the marvellous induced him to believe it. On the night before the assault on Seringapatam, he was absurdly angry with me, and with others, for treating the whole thing as a fable. A foolish wrangle followed; and Herncastleâ##s unlucky temper got the better of him. He declared, in his boastful way, that we should see the Diamond on his finger, if the English army took Seringapatam. The sally was saluted by a roar of laughter, and there, as we all thought that night, the thing ended.

Let me now take you on to the day of the assault.

My cousin and I were separated at the outset. I never saw him when we forded the river; when we planted the English flag in the first breach; when we crossed the ditch beyond; and, fighting every inch of our way, entered the town. It was only at dusk, when the place was ours, and after General Baird himself had found the dead body of Tippoo under a heap of the slain, that Herncastle and I met.

We were each attached to a party sent out by the generalâ##s orders to prevent the plunder and confusion which followed our conquest. The camp-followers committed deplorable excesses; and, worse still, the soldiers found their way, by an unguarded door, into the treasury of the Palace, and loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met, to enforce the laws of discipline on our soldiers. Herncastleâ##s fiery temper had been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through which we had passed. He was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been entrusted to him.

There was riot and confusion enough in the treasury, but no violence that I saw. The men (if I may use such an expression) disgraced themselves good-humouredly. All sorts of rough jests and catchwords were bandied about among them; and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly, in the form of a mischievous joke. â##Whoâ##s got the Moonstone?â## was the rallying cry which perpetually caused the plundering, as soon as it was stopped in one place, to break out in another. While I was still vainly trying to establish order, I heard a frightful yelling on the other side of the courtyard, and at once ran towards the cries, in dread of finding some new outbreak of the pillage in that direction.

I got to an open door, and saw the bodies of two Indians (by their dress, as I guessed, officers of the palace) lying across the entrance, dead.

A cry inside hurried me into a room, which appeared to serve as an armoury. A third Indian, mortally wounded, was sinking at the feet of a man whose back was towards me. The man turned at the instant when I came in, and I saw John Herncastle, with a torch in one hand, and a dagger dripping with blood in the other. A stone, set like a pommel, in the end of the daggerâ##s handle, flashed in the torchlight, as he turned on me, like a gleam of fire. The dying Indian sank to his knees, pointed to the dagger in Herncastleâ##s hand, and said, in his native language:â##â##The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!â## He spoke those words, and fell dead on the floor.

Before I could stir in the matter, the men who had followed me across the courtyard crowded in. My cousin rushed to meet them, like a madman. â##Clear the room!â## he shouted to me, â##and set a guard on the door!â## The men fell back as he threw himself on them with his torch and his dagger. I put two sentinels of my own company, on whom I could rely, to keep the door. Through the remainder of the night, I saw no more of my cousin.

Early in the morning, the plunder still going on, General Baird announced publicly by beat of drum, that any thief detected in the fact, be he whom he might, should be hung. The Provost-Marshal was in attendance, to prove that the General was in earnest; and in the throng that followed the proclamation, Herncastle and I met again.

He held out his hand as usual, and said, â##Good morning.â##

I waited before I gave him my hand in return.

â##Tell me first,â## I said, â##how the Indian in the armoury met his death, and what those last words meant, when he pointed to the dagger in your hand.â##

â##The Indian met his death, as I suppose, by a mortal wound,â## said Herncastle. â##What his last words meant I know no more than you do.â##

I looked at him narrowly. His frenzy of the previous day had all calmed down. I determined to give him another chance.

â##Is that all you have to tell me?â## I asked.

He answered, â##That is all.â##

I turned my back on him; and we have not spoken since.

4

I beg it to be understood that what I write here about my cousin (unless some necessity should arise for making it public) is for the information of the family only. Herncastle had said nothing that can justify me in speaking to our commanding officer. He has been taunted more than once about the Diamond, by those who recollect his angry outbreak before the assault; but, as may easily be imagined, his own remembrance of the circumstances under which I surprised him in the armoury has been enough to keep him silent. It is reported that he means to exchange into another regiment, avowedly for the purpose of separating himself from *me*.

Whether this be true or not, I cannot prevail upon myself to become his accuserâ##and I think with good reason. If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward. I have not only no proof that he killed the two men at the door; I cannot even declare that he killed the third man insideâ##for I cannot say that my own eyes saw the deed committed. It is true that I heard the dying Indianâ##s words; but if those words were pronounced to be the ravings of delirium, how could I contradict the assertion from my own knowledge? Let our relatives, on either side, form their own opinion on what I have written, and decide for themselves whether the aversion I now feel towards this man is well or ill founded.

Although I attach no sort of credit to the fantastic Indian legend of the gem, I must acknowledge, before I conclude, that I am influenced by a certain superstition of my own in this matter. It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality with it. I am not only persuaded of Herncastleâ##s guilt; I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away.

PART ONE First Period

CHAPTER 1 The Loss of the Diamond (1848)

The events related by Gabriel Betteredge, house-stewart in the service of Julia, Lady Verinder

1

In the first part of *Robinson Crusoe*, at page one hundred and twenty-nine, you will find it thus written:

â##Now I saw, though too late, the Folly of beginning a Work before we count the Cost, and before we judge rightly of our own Strength to go through with it.â##

Only yesterday, I opened my *Robinson Crusoe* at that place. Only this morning (May twenty-first, Eighteen hundred and fifty), came my ladyâ##s nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, and held a short conversation with me, as follows:â##

â##Betteredge,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##I have been to the lawyerâ##s about some family matters; and, among other things, we have been talking of the loss of the Indian Diamond, in my auntâ##s house in Yorkshire, two years since. Mr. Bruff thinks as I think that the whole story ought, in the interests of the truth, to be placed on record in writingâ##and the sooner the better.â##

Not perceiving his drift yet, and thinking it always desirable for the sake of peace and quietness to be on the lawyerâ##s side, I thought so too. Mr. Franklin went on.

â##In this matter of the Diamond,â## he said, â##the characters of innocent people have suffered under suspicion alreadyâ##as you know. The memories of innocent people may suffer, hereafter, for want of a record of the facts to which those who come after us can appeal. There can be no doubt that this strange family story of ours ought to be told. And I think, Betteredge, Mr. Bruff and I together have hit on the right way of telling it.â##

Very satisfactory to both of them, no doubt. But I failed to see what I myself had to do with it, so far.

â##We have certain events to relate,â## Mr. Franklin proceeded: â##and we have certain persons concerned in those events who are capable of relating them. Starting from these plain facts, the idea is that we should all write the story of the Moonstone in turnâ##as far as our own personal experience extends, and no further. We must begin by showing how the Diamond first fell into the hands of my uncle Herncastle, when he was serving in India fifty years since. This prefatory narrative I have already got by me in the form of an old family paper, which relates the necessary particulars on the authority of an eye-witness. The next thing to do is to tell how the Diamond found its way into my auntâ##s house in Yorkshire, two years ago, and how it came to be lost in little more than twelve hours afterwards. Nobody knows as much as you do, Betteredge, about what went on in the house at that time. So you must take the pen in hand, and start the story.â##

In those terms I was informed of what my personal concern was with the matter of the Diamond. If you are curious to know what course I took under the circumstances, I beg to inform you that I did what you would probably have done in my place. I modestly declared myself to be quite unequal to the task imposed upon meâ##and I privately felt, all the time, that I was quite clever enough to perform it, if I only gave my own abilities a fair chance. Mr. Franklin, I imagine, must have seen my private sentiments in my face. He declined to believe in my modesty; and he insisted on giving my abilities a fair chance.

Two hours have passed since Mr. Franklin left me. As soon as his back was turned, I went to my writing desk to start the story. There I have set helpless (in spite of my abilities) ever since; seeing what Robinson Crusoe saw, as quoted aboveâ##namely, the folly of beginning a work before we count the cost, and before we judge rightly of our own strength to go through with it. Please to remember, I opened the book by accident, at that bit, only the day before I rashly undertook the business now in hand; and, allow me to askâ##if *that* isnâ##t prophecy, what is?

I am not superstitious; I have read a heap of books in my time; I am a scholar in my own way. Though turned seventy, I possess an active memory, and legs to correspond. You are not to take it, if you please, as the saying of an ignorant man, when I express my opinion that such a book

as *Robinson Crusoe* never was written, and never will be written again. I have tried that book for yearsâ##generally in combination with a pipe of tobaccoâ##and I have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are badâ##*Robinson Crusoe.* When I want adviceâ##*Robinson Crusoe.* In past times when my wife plagued me; in present times when I have had a drop too muchâ##*Robinson Crusoe.* I have worn out six stout *Robinson Crusoes* with hard work in my service. On my ladyâ##s last birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and *Robinson Crusoe* put me right again. Price four shillings and sixpence, bound in blue, with a picture into the bargain.

Still, this donâ##t look much like starting the story of the Diamondâ##does it? I seem to be wandering off in search of Lord knows what, Lord knows where. We will take a new sheet of paper, if you please, and begin over again, with my best respects to you.

2

I spoke of my lady a line or two back. Now the Diamond could never have been in our house, where it was lost, if it had not been made a present of to my ladyâ##s daughter; and my ladyâ##s daughter would never have been in existence to have the present, if it had not been for my lady who (with pain and travail) produced her into the world. Consequently, if we begin with my lady, we are pretty sure of beginning far enough back. And that, let me tell you, when you have got such a job as mine in hand, is a real comfort at starting.

If you know anything of the fashionable world, you have heard tell of the three beautiful Miss Herncastles. Miss Adelaide; Miss Caroline; and Miss Juliaâ##this last being the youngest and the best of the three sisters, in my opinion; and I had opportunities of judging as you shall presently see. I went into the service of the old lord, their father (thank God, we have got nothing to do with *him*, in this business of the Diamond; he had the longest tongue and the shortest temper of any man, high or low, I ever met with)â##I say, I went into the service of the old lord, as page-boy in waiting on the three honourable young ladies, at the age of fifteen years. There I lived till Miss Julia married the late Sir John Verinder. An excellent man, who only wanted somebody to manage him; and, between ourselves, he found somebody to do it; and, what is more, he throve on it, and grew fat on it, and lived happy and died easy on it, dating from the day when my lady took him to church to be married, to the day when she relieved him of his last breath, and closed his eyes for ever.

I have omitted to state that I went with the bride to the brideâ##s husbandâ##s house and lands down here. â##Sir John,â## she says, â##I canâ##t do without Gabriel Betteredge,â## â##My lady,â## says Sir John, â##I canâ##t do without him, either.â## That was his way with herâ##and that was how I went into his service. It was all one to me where I went, so long as my mistress and I were together.

Seeing that my lady took an interest in the out-of-door work, and the farms, and such like, I took an interest in them tooâ##with all the more reason that I was a small farmerâ##s seventh son myself. My lady got me put under the bailiff, and I did my best, and gave satisfaction, and got promotion accordingly. Some years later, on the Monday as it might be, my lady says, â##Sir John, your bailiff is a stupid old man. Pension him liberally, and let Gabriel Betteredge have his place.â## On the Tuesday as it might be, Sir John says, â##My lady, the bailiff is pensioned liberally; and Gabriel Betteredge has got his place.â## You hear more than enough of married people living together miserably. Here is an example to the contrary. Let it be a warning to some of you, and an encouragement to others. In the meantime, I will go on with my story.

Well, there I was in clover, you will say. Placed in a position of trust and honour, with a little cottage of my own to live in, with my rounds on the estate to occupy me in the morning, and my accounts in the afternoon, and my pipe and my *Robinson Crusoe* in the eveningâ##what more could I possibly want to make me happy? Remember what Adam wanted when he was alone in the Garden of Eden; and if you donâ##t blame it in Adam, donâ##t blame it in me.

The woman I fixed my eye on, was the woman who kept house for me at the cottage. Her name was Selina Goby. I agree with the late William Cobbett about picking a wife. See that she chews her food well, and sets her foot down firmly on the ground when she walks, and youâ##re all right. Selina Goby was all right in both these respects, which was one reason for marrying her. I had another reason, likewise, entirely of my own discovering. Selina, being a single woman, made me pay so much a week for her board and services. Selina, being my wife, couldnâ##t charge for her board and would have to give me her services for nothing. That was the point of view I looked at it from. Economyâ##with a dash of love. I put it to my mistress as in duty bound, just as I had put it to myself.

â##I have been turning Selina Goby over in my mind,â## I said, â##and I think, my lady, it will be cheaper to marry her than to keep her.â##

My lady burst out laughing, and said she didnâ##t know which to be most shocked atâ##my language or my principles. Some joke tickled her, I suppose, of the sort that you canâ##t take unless you are a person of quality. Understanding nothing myself but that I was free to put it next to Selina, I went and put it accordingly. And what did Selina say? Lord! how little you must know of women, if you ask that. Of course she said, Yes.

As my time drew nearer, and there got to be talk of my having a new coat for the ceremony, my mind began to misgive me. I have compared notes with other men as to what they felt while they were in my interesting situation; and they have all acknowledged that, about a week before it happened, they privately wished themselves out of it. I went a trifle further than that myself; I actually rose up, as it were, and tried to get out of it. Not for nothing! I was too just a man to expect she would let me off for nothing. Compensation to the woman when the man gets out of it, is one of the laws of England. In obedience to the laws, and after turning it over carefully in my mind, I offered Selina Goby a feather-bed and fifty shillings to be off the bargain. You will hardly believe it, but it is nevertheless trueâ##she was fool enough to refuse.

After that it was all over with me, of course. I got the new coat as cheap as I could, and I went through all the rest of it as cheap as I could. We were not a happy couple, and not a miserable couple. We were six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. How it was I donâ##t understand, but we always seemed to be getting, with the best of motives, in one anotherâ##s way. When I wanted to go upstairs, there was my wife coming down; or when my wife wanted to go down, there was I coming up. That is married life, according to my experience of it.

After five years of misunderstandings on the stairs, it pleased an all-wise Providence to relieve us of each other by taking my wife. I was left with my little girl Penelope, and with no other child. Shortly afterwards Sir John died, and my lady was left with her little girl, Miss Rachel, and no other child. I have written to very poor purpose of my lady, if you require to be told that my little Penelope was taken care of, under my good mistressâ##s own eye, and was sent to school and taught, and made a sharp girl, and promoted, when old enough, to be Miss Rachelâ##s own maid.

As for me, I went on with my business as bailiff year after year up to Christmas 1847, when there came a change in my life. On that day, my lady invited herself to a cup of tea alone with me in my cottage. She remarked that, reckoning from the year when I started as page-boy in the time of the old lord, I had been more than fifty years in her service, and she put into my hands a beautiful waistcoat of wool that she had worked herself, to keep me warm in the bitter winter weather.

I received this magnificent present quite at a loss to find words to thank my mistress with for the honour she had done me. To my great astonishment, it turned out, however, that the waistcoat was not an honour, but a bribe. My lady had discovered that I was getting old before I had discovered it myself, and she had come to my cottage to wheedle me (if I may use such an expression) into giving up my hard out-of-door work as bailiff, and taking my ease for the rest of my days as steward in the house. I made as good a fight of it against the indignity of taking my case as I could. But my mistress knew the weak side of me; she put it as a favour to herself. The dispute between us ended, after that, in my wiping my eyes, like an old fool, with my new woollen waistcoat, and saying I would think about it.

The perturbation in my mind, in regard to thinking about it, being truly dreadful after my lady had gone away, I applied the remedy which I have never yet found to fail me in cases of doubt and emergency. I smoked a pipe and took a turn at *Robinson Crusoe.* Before I had occupied myself with that extraordinary book five minutes, I came on a comforting bit (page one hundred and fifty-eight), as follows: â##To-day we love, what to-morrow we hate.â## I saw my way clear directly. To-day I was all for continuing to be farm-bailiff; to-morrow, on the authority of *Robinson Crusoe*, I should be all the other way. Take myself to-morrow while in to-morrowâ##s humour, and the thing was done. My mind being relieved in this manner, I went to sleep that night in the character of Lady Verinderâ##s

farm-bailiff, and I woke up the next morning in the character of Lady Verinderâ##s house-steward. All quite comfortable, and all through *Robinson Crusoe*!

My daughter Penelope has just looked over my shoulder to see what I have done so far. She remarks that it is beautifully written, and every word of it true. But she points out one objection. She says what I have done so far isnâ##t in the least what I was wanted to do. I am asked to tell the story of the Diamond, and, instead of that, I have been telling the story of my own self. Curious, and quite beyond me to account for, I wonder whether the gentlemen who make a business and a living out of writing books, ever find their own selves getting in the way of their subjects, like me? If they do, I can feel for them. In the meantime, here is another false start, and more waste of good writing-paper. Whatâ##s to be done now? Nothing that I know of, except for you to keep your temper, and for me to begin it all over again for the third time.

3

The question of how I am to start the story properly I have tried to settle in two ways. First, by scratching my head, which led to nothing. Second, by consulting my daughter Penelope, which has resulted in an entirely new idea.

Penelopeâ##s notion is that I should set down what happened, regularly day by day, beginning with the day when we got the news that Mr. Franklin Blake was expected on a visit to the house. When you come to fix your memory with a date in this way, it is wonderful what your memory will pick up for you upon that compulsion. The only difficulty is to fetch out the dates, in the first place. This Penelope offers to do for me by looking into her own diary, which she was taught to keep when she was at school, and which she has gone on keeping ever since. In answer to an improvement on this notion, devised by myself, namely, that she should tell the story instead of me, out of her own diary, Penelope observes, with a fierce look and a red face, that her journal is for her own private eye, and that no living creature shall ever know what is in it but herself. When I enquire what this means, Penelope says, â##Fiddlesticks!â## I say, Sweethearts.

Beginning, then, on Penelopeâ##s plan, I beg to mention that I was specially called one Wednesday morning into my own ladyâ##s sitting-room, the date being the twenty-fourth of May, Eighteen hundred and forty-eight.

â##Gabriel,â## says my lady, â##here is news that will surprise you. Franklin Blake has come back from abroad. He has been staying with his father in London, and he is coming to us to-morrow to stop till next month, and keep Rachelâ##s birthday.â##

If I had had my hat in my hand, nothing but respect would have prevented me from throwing that hat up to the ceiling, I had not seen Mr. Franklin since he was a boy, living along with us in this house. He was, out of all sight (as I remembered him), the nicest boy that ever spun a top or broke a window. Miss Rachel, who was present, and to whom I made that remark, observed, in return, that *she* remembered him as the most atrocious tyrant that ever tortured a doll, and the hardest driver of an exhausted little girl in string harness that England could produce. â##I burn with indignation, and ache with fatigue,â## was the way Miss Rachel summed it up, â##when I think of Franklin Blake.â##

Hearing what I now tell you, you will naturally ask how it was that Mr. Franklin should have passed all the years, from the time when he was a boy to the time when he was a man, out of his own country. I answer, because his father had the misfortune to be next heir to a Dukedom, and not to be able to prove it.

In two words, this was how the thing happened:

My ladyâ##s eldest sister married the celebrated Mr. Blakeâ##equally famous for his great riches, and his great suit at law. How many years he went on worrying the tribunals of his country to turn out the Duke in possession, and to put himself in the Dukeâ##s placeâ##how many lawyerâ##s purses he filled to bursting, and how many otherwise harmless people he set by the ears together disputing whether he was right or wrongâ##is more by a great deal than I can reckon up. His wife died, and two of his three children died, before the tribunals could make up their minds to show him the door and take no more of his money. When it was all over, and the Duke in possession was left in possession, Mr. Blake discovered that the only way of being even with his country for the manner in which it had treated him, was not to let his country have the honour of educating his son. â##How can I trust my native institutions,â## was the form in which he put it, â##after the way in which my native institutions have behaved to *me*?â## Add to this, that Mr. Blake disliked all boys, his own included, and you will admit that it could only end in one way. Master Franklin was taken from us in England, and was sent to institutions which his father *could* trust, in that superior country, Germany; Mr. Blake himself, you will observe, remaining snug in England, to improve his fellow-countrymen

in the Parliament House, and to publish a statement on the subject of the Duke in possession, which has remained an unfinished statement from that day to this.

There! thank God, thatâ##s told! Neither you nor I need trouble our heads any more about Mr. Blake, senior. Leave him to the Dukedom; and let you and I stick to the Diamond.

The Diamond takes us back to Mr. Franklin, who was the innocent means of bringing that unlucky jewel into the house.

Our nice boy didnâ##t forget us after he went abroad. He wrote every now and then; sometimes to my lady, sometimes to Miss Rachel, and sometimes to me. We had had a transaction together, before he left, which consisted in his borrowing of me a ball of string, a four-bladed knife, and seven-and-sixpence in moneyâ##the colour of which last I have not seen, and never expect to see again. His letters to me chiefly related to borrowing more. I heard, however, from my lady, how he got on abroad, as he grew in years and stature. After he had learnt what the institutions of Germany could teach him, he gave the French a turn next, and the Italians a turn after that. They made him among them a sort of universal genius, as well as I could understand it. He wrote a little; he painted a little; he sang and played and composed a littleâ##borrowing, as I suspect, in all these cases, just as he had borrowed from me. His motherâ##s fortune (seven hundred a year) fell to him when he came of age, and ran through him, as it might be through a sieve. The more money he had, the more he wanted; there was a hole in Mr. Franklinâ##s pocket that nothing would sew up. Wherever he went, the lively, easy way of him made him welcome. He lived here, there and everywhere; his address (as he used to put it himself) being â##Post Office, Europeâ##to be left till called forâ##. Twice over, he made up his mind to come back to England and see us; and twice over (saving your presence), some unmentionable woman stood in the way and stopped him. His third attempt succeeded, as you know already from what my lady told me. On Thursday the twenty-fifth of May, we were to see for the first time what our nice boy had grown to be as a man. He came of good blood; he had a high courage; and he was five-and-twenty years of age, by our reckoning. Now you know as much of Mr. Franklin Blake as I didâ##before Mr. Franklin Blake came down to our house.

The Thursday was as fine a summerâ##s day as ever you saw: and my lady and Miss Rachel (not expecting Mr. Franklin till dinner-time) drove out to lunch with some friends in the neighbourhood.

When they were gone, I went and had a look at the bedroom which had been got ready for our guest, and saw that all was straight. Then, being butler in my ladyâ##s establishment, as well as steward (at my own particular request, mind, and because it vexed me to see anybody but myself in possession of the key of the late Sir Johnâ##s cellar)â##then, I say, I fetched up some of our famous Latour claret, and set it in the warm summer air to take off the chill before dinner. Concluding to set myself in the warm summer air nextâ##seeing that what is good for old claret is equally good for old ageâ##I took up my beehive chair to go out into the back court, when I was stopped by hearing a sound like the soft beating of a drum, on the terrace in front of my ladyâ##s residence.

Going round to the terrace, I found three mahogany-coloured Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers, looking up at the house.

The Indians, as I saw on looking closer, had small hand-drums slung in front of them. Behind them stood a little delicate-looking light-haired English boy carrying a bag. I judged the fellows to be strolling conjurors, and the boy with the bag to be carrying the tools of their trade. One of the three, who spoke English and who exhibited, I must own, the most elegant manners, presently informed me that my judgment was right. He requested permission to show his tricks in the presence of the lady of the house.

Now I am not a sour man. I am generally all for amusement, and the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker than myself. But the best of us have our weaknessesâ##and my weakness, when I know a family plate-basket to be out on a pantry-table, is to be instantly reminded of that basket by the sight of a strolling stranger whose manners are superior to my own. I accordingly informed the Indian that the lady of the house was out; and I

warned him and his party off the premises. He made me a beautiful bow in return; and he and his party went off the premises. On my side, I returned to my beehive chair, and set myself down on the sunny side of the court, and fell (if the truth must be owned), not exactly into a sleep, but into the next best thing to it.

I was roused up by my daughter Penelope running out at me as if the house was on fire. What do you think she wanted? She wanted to have the three Indian jugglers instantly taken up; for this reason, namely, that they knew who was coming from London to visit us, and that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

Mr. Franklinâ##s name roused me. I opened my eyes, and made my girl explain herself.

It appeared that Penelope had just come from our lodge, where she had been having a gossip with the lodge-keeperâ##s daughter. The two girls had seen the Indians pass out, after I had warned them off, followed by their little boy. Taking it into their heads that the boy was ill-used by the foreignersâ##for no reason that I could discover, except that he was pretty and delicate-lookingâ##the two girls had stolen along the inner side of the hedge between us and the road, and had watched the proceedings of the foreigners on the outer side. Those proceedings resulted in the performance of the following extraordinary trick.

They first looked up the road, and down the road, and made sure that they were alone. Then they all three faced about, and stared hard in the direction of our house. Then they jabbered and disputed in their own language, and looked at each other like men in doubt. Then they all turned to their little English boy, as if they expected *him* to help them. And then the chief Indian, who spoke English, said to the boy, â##Hold out your hand.â##

On hearing those dreadful words, my daughter, Penelope said she didnâ##t know what prevented her heart from flying straight out of her. I thought privately that it might have been her stays. All I said, however, was, â##You make my flesh creep.â## (*Nota bene:* Women like these little compliments).

Well, when the Indian said, â##Hold out your hand,â## the boy shrunk back, and shook his head, and said he didnâ##t like it. The Indian, thereupon, asked him (not at all unkindly), whether he would like to be sent back to London, and left where they had found him, sleeping in an empty basket in a marketâ##a hungry, ragged, and forsaken little boy. This, it seems, ended the difficulty. The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boyâ##s hand. The Indianâ##first touching the boyâ##s head, and making signs over it in the airâ##then said, â##Look.â## The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand.

(So far, it seemed to me to be juggling, accompanied by a foolish waste of ink. I was beginning to feel sleepy again, when Penelopeâ##s next words stirred me up).

The Indians looked up the road and down the road once moreâ##and then the chief Indian said these words to the boy: â##See the English gentleman from foreign parts.â##

The boy said, â##I see him.â##

The Indian said, â##Is it on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day?â##

The boy said, â##It is on the road to this house, and on no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day.â##

The Indian put a second questionâ##after waiting a little first. He said: â##Has the English gentleman got It about him?â##

The boy answeredâ##also, after waiting a little firstâ##â##Yes.â##

The Indian put a third and last question: â##Will the English gentleman come here, as he has promised to come, at the close of day?â##

The boy said, â##I canâ##t tell.â##

The Indian asked why.

The boy said, â##I am tired. The mist rises in my head, and puzzles me. I can see no more to-day.â##

With that, the catechism ended. The chief Indian said something in his own language to the other two, pointing to the boy, and pointing towards the town, in which (as we afterwards discovered) they were lodged. He then, after making more signs on the boyâ##s head, blew on his forehead, and so woke him up with a start. After that, they all went on their way towards the town, and the girls saw them no more.

Most things they say have a moral, if you only look for it. What was the moral of this?

The moral was, as I thought: First, that the chief juggler had heard Mr. Franklinâ##s arrival talked of among the servants out-of-doors, and saw his way to making a little money by it. Second, that he and his men and boy (with a view to making the said money) meant to hang about till they saw my lady drive home, and then to come back, and foretell Mr. Franklinâ##s arrival by magic. Third, that Penelope had heard them rehearsing their hocus-pocus, like actors rehearsing a play. Fourth, that I should do well to have an eye, that evening, on the plate-basket. Fifth, that Penelope would do well to cool down, and leave me, her father, to doze off again in the sun.

That appeared to me to be the sensible view. If you know anything of the ways of young women, you wonâ##t be surprised to hear that Penelope wouldnâ##t take it. The moral of the thing was serious, according to my daughter. She particularly reminded me of the Indianâ##s third question, Has the English gentleman got It about him? â##Oh, father!â## says Penelope, clasping her hands, â##donâ##t joke about this. What does â##Itâ## mean?â##

â##Weâ##ll ask Mr. Franklin, my dear,â## I said, â##if you can wait till Mr. Franklin comes.â## I winked to show I meant that in joke. Penelope took it quite seriously. My girlâ##s earnestness tickled me. â##What on earth should Mr. Franklin know about it?â## I inquired. â##Ask him,â## says Penelope. â##And see whether *he* thinks it is a laughing matter too.â## With that parting shot, my daughter left me.

I settled it with myself, when she was gone, that I really would ask Mr. Franklinâ##mainly to set Penelopeâ##s mind at rest. What was said between us, when I did ask him, later on that same day, you will find set out fully in its proper place. But as I donâ##t wish to raise your expectations and then disappoint them, I will take leave to warn you hereâ##before we go any furtherâ##that you wonâ##t find the ghost of a joke in our conversation on the subject of the jugglers. To my great surprise, Mr. Franklin, like Penelope, took the thing seriously. How seriously, you will understand, when I tell you that, in his opinion, â##Itâ## meant the Moonstone.

4

I am truly sorry to detain you over me and my beehive chair. A sleepy old man, in a sunny backyard, is not an interesting object, I am well aware. But things must be put down in their places, as things actually happenedâ##and you must please to jog on a little while longer with me, in expectation of Mr. Franklin Blakeâ##s arrival later in the day.

Before I had time to doze off again, after my daughter Penelope had left me, I was disturbed by a rattling of plates and dishes in the servantâ##s hall, which meant that dinner was ready. Taking my own meals in my own sitting-room, I had nothing to do with the servantâ##s dinner, except to wish them a good stomach to it all round, previous to composing myself once more in my chair. I was just stretching my legs, when out bounced another woman on me. Not my daughter again; only Nancy, the kitchen-maid, this time. I was straight in her way out; and I observed, as she asked me to let her by, that she had a sulky faceâ##a thing which, as head of the servants, I never allow, on principle, to pass me without inquiry.

â##What are you turning your back on your dinner for?â## I asked. â##Whatâ##s wrong now, Nancy?â##

Nancy tried to push by, without answering; upon which I rose up, and took her by the ear. She is a nice plump young lass, and it is customary with me to adopt that manner of showing that I personally approve of a girl.

â##Whatâ##s wrong now?â## I said once more.

â##Rosannaâ##s late again for dinner,â## says Nancy. â##And Iâ##m sent to fetch her in. All the hard work falls on my shoulders in this house. Let me alone, Mr. Betteredge!â##

The person here mentioned as Rosanna was our second housemaid. Having a kind of pity for our second housemaid (why, you shall presently know), and seeing in Nancyâ##s face that she would fetch her fellow-servant in with more hard words than might be needful under the circumstances, it struck me that I had nothing particular to do, and that I might as well fetch Rosanna myself; giving her a hint to be punctual in future, which I knew she would take kindly from *me.*

â##Where is Rosanna?â## I inquired.

â##At the sands, of course!â## says Nancy, with a toss of her head. â##She had another of her fainting-fits this morning, and she asked to go out and get a breath of fresh air. I have no patience with her!â##

â##Go back to your dinner, my girl,â## I said. â##I have patience with her and Iâ##ll fetch her in.â##

Nancy (who has a fine appetite) looked pleased. When she looks pleased, she looks nice. When she looks nice, I chuck her under the chin. It isnâ##t immoralityâ##itâ##s only habit.

Well, I took my stick, and set off for the sands.

No! it wonâ##t do to set off yet. I am sorry again to detain you; but you really must hear the story of the sands, and the story of Rosannaâ##for this reason, that the matter of the Diamond touches both nearly. How hard I try to get on with my statement without stopping by the way, and how badly I succeed! But, there!â##Persons and Things do turn up so vexatiously in this life, and will in a manner insist on being noticed. Let us take it easy, and let us take it short; we shall be in the thick of the mystery soon, I promise you!

Rosanna (to put the Person before the Thing, which is but common politeness) was the only new servant in our house. About four months before the time I am writing of, my lady had been in London, and had gone over a Reformatory, intended to save forlorn women from drifting back into bad ways, after they had got released from prison. The matron, seeing my lady took an interest in the place, pointed out a girl to her, named Rosanna Spearman, and told her a most miserable story, which I havenâ##t the heart to repeat here; for I donâ##t like to be made wretched without any use, and no

more do you. The upshot of it was, that Rosanna Spearman had been a thief, and not being of the sort that get up Companies in the City, and rob from thousands, instead of only robbing from one, the law laid hold of her, and the prison and the reformatory followed the lead of the law. The matronâ##s opinion of Rosanna was (in spite of what she had done) that the girl was one in a thousand, and that she only wanted a chance to prove herself worthy of any Christian womanâ##s interest in her. My lady (being a Christian woman, if ever there was one yet) said to the matron, upon that, â##Rosanna Spearman shall have her chance, in my service.â## In a week afterwards, Rosanna Spearman entered this establishment as our second housemaid.

Not a soul was told of the girlâ##s story, excepting Miss Rachel and me. My lady, doing me the honour to consult me about most things, consulted me about Rosanna. Having fallen a good deal latterly into the late Sir Johnâ##s way of always agreeing with my lady, I agreed with her heartily about Rosanna Spearman.

A fairer chance no girl could have had than was given to this poor girl of ours. None of the servants could cast her past life in her teeth, for none of the servants knew what it had been. She had her wages and her privileges, like the rest of them; and every now and then a friendly word from my lady, in private, to encourage her. In return, she showed herself, I am bound to say, well worthy of the kind treatment bestowed upon her. Though far from strong, and troubled occasionally with those fainting-fits already mentioned, she went about her work modestly and uncomplainingly, doing it carefully, and doing it well. But, somehow, she failed to make friends among the other women servants, excepting my daughter Penelope, who was always kind to Rosanna, though never intimate with her.

I hardly know what the girl did to offend them. There was certainly no beauty about her to make the others envious; she was the plainest woman in the house, with the additional misfortune of having one shoulder bigger than the other. What the servants chiefly resented, I think, was her silent tongue and her solitary ways. She read or worked in leisure hours when the rest gossiped. And when it came her turn to go out, nine times out of ten she quietly put on her bonnet, and had her turn by herself. She never quarrelled, she never took offence; she only kept a certain distance, obstinately and civilly, between the rest of them and herself. Add to this that, plain as she was, there was just a dash of something that wasnâ##t like a housemaid, and that *was* like a lady, about her. It might have been in her voice or it might have been in her face. All I can say is, that the other women pounced on it like lightning the first day she came into the house, and said (which was most unjust) that Rosanna Spearman gave herself airs.

Having now told the story of Rosanna, I have only to notice one of the many queer ways of this strange girl to get on next to the story of the sands.

Our house is high up on the Yorkshire coast, and close by the sea. We have got beautiful walks all round us, in every direction but one. That one I acknowledge to be a horrid walk. It leads, for a quarter of a mile, through a melancholy plantation of firs, and brings you out between low cliffs on the loneliest and ugliest little bay on all our coast.

The sandhills here run down to the sea, and end in two spits of rock jutting out opposite each other, till you lose sight of them in the water. One is called the North Spit, and one the South. Between the two, shifting backwards and forwards at certain seasons of the year, lies the most horrible quicksand on the shores of Yorkshire. At the turn of the tide, something goes on in the unknown deeps below, which sets the whole face of the quicksand shivering and trembling in a manner most remarkable to see, and which has given to it, among the people in our parts, the name of the Shivering Sand. A great bank, half a mile out, nigh the mouth of the bay, breaks the force of the main ocean coming in from the offing. Winter and summer, when the tide flows over the quicksand, the sea seems to leave the waves behind it on the bank, and rolls its waters in smoothly with a heave, and covers the sand in silence. A lonesome and a horrid retreat, I can tell you! No boat ever ventures into this bay. No children from our fishing-village, called Cobbâ##s Hole, ever come here to play. The

very birds of the air, as it seems to me, give the Shivering Sand a wide berth. That a young woman, with dozens of nice walks to choose from, and company to go with her, if she only said â##Come! â## should prefer this place, and should sit and work or read in it, all alone, when itâ##s her turn out, I grant you, passes belief. Itâ##s true nevertheless, account for it as you may, that this was Rosanna Spearmanâ##s favourite walk, except when she went once or twice to Cobbâ##s Hole, to see the only friend she had in our neighbourhood, of whom more anon. Itâ##s also true that I was now setting out for this same place, to fetch the girl in to dinner, which brings us round happily to our former point, and starts us fair again on our way to the sands.

I saw no sign of the girl in the plantation. When I got out, through the sandhills, on to the beach, there she was, in her little straw bonnet, and her plain grey cloak that she always wore to hide her deformed shoulder as much as might beâ##there she was, all alone, looking out on the quicksand and the sea.

She started when I came up with her, and turned her head away from me. Not looking me in the face being another of the proceedings which, as head of the servants, I never allow, on principle, to pass without inquiryâ##I turned her round my way, and saw that she was crying. My bandanna handkerchiefâ##one of six beauties given to me by my ladyâ##was handy in my pocket. I took it out, and I said to Rosanna, â##Come and sit down, my dear, on the slope of the beach along with me. Iâ##ll dry your eyes for you first, and then Iâ##ll make so bold as to ask what you have been crying about.â##

When you come to my age, you will find sitting down on the slope of a beach a much longer job than you think it now. By the time I was settled, Rosanna had dried her own eyes with a very inferior handkerchief to mineâ##cheap cambric. She looked very quiet, and very wretched; but she sat down by me like a good girl, when I told her. When you want to comfort a woman by the shortest way, take her on your knee. I thought of this golden rule. But there! Rosanna wasnâ##t Nancy, and thatâ##s the truth of it!

â##Now, tell me, my dear,â## I said, â##what are you crying about?â##

â##About the years that are gone, Mr. Betteredge,â## says Rosanna quietly. â##My past life still comes back to me sometimes.â##

â##Come, come, my girl,â## I said, â##your past life is all sponged out. Why canâ##t you forget it?â##

She took me by one of the lappets of my coat. I am a slovenly old man, and a good deal of my meat and drink gets splashed about on my clothes. Sometimes one of the women, and sometimes another, cleans me of my grease. The day before, Rosanna had taken out a spot for me on the lappet of my coat, with a new composition, warranted to remove anything. The grease was gone, but there was a little dull place left on the nap of the cloth where the grease had been. The girl pointed to that place, and shook her head.

â##The stain is taken off,â## she said. â##But the place shows, Mr. Betteredgeâ##the place shows!â##

A remark which takes a man unawares by means of his own coat is not an easy remark to answer. Something in the girl herself, too, made me particularly sorry for her just then. She had nice brown eyes, plain as she was in other waysâ##and she looked at me with a sort of respect for my happy old age and my good character, as things forever out of her own reach, which made my heart heavy for our second housemaid. Not feeling myself able to comfort her, there was only one other thing to do. That thing wasâ##to take her in to dinner.

â##Help me up,â## I said. â##Youâ##re late for dinner, Rosannaâ##and I have come to fetch you in.â##

â##You, Mr. Betteredge!â## says she.

â##They told Nancy to fetch you,â## I said. â##But I thought you might like your scolding better, my dear, if it came from me.â##

Instead of helping me up, the poor thing stole her hand into mine, and gave it a little squeeze. She tried hard to keep from crying again, and succeededâ##for which I respected her. â##Youâ##re very kind, Mr. Betteredge,â## she said. â##I donâ##t want any dinner to-dayâ##let me bide a little longer here.â##

â##What makes you like to be here?â## I asked. â##What is it that brings you everlastingly to this miserable place?â##

â##Something draws me to it,â## says the girl, making images with her finger in the sand. â##I try to keep away from it, and I canâ##t. Sometimes,â## says she in a low voice, as if she was frightened at her own fancy, â##sometimes, Mr. Betteredge, I think that my grave is waiting for me here.â##

â##Thereâ##s roast mutton and suet pudding waiting for you!â## says I. â##Go in to dinner directly. This is what comes, Rosanna, of thinking on an empty stomach!â## I spoke severely, being naturally indignant (at my time of life) to hear a young woman of five-and-twenty talking about her latter end!

She didnâ##t seem to hear me: she put her hand on my shoulder, and kept me where I was, sitting by her side.

â##I think the place has laid a spell on me,â## she said. â##I dream of it night after night; I think of it when I sit stitching at my work. You know I am grateful, Mr. Betteredgeâ##you know I try to deserve your kindness, and my ladyâ##s confidence in me. But I wonder sometimes whether the life here is too quiet and too good for such a woman as I am, after all I have gone through, Mr. Betteredgeâ##after all I have gone through. Itâ##s more lonely to me to be among the other servants, knowing I am not what they are, than it is to be here. My lady doesnâ##t know, the matron at the reformatory doesnâ##t know, what a dreadful reproach honest people are in themselves to a woman like me. Donâ##t scold me, thereâ##s a dear good man. I do my work, donâ##t I? Please not to tell my lady I am discontentedâ##I am not. My mindâ##s unquiet, sometimes, thatâ##s all.â## She snatched her hand off my shoulder, and suddenly pointed down to the quicksand. â##Look!â## she said. â##Isnâ##t it wonderful? isnâ##t it terrible? I have seen it dozens of times, and itâ##s always as new to me as if I had never seen it before!â##

I looked where she pointed. The tide was on the turn, and the horrid sand began to shiver. The broad brown face of it heaved slowly, and then dimpled and quivered all over. â##Do you know what it looks like to *me*?â## says Rosanna, catching me by the shoulder again. â##It looks as if it had hundreds of suffocating people under itâ##all struggling to get to the surface, and all sinking lower and lower in the dreadful deeps! Throw a stone in, Mr. Betteredge! Throw a stone in, and letâ##s see the sand suck it down!â##

Here was unwholesome talk! Here was an empty stomach feeding on an unquiet mind! My answerâ##a pretty sharp one, in the poor girlâ##s own interests, I promise you!â##was at my tongueâ##s end, when it was snapped short off on a sudden by a voice among the sandhills shouting for me by my name. â##Betteredge!â## cries the voice, â##where are you?â## â##Here!â## I shouted out in return, without a notion in my mind of who it was. Rosanna started to her feet, and stood looking towards the voice. I was just thinking of getting on my own legs next, when I was staggered by a sudden change in the girlâ##s face.

Her complexion turned of a beautiful red, which I had never seen in it before; she brightened all over with a kind of speechless and breathless surprise. â##Who is it?â## I asked. Rosanna gave me back my own question. â##Oh! who is it?â## she said softly, more to herself than to me. I twisted round on the sand and looked behind me. There, coming out on us from among the hills, was a bright-eyed young gentleman, dressed in a beautiful fawn-coloured suit, with gloves and hat to match, with a rose in his button-hole, and a smile on his face that might have set the Shivering Sand itself smiling at him in return. Before I could get on my legs, he plumped down on the sand by the side of me, put his arm round my neck, foreign fashion, and gave me a hug that fairly squeezed the breath out

of my body. â##Dear old Betteredge!â## says he. â##I owe you seven-and-sixpence. Now do you know who I am?â##

Lord bless us and save us! Hereâ##four good hours before we expected himâ##was Mr. Franklin Blake!

Before I could say a word, I saw Mr. Franklin, a little surprised to all appearance, look up from me to Rosanna. Following his lead, I looked at the girl too. She was blushing of a deeper red than ever, seemingly at having caught Mr. Franklinâ##s eye: and she turned and left us suddenly, in a confusion quite unaccountable to my mind, without either making her curtsy to the gentleman or saying a word to me. Very unlike her usual self: a civiller and better-behaved servant, in general, you never met with.

â##Thatâ##s an odd girl,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##I wonder what she sees in me to surprise her?â##

â##I suppose, sir,â## I answered, drolling on our young gentlemanâ##s Continental education, â##itâ##s the varnish from foreign parts.â##

I set down here Mr. Franklinâ##s careless question, and my foolish answer, as a consolation and encouragement to all stupid peopleâ##it being, as I have remarked, a great satisfaction to our inferior fellow-creatures to find that their betters are, on occasions, no brighter than they are. Neither Mr. Franklin, with his wonderful foreign training, nor I, with my age, experience, and natural mother-wit, had the ghost of an idea of what Rosanna Spearmanâ##s unaccountable behaviour really meant. She was out of our thoughts, poor soul, before we had seen the last flutter of her little grey cloak among the sandhills. And what of that? you will ask, naturally enough. Read on, good friend, as patiently as you can, and perhaps you will be as sorry for Rosanna Spearman as I was, when I found out the truth.

5

The first thing I did, after we were left together alone, was to make a third attempt to get up from my seat on the sand. Mr. Franklin stopped me.

â##There is one advantage about this horrid place,â## he said; â##we have got it all to ourselves. Stay where you are, Betteredge; I have something to say to you.â##

While he was speaking, I was looking at him, and trying to see something of the boy I remembered, in the man before me. The man put me out. Look as I might, I could see no more of his boyâ##s rosy cheeks than of his boyâ##s trim little jacket. His complexion had got pale: his face, at the lower part, was covered, to my great surprise and disappointment, with a curly brown beard and mustachios. He had a lively touch-and-go way with him, very pleasant and engaging, I admit; but nothing to compare with his free-and-easy manners of other times. To make matters worse, he had promised to be tall, and had not kept his promise. He was neat, and slim, and well made; but he wasnâ##t by an inch or two up to the middle height. In short, he baffled me altogether. The years that had passed had left nothing of his old self, except the bright, straightforward look in his eyes. There I found our nice boy again, and there I concluded to stop in my investigation.

â##Welcome back to the old place, Mr. Franklin,â## I said. â##All the more welcome sir, that you have come some hours before we expected you.â##

â##I have a reason for coming before you expected me,â## answered Mr. Franklin. â##I suspect, Betteredge, that I have been followed and watched in London, for the last three or four days; and I have travelled by the morning instead of the afternoon train, because I wanted to give a certain dark-looking stranger the slip.â##

Those words did more than surprise me. They brought back to my mind, in a flash, the three jugglers, and Penelopeâ##s notion that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

â##Whoâ##s watching you, sirâ##and why?â## I inquired.

â##Tell me about the three Indians you have had at the house to-day,â## says Mr. Franklin, without noticing my question. â##Itâ##s just possible, Betteredge, that my stranger and your three jugglers may turn out to be pieces of the same puzzle.â##

â##How do you come to know about the jugglers, sir?â## I asked, putting one question on top of the other, which was bad manners, I own. But you donâ##t expect much from poor human natureâ##so donâ##t expect much from me.

â##I saw Penelope at the house,â## says Mr. Franklin; â##and Penelope told me. Your daughter promised to be a pretty girl, Betteredge, and she has kept her promise. Penelope has got a small ear and a small foot. Did the late Mrs. Betteredge possess those inestimable advantages?â##

â##The late Mrs. Betteredge possessed a good many defects, sir,â## says I. â##One of them (if you will pardon my mentioning it) was never keeping to the matter in hand. She was more like a fly than a woman: she couldnâ##t settle on anything.â##

â##She would just have suited me,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##I never settle on anything either. Betteredge, your edge is better than ever. Your daughter said as much, when I asked for particulars about the jugglers. â##Father will tell you, sir. Heâ##s a wonderful man for his age; and he expresses himself beautifully.â## Penelopeâ##s own wordsâ##blushing divinely. Not even my respect for you prevented me fromâ##never mind; I knew her when she was a child, and sheâ##s none the worse for it. Letâ##s be serious. What did the jugglers do?â##

I was something dissatisfied with my daughterâ##not for letting Mr. Franklin kiss her; Mr. Franklin was welcome to *that*â##but for forcing me to tell her foolish story at second hand. However, there was no help for it now but to mention the circumstances. Mr. Franklinâ##s merriment all died away as I went on. He sat knitting his eyebrows, and twisting his beard. When I had done, he repeated

after me two of the questions which the chief juggler had put to the boyâ##seemingly for the purpose of fixing them well in his mind.

â##â##Is it on the road to this house, and no other, that the English gentleman will travel to-day? â## â##Has the English gentleman got It about him?â## I suspect,â## says Mr. Franklin, pulling a little sealed paper parcel out of his pocket, â##that â##Itâ## means *this.* And â##this,â## Betteredge, means my uncle Herncastleâ##s famous Diamond.â##

â##Good Lord, sir!â## I broke out, â##how do you come to be in charge of the wicked Colonelâ##s Diamond?â##

â##The wicked Colonelâ##s will has left his Diamond as a birthday present to my cousin Rachel,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##And my father, as the wicked Colonelâ##s executor, has given it in charge to me to bring down here.â##

If the sea, then oozing in smoothly over the Shivering Sand, had been changed into dry land before my own eyes, I doubt if I could have been more surprised than I was when Mr. Franklin spoke those words.

â##The Colonelâ##s Diamond left to Miss Rachel!â## says I. â##And your father, sir, the Colonelâ##s executor! Why, I would have laid any bet you like, Mr. Franklin, that your father wouldnâ##t have touched the Colonel with a pair of tongs!â##

â##Strong language, Betteredge! What was there against the Colonel? He belonged to your time, not to mine. Tell me what you know about him, and Iâ##ll tell you how my father came to be his executor, and more besides. I have made some discoveries in London about my uncle Herncastle and his Diamond, which have rather an ugly look to my eyes; and I want you to confirm them. You called him the â##wicked Colonelâ## just now. Search your memory, my old friend and tell me why.â##

I saw he was in earnest, and I told him.

Here follows the substance of what I said, written out entirely for your benefit. Pay attention to it, or you will be all abroad, when we get deeper into the story. Clear your mind of the children, or the dinner, or the new bonnet, or what not. Try if you canâ##t forget politics, horses, prices in the City, and grievances at the club. I hope you wonâ##t take this freedom on my part amiss; itâ##s only a way I have of appealing to the gentle reader. Lord! havenâ##t I seen you with the greatest authors in your hands, and donâ##t I know how ready your attention is to wander when itâ##s a book that asks for it, instead of a person?

I spoke, a little way back, of my ladyâ##s father, the old lord with the short temper and the long tongue. He had five children in all. Two sons to begin with; then, after a long time, his wife broke out breeding again, and the three young ladies came briskly one after the other, as fast as the nature of things would permit; my mistress, as before mentioned, being the youngest and best of the three. Of the two sons, the eldest, Arthur, inherited the title and estates. The second, the Honourable John, got a fine fortune left him by a relative, and went into the army.

Itâ##s an ill bird, they say, that fouls its own nest. I look on the noble family of the Herncastles as being my nest; and I shall take it as a favour if I am not expected to enter into particulars on the subject of the Honourable John. He was, I honestly believe, one of the greatest blackguards that ever lived. I can hardly say more or less for him than that. He went into the army, beginning in the Guards. He had to leave the Guards before he was two-and-twentyâ##never mind why. They are very strict in the army, and they were too strict for the Honourable John. He went out to India to see whether they were equally strict there, and to try a little active service. In the matter of bravery (to give him his due), he was a mixture of bull-dog and game-cock, with a dash of the savage. He was at the taking of Seringapatam. Soon afterwards he changed into another regiment, and, in course of time, changed into a third. In the third he got his last step as lieutenant-colonel, and, getting that, got also a sunstroke, and came home to England.

He came back with a character that closed the doors of all his family against him, my lady (then just married) taking the lead, and declaring (with Sir Johnâ##s approval, of course) that her brother

should never enter any house of hers. There was more than one slur on the Colonel that made people shy of him; but the blot of the Diamond is all I need mention here.

It was said that he got possession of his Indian jewel by means which, bold as he was, he didnâ##t dare acknowledge. He never attempted to sell itâ##not being in need of money, and not (to give him his due again) making money an object. He never gave it away; he never even showed it to any living soul. Some said he was afraid of its getting him into a difficulty with the military authorities; others (very ignorant indeed of the real nature of the man) said he was afraid, if he showed it, of its costing him his life.

There was perhaps a grain of truth mixed up with this last report. It was false to say that he was afraid; but it was a fact that his life had been twice threatened in India; and it was firmly believed that the Moonstone was at the bottom of it. When he came back to England, and found himself avoided by everybody, the Moonstone was thought to be at the bottom of it again. The mystery of the Colonelâ##s life got in the Colonelâ##s way, and outlawed him, as you may say, among his own people. The men wouldnâ##t let him into their clubs; the womenâ##more than oneâ##whom he wanted to marry, refused him; friends and relations got too near-sighted to see him in the street.

Some men in this mess would have tried to set themselves right with the world. But to give in, even when he was wrong, and had all society against him, was not the way of the Honourable John. He had kept the Diamond, in flat defiance of assassination, in India. He kept the Diamond, in flat defiance of public opinion, in England. There you have the portrait of the man before you, as in a picture: a character that braved everything; and a face, handsome as it was, that looked possessed by the devil.

We heard different rumours about him from time to time. Sometimes they said he was given up to smoking opium and collecting old books; sometimes he was reported to be trying strange things in chemistry; sometimes he was seen carousing and amusing himself among the lowest people in the lowest slums of London. Anyhow, a solitary, vicious, underground life was the life the Colonel led. Once, and once only, after his return to England, I myself saw him, face to face.

About two years before the time of which I am now writing, and about a year and a half before the time of his death, the Colonel came unexpectedly to my ladyâ##s house in London. It was the night of Miss Rachelâ##s birthday, the twenty-first of June; and there was a party in honour of it, as usual. I received a message from the footman to say that a gentleman wanted to see me. Going up into the hall, there I found the Colonel, wasted, and worn, and old, and shabby, and as wild and wicked as ever.

â##Go up to my sister,â## says he, â##and say that I have called to wish my niece many happy returns of the day.â##

He had made attempts by letter, more than once already, to be reconciled with my lady, for no other purpose, I am firmly persuaded, than to annoy her. But this was the first time he had actually come to the house. I had it on the tip of my tongue to say that my mistress had a party that night. But the devilish look of him daunted me. I went upstairs with his message, and left him, by his own desire, waiting in the hall. The servants stood staring at him, at a distance, as if he was a walking engine of destruction, loaded with powder and shot, and likely to go off among them at a momentâ##s notice.

My lady had a dashâ##no moreâ##of the family temper. â##Tell Colonel Herncastle,â## she said, when I gave her her brotherâ##s message, â##that Miss Verinder is engaged, and that *I decline* to see him.â## I tried for a civiller answer than that; knowing the Colonelâ##s constitutional superiority to the restraints which govern gentlemen in general. Quite useless! The family temper flashed out at me directly. â##When I want your advice,â## says my lady, â##you know that I always ask for it. I donâ##t ask for it now.â## I went downstairs with the message, of which I took the liberty of presenting a new and amended edition of my own contriving, as follows: â##My lady and Miss Rachel regret that they are engaged, Colonel; and beg to be excused having the honour of seeing you.â##

I expected him to break out, even at that polite way of putting it. To my surprise he did nothing of the sort; he alarmed me by taking the thing with an unnatural quiet. His eyes, of a glittering bright grey, just settled on me for a moment; and he laughed, not *out* of himself, like other people, but *into* himself, in a soft, chuckling, horridly mischievous way. â##Thank you, Betteredge,â## he said. â##I shall remember my nieceâ##s birthday.â## With that, he turned on his heel, and walked out of the house.

The next birthday came round, and we heard he was ill in bed. Six months afterwardsâ##that is to say, six months before the time I am now writing ofâ##there came a letter from a highly respectable clergyman to my lady. It communicated two wonderful things in the way of family news. First, that the Colonel had forgiven his sister on his deathbed. Second, that he had forgiven everybody else, and had made a most edifying end. I have myself (in spite of the bishops and the clergy) an unfeigned respect for the Church; but I am firmly persuaded, at the same time, that the devil remained in undisturbed possession of the Honourable John, and that the last abominable act in the life of that abominable man was (saving your presence) to take the clergyman in!

This was the sum-total of what I had to tell Mr. Franklin. I remarked that he listened more and more eagerly the longer I went on. Also, that the story of the Colonel being sent away from his sisterâ##s door, on the occasion of his nieceâ##s birthday, seemed to strike Mr. Franklin like a shot that had hit the mark. Though he didnâ##t acknowledge it, I saw that I had made him uneasy, plainly enough, in his face.

â##You have said your say, Betteredge,â## he remarked. â##Itâ##s my turn now. Before, however, I tell you what discoveries I have made in London, and how I came to be mixed up in this matter of the Diamond, I want to know one thing. You look, my old friend, as if you didnâ##t quite understand the object to be answered by this consultation of ours. Do your looks belie you?â##

â##No, sir,â## I said. â##My looks, on this occasion at any rate, tell the truth.â##

â##In that case,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##suppose I put you up to my point of view, before we go any further. I see three very serious questions involved in the Colonelâ##s birthday-gift to my cousin Rachel. Follow me carefully, Betteredge; and count me off on your fingers, if it will help you,â## says Mr. Franklin, with a certain pleasure in showing how clear-headed he could be, which reminded me wonderfully of old times when he was a boy. â##Question the first: Was the Colonelâ##s Diamond the object of a conspiracy in India? Question the second: Has the conspiracy followed the Colonelâ##s Diamond to England? Question the third: Did the Colonel know the conspiracy followed the Diamond; and has he purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, through the innocent medium of his sisterâ##s child? *That* is what I am driving at, Betteredge. Donâ##t let me frighten you.â##

It was all very well to say that, but he *had* frightened me.

If he was right, here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamondâ##bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man. There was our situation as revealed to me in Mr. Franklinâ##s last words! Who ever heard the like of itâ##in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British constitution? Nobody ever heard the like of it, and, consequently, nobody can be expected to believe it. I shall go on with my story, however, in spite of that.

When you get a sudden alarm, of the sort that I had got now, nine times out of ten the place you feel it in is your stomach. When you feel it in your stomach, your attention wanders, and you begin to fidget. I fidgeted silently in my place on the sand. Mr. Franklin noticed me, contending with a perturbed stomach or mindâ##which you please; they mean the same thingâ##and, checking himself just as he was starting with his part of the story, said to me sharply, â##What do you want?â##

What did I want? I didnâ##t tell *him*; but Iâ##ll tell *you*, in confidence. I wanted a whiff of my pipe, and a turn at *Robinson Crusoe.*

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Keeping my private sentiments to myself, I respectfully requested Mr. Franklin to go on. Mr. Franklin replied, â##Donâ##t fidget, Betteredge,â## and went on.

Our young gentlemanâ##s first words informed me that his discoveries, concerning the wicked Colonel and the Diamond, had begun with a visit which he had paid (before he came to us) to the family lawyer at Hampstead. A chance word dropped by Mr. Franklin, when the two were alone, one day, after dinner, revealed that he had been charged by his father with a birthday present to be taken to Miss Rachel. One thing led to another; and it ended in the lawyer mentioning what the present really was, and how the friendly connexion between the late Colonel and Mr. Blake, senior, had taken its rise. The facts here are really so extraordinary, that I doubt if I can trust my own language to do justice to them. I prefer trying to report Mr. Franklinâ##s discoveries, as nearly as may be, in Mr. Franklinâ##s own words.

â##You remember the time, Betteredge,â## he said, â##when my father was trying to prove his title to that unlucky Dukedom? Well! that was also the time when my uncle Herncastle returned from India. My father discovered that his brother-in-law was in possession of certain papers which were likely to be of service to him in his lawsuit. He called on the Colonel, on pretence of welcoming him back to England. The Colonel was not to be deluded in that way. â##You want something,â## he said, â##or you would never have compromised your reputation by calling on *me*.â## My father saw that the one chance for him was to show his hand; he admitted, at once, that he wanted the papers. The Colonel asked for a day to consider his answer. His answer came in the shape of a most extraordinary letter, which my friend the lawyer showed me. The Colonel began by saying that he wanted something of my father, and that he begged to propose an exchange of friendly services between them. The fortune of war (that was the expression he used) had placed him in possession of one of the largest Diamonds in the world; and he had reason to believe that neither he nor his precious jewel was safe in any house, in any quarter of the globe, which they occupied together. Under these alarming circumstances, he had determined to place his Diamond in the keeping of another person. That person was not expected to run any risk. He might deposit the precious stone in any place especially guarded and set apartâ##like a bankerâ##s or jewellerâ##s strong-roomâ##for the safe custody of valuables of high price. His main personal responsibility in the matter was to be of the passive kind. He was to undertakeâ##either by himself, or by a trustworthy representativeâ##to receive at a prearranged address, on certain prearranged days in every year, a note from the Colonel, simply stating the fact that he was a living man at that date. In the event of the date passing over without the note being received, the Colonelâ##s silence might be taken as a sure token of the Colonelâ##s death by murder. In that case, and in no other, certain sealed instructions relating to the disposal of the Diamond, and deposited with it, were to be opened, and followed implicitly. If my father chose to accept this strange charge, the Colonelâ##s papers were at his disposal in return. That was the letter.â##

â##What did your father do, sir?â## I asked.

â##Do?â## says Mr. Franklin. â##Iâ##ll tell you what he did. He brought the invaluable faculty, called common sense, to bear on the Colonelâ##s letter. The whole thing, he declared, was simply absurd. Somewhere in his Indian wanderings, the Colonel had picked up with some wretched crystal which he took for a diamond. As for the danger of his being murdered, and the precautions devised to preserve his life and his piece of crystal, this was the nineteenth century, and any man in his senses had only to apply to the police. The Colonel had been a notorious opium-eater for years past; and, if the only way of getting at the valuable papers he possessed was by accepting a matter of opium as a matter of fact, my father was quite willing to take the ridiculous responsibility imposed on himâ##all the more readily that it involved no trouble to himself. The Diamond and the sealed instructions went into his bankerâ##s strong-room, and the Colonelâ##s letters, periodically reporting him a living

man, were received and opened by our family lawyer, Mr. Bruff, as my fatherâ##s representative. No sensible person, in a similar position, could have viewed the matter in any other way. Nothing in this world, Betteredge, is probable unless it appeals to our own trumpery experience; and we only believe in a romance when we see it in a newspaper.â##

It was plain to me from this, that Mr. Franklin thought his fatherâ##s notion about the Colonel hasty and wrong.

â##What is your own private opinion about the matter, sir?â## I asked.

â##Letâ##s finish the story of the Colonel first,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##There is a curious want of system, Betteredge, in the English mind; and your question, my old friend, is an instance of it. When we are not occupied in making machinery, we are (mentally speaking) the most slovenly people in the universe.â##

â##So much,â## I thought to myself, â##for a foreign education! He has learned that way of girding at us in France, I suppose.â##

Mr. Franklin took up the lost thread, and went on.

â##My father,â## he said, â##got the papers he wanted, and never saw his brother-in-law again from that time. Year after year, on the prearranged days, the prearranged letter came from the Colonel, and was opened by Mr. Bruff. I have seen the letters, in a heap, all of them written in the same brief business-like form of words: â##Sirâ##This is to certify that I am still a living man. Let the Diamond be. John Herncastle.â## That was all he ever wrote, and that came regularly to the day; until some six or eight months since, when the form of the letter varied for the first time. It ran now: â##Sir,â##They tell me I am dying. Come to me, and help to make my will.â## Mr. Bruff went, and found him, in the little suburban villa, surrounded by its own grounds, in which he had lived alone, ever since he had left India. He had dogs, cats, and birds to keep him company; but no human being near him, except the person who came daily to do the house-work, and the doctor at the bedside. The Will was a very simple matter. The Colonel had dissipated the greater part of his fortune in his chemical investigations. His Will began and ended in three clauses, which he dictated from his bed, in perfect possession of his faculties. The first clause provided for the safe keeping and support of his animals. The second founded a professorship of experimental chemistry at a northern university. The third bequeathed the Moonstone as a birthday present to his niece, on condition that my father would act as executor. My father at first refused to act. On second thoughts, however, he gave way, partly because he was assured that the executorship would involve him in no trouble; partly because Mr. Bruff suggested, in Rachelâ##s interest, that the Diamond might be worth something, after all.â##

â##Did the Colonel give any reason, sir,â## I inquired, â##why he left the Diamond to Miss Rachel?â##

â##He not only gave the reasonâ##he had the reason written in his will,â## said Mr. Franklin. â##I have got an extract, which you shall see presently. Donâ##t be slovenly-minded, Betteredge! One thing at a time. You have heard about the Colonelâ##s Will; now you must hear what happened after the Colonelâ##s death. It was formally necessary to have the Diamond valued before the Will could be proved. All the jewellers consulted, at once confirmed the Colonelâ##s assertion that he possessed one of the largest diamonds in the world. The question of accurately valuing it presented some serious difficulties. Its size made it a phenomenon in the diamond market; its colour placed it in a category by itself; and, to add to these elements of uncertainty, there was a defect, in the shape of a flaw, in the very heart of the stone. Even with this last serious drawback, however, the lowest of the various estimates given was twenty thousand pounds. Conceive my fatherâ##s astonishment! He had been within a hairâ##s-breadth of refusing to act as executor, and of allowing this magnificent jewel to be lost to the family. The interest he took in the matter now, induced him to open the sealed instructions which had been deposited with the Diamond. Mr. Bruff showed this document to me, with the other papers; and it suggests (to my mind) a clue to the nature of the conspiracy which threatened the Colonelâ##s life.â##

â##Then you do believe, sir,â## I said, â##that there was a conspiracy?â##

â##Not possessing my fatherâ##s excellent common sense,â## answered Mr. Franklin, â##I believe the Colonelâ##s life was threatened, exactly as the Colonel said. The sealed instructions, as I think, explain how it was that he died, after all, quietly in his bed. In the event of his death by violence (that is to say, in the absence of the regular letter from him at the appointed date), my father was then directed to send the Moonstone secretly to Amsterdam. It was to be deposited in that city with a famous diamond-cutter, and it was to be cut up into from four to six separate stones. The stones were then to be sold for what they would fetch, and the proceeds were to be applied to the founding of that professorship of experimental chemistry, which the Colonel has since endowed by his Will. Now, Betteredge, exert those sharp wits of yours, and observe the conclusion to which the Colonelâ##s instructions point!â##

I instantly exerted my wits. They were of the slovenly English sort; and they consequently muddled it all, until Mr. Franklin took them in hand, and pointed out what they ought to see.

â##Remark,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##that the integrity of the Diamond, as a whole stone, is here artfully made dependent on the preservation from violence of the Colonelâ##s life. He is not satisfied with saying to the enemies he dreads, â##Kill meâ##and you will be no nearer the Diamond than you are now; it is where you canâ##t get at itâ##in the guarded strong-room of a bank.â## He says instead, â##Kill meâ##and the Diamond will be the Diamond no longer; its identity will be destroyed.â## What does that mean?â##

Here I had (as I thought) a flash of the wonderful foreign brightness.

â##I know,â## I said. â##It means lowering the value of the stone, and cheating the rogues in that way!â##

â##Nothing of the sort,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##I have inquired about that. The flawed Diamond, cut up, would actually fetch more than the Diamond as it now is; for this plain reasonâ##that from four to six perfect brilliants might be cut from it, which would be, collectively, worth more money than the largeâ##but imperfectâ##single stone. If robbery for the purpose of gain was at the bottom of the conspiracy, the Colonelâ##s instructions absolutely made the Diamond better worth stealing. More money could have been got for it, and the disposal of it in the diamond market would have been infinitely easier, if it had passed through the hands of the workmen of Amsterdam.â##

â##Lord bless us, sir!â## I burst out. â##What was the plot then?â##

â##A plot organised among the Indians who originally owned the jewel,â## says Mr. Franklinâ##â##a plot with some old Hindoo superstition at the bottom of it. That is my opinion, confirmed by a family paper which I have about me at this moment.â##

I saw, now, why the appearance of the three Indian jugglers at our house had presented itself to Mr. Franklin in the light of a circumstance worth noting.

â##I donâ##t want to force my opinion on you,â## Mr. Franklin went on. â##The idea of certain chosen servants of an old Hindoo superstition devoting themselves, through all difficulties and dangers, to watching the opportunity of recovering their sacred gem, appears to *me* to be perfectly consistent with everything that we know of the patience of Oriental races, and the influence of Oriental religions. But then I am an imaginative man; and the butcher, the baker, and the tax-gatherer are not the only credible realities in existence to *my* mind. Let the guess I have made at the truth in this matter go for what it is worth, and let us get on to the only practical question that concerns us. Does the conspiracy against the Moonstone survive the Colonelâ##s death? And did the Colonel know it, when he left the birthday gift to his niece?â##

I began to see my lady and Miss Rachel at the end of it all, now. Not a word he said escaped me.

â##I was not very willing, when I discovered the story of the Moonstone,â## said Mr. Franklin, â##to be the means of bringing it here. But Mr. Bruff reminded me that somebody must put my cousinâ##s legacy into my cousinâ##s handsâ##and that I might as well do it as anybody else. After taking the Diamond out of the bank, I fancied I was followed in the streets by a shabby, dark-

complexioned man. I went to my fatherâ##s house to pick up my luggage, and found a letter there, which unexpectedly detained me in London. I went back to the bank with the Diamond, and thought I saw the shabby man again. Taking the Diamond once more out of the bank this morning, I saw the man for the third time, gave him the slip, and started (before he recovered the trace of me) by the morning instead of the afternoon train. Here I am, with the Diamond safe and soundâ##and what is the first news that meets me? I find that three strolling Indians have been at the house, and that my arrival from London, and something which I am expected to have about me, are two special objects of investigation to them when they believe themselves to be alone. I donâ##t waste time and words on their pouring the ink into the boyâ##s hand, and telling him to look in it for a man at a distance, and for something in that manâ##s pocket. The thing (which I have often seen done in the East) is â##hocus-pocusâ## in my opinion, as it is in yours. The present question for us to decide is, whether I am wrongly attaching a meaning to a mere accident? or whether we really have evidence of the Indians being on the track of the Moonstone, the moment it is removed from the safe keeping of the bank?â##

Neither he nor I seemed to fancy dealing with this part of the inquiry. We looked at each other, and then we looked at the side, oozing in smoothly, higher and higher, over the Shivering Sand.

â##What are you thinking of ?â## says Mr. Franklin, suddenly.

â##I was thinking, sir,â## I answered, â##that I should like to shy the Diamond into the quicksand, and settle the question in *that* way.â##

â##If you have got the value of the stone in your pocket,â## answered Mr. Franklin, â##say so, Betteredge, and in it goes!â##

Itâ##s curious to note, when your mindâ##s anxious, how very far in the way of relief a very small joke will go. We found a fund of merriment, at the time, in the notion of making away with Miss Rachelâ##s lawful property, and getting Mr. Blake, as executor, into dreadful troubleâ##though where the merriment was, I am quite at a loss to discover now.

Mr. Franklin was the first to bring the talk back to the talkâ##s proper purpose. He took an envelope out of his pocket, opened it, and handed to me the paper inside.

â##Betteredge,â## he said, â##we must face the question of the Colonelâ##s motive in leaving this legacy to his niece, for my auntâ##s sake. Bear in mind how Lady Verinder treated her brother from the time when he returned to England, to the time when he told you he should remember his nieceâ##s birthday. And read that.â##

He gave me the extract from the Colonelâ##s Will. I have got it by me while I write these words; and I copy it, as follows, for your benefit:

â##Thirdly, and lastly, I give and bequeath to my niece, Rachel Verinder, daughter and only child of my sister, Julia Verinder, widowâ##if her mother, the said Julia Verinder, shall be living on the said Rachel Verinderâ##s next Birthday after my deathâ##the yellow Diamond belonging to me, and known in the East by the name of The Moonstone: subject to this condition, that her mother, the said Julia Verinder, shall be living at the time. And I hereby desire my executor to give my Diamond, either by his own hands or by the hands of some trustworthy representative whom he shall appoint, into the personal possession of my said niece Rachel, on her next birthday after my death, and in the presence, if possible, of my sister, the said Julia Verinder. And I desire that my said sister may be informed, by means of a true copy of this, the third and last clause of my Will, that I give the Diamond to her daughter Rachel, in token of my free forgiveness of the injury which her conduct towards me has been the means of inflicting on my reputation in my lifetime; and especially in proof that I pardon, as becomes a dying man, the insult offered to me as an officer and a gentleman, when her servant, by her orders, closed the door of her house against me, on the occasion of her daughterâ##s birthday.â##

More words followed these, providing if my lady was dead, or if Miss Rachel was dead, at the time of the testatorâ##s decease, for the Diamond being sent to Holland, in accordance with the

sealed instructions originally deposited with it. The proceeds of the sale were, in that case, to be added to the money already left by the Will for the professorship of chemistry at the university in the north.

I handed the paper back to Mr. Franklin, sorely troubled what to say to him. Up to that moment, my own opinion had been (as you know) that the Colonel had died as wickedly as he had lived. I donâ##t say the copy from his Will actually converted me from that opinion: I only say it staggered me.

â##Well,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##now you have read the Colonelâ##s own statement, what do you say? In bringing the Moonstone to my auntâ##s house, am I serving his vengeance blindfold, or am I vindicating him in the character of a penitent and Christian man?â##

â##It seems hard to say, sir,â## I answered, â##that he died with a horrid revenge in his heart, and a horrid lie on his lips. God alone knows the truth. Donâ##t ask *me*.â##

Mr. Franklin sat twisting and turning the extract from the Will in his fingers, as if he expected to squeeze the truth out of it in that manner. He altered quite remarkably, at the same time. From being brisk and bright, he now became, most unaccountably, a slow, solemn, and pondering young man.

â##This question has two sides,â## he said. â##An Objective side, and a Subjective side. Which are we to take?â##

He had had a German education as well as a French. One of the two had been in undisturbed possession of him (as I supposed) up to this time. And now (as well as I could make out) the other was taking its place. It is one of my rules in life, never to notice what I donâ##t understand. I steered a middle course between the Objective and the Subjective side. In plain English I stared hard, and said nothing.

â##Letâ##s extract the inner meaning of this,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##Why did my uncle leave the Diamond to Rachel? Why didnâ##t he leave it to my aunt?â##

â##Thatâ##s not beyond guessing, at any rate,â## I said. â##Colonel Herncastle knew my lady well enough to know that she would have refused to accept any legacy that came to her from *him*.â##

â##How did he know that Rachel might not refuse to accept it, too?â##

â##Is there any young lady in existence, sir, who could resist the temptation of accepting such a birthday present as the Moonstone?â##

â##Thatâ##s the Subjective view,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##It does you great credit, Betteredge, to be able to take the Subjective view. But thereâ##s another mystery about the Colonelâ##s legacy which is not accounted for yet. How are we to explain his only giving Rachel her birthday present conditionally on her mother being alive?â##

â##I donâ##t want to slander a dead man, sir,â## I answered. â##But if he *has* purposely left a legacy of trouble and danger to his sister, by the means of her child, it must be a legacy made conditional on his sisterâ##s being alive to feel the vexation of it.â##

â##Oh! Thatâ##s your interpretation of his motive, is it? The Subjective interpretation again! Have you ever been in Germany, Betteredge?â##

â##No, sir. Whatâ##s your interpretation, if you please?â##

â##I can see,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##that the Colonelâ##s object may, quite possibly, have beenâ##not to benefit his niece, whom he had never even seenâ##but to prove to his sister that he had died forgiving her, and to prove it very prettily by means of a present made to her child. There is a totally different explanation from yours, Betteredge, taking its rise in a Subjective â## Objective point of view. From all I can see, one interpretation is just as likely to be right as the other.â##

Having brought matters to this pleasant and comforting issue, Mr. Franklin appeared to think that he had completed all that was required of him. He laid down flat on his back on the sand, and asked what was to be done next.

He had been so clever, and clear-headed (before he began to talk the foreign gibberish), and had so completely taken the lead in the business up to the present time, that I was quite unprepared for such a sudden change as he now exhibited in this helpless leaning upon *me.* It was not till later that I learnedâ##by assistance of Miss Rachel, who was the first to make the discoveryâ##that these

puzzling shifts and transformations in Mr. Franklin were due to the effect on him of his foreign training. At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, he had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. As a consequence of this he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. He could be a busy man, and a lazy man; cloudy in the head, and clear in the head; a model of determination, and a spectacle of helplessness, all together. He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian sideâ##the original English foundation showing through, every now and then, as much as to say, â##Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but thereâ##s something of me left at the bottom of him still.â## Miss Rachel used to remark that the Italian side of him was uppermost, on those occasions when he unexpectedly gave in, and asked you in his nice sweet-tempered way to take his own responsibilities on your shoulders. You will do him no injustice, I think, if you conclude that the Italian side of him was uppermost now.

â##Isnâ##t it your business, sir,â## I asked, â##to know what to do next? Surely it canâ##t be mine?â##

Mr. Franklin didnâ##t appear to see the force of my questionâ##not being in a position, at the time, to see anything but the sky over his head.

â##I donâ##t want to alarm my aunt without reason,â## he said. â##And I donâ##t want to leave her without what may be a needful warning. If you were in my place, Betteredge, tell me, in one word, what would you do?â##

In one word, I told him: â##Wait.â##

â##With all my heart,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##How long?â##

I proceeded to explain myself.

â##As I understand it, sir,â## I said, â##somebody is bound to put this plaguy Diamond into Miss Rachelâ##s hands on her birthdayâ##and you may as well do it as another. Very good. This is the twenty-fifth of May, and the birthday is on the twenty-first of June. We have got close on four weeks before us. Letâ##s wait and see what happens in that time; and letâ##s warn my lady or not, as the circumstances direct us.â##

â##Perfect, Betteredge, as far as it goes!â## says Mr. Franklin. â##But between this and the birthday, whatâ##s to be done with the Diamond?â##

â##What your father did with it, to be sure, sir!â## I answered. â##Your father put it in the safe keeping of a bank in London. You put it in the safe keeping of the bank at Frizinghall.â## (Frizinghall was our nearest town, and the Bank of England wasnâ##t safer than the bank there). â##If I were you, sir,â## I added, â##I would ride straight away with it to Frizinghall before the ladies come back.â##

The prospect of doing somethingâ##and, what is more, of doing that something on a horseâ##brought Mr. Franklin up like lightning from the flat of his back. He sprang to his feet, and pulled me up, without ceremony, on to mine. â##Betteredge, you are worth your weight in gold,â## he said. â##Come along, and saddle the best horse in the stables directly!â##

Here (God bless it!) was the original English foundation of him showing through all the foreign varnish at last! Here was the Master Franklin I remembered, coming out again in the good old way at the prospect of a ride, and reminding me of the good old times! Saddle a horse for him? I would have saddled a dozen horses, if he could only have ridden them all!

We went back to the house in a hurry; we had the fleetest horse in the stables saddled in a hurry; and Mr. Franklin rattled off in a hurry, to lodge the cursed Diamond once more in the strong-room of a bank. When I heard the last of his horseâ##s hoofs on the drive, and when I turned about in the yard and found I was alone again, I felt half inclined to ask myself if I hadnâ##t woke up from a dream.

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While I was in this bewildered frame of mind, sorely needing a little quiet time by myself to put me right again, my daughter Penelope got in my way (just as her late mother used to get in my way on the stairs), and instantly summoned me to tell her all that had passed at the conference between Mr. Franklin and me. Under present circumstances, the one thing to be done was to clap the extinguisher upon Penelopeâ##s curiosity on the spot. I accordingly replied that Mr. Franklin and I had both talked of foreign politics, till we could talk no longer, and had then mutually fallen asleep in the heat of the sun. Try that sort of answer when your wife or your daughter next worries you with an awkward question at an awkward time, and depend on the natural sweetness of women for kissing and making it up again at the next opportunity.

The afternoon wore on, and my lady and Miss Rachel came back.

Needless to say how astonished they were, when they heard that Mr. Franklin Blake had arrived, and had gone off again on horseback. Needless also to say, that *they* asked awkward questions directly, and that the â##foreign politicsâ## and the â##falling asleep in the sunâ## wouldnâ##t serve a second time over with *them.* Being at the end of my invention, I said Mr. Franklinâ##s arrival by the early train was entirely attributable to one of Mr. Franklinâ##s freaks. Being asked, upon that, whether his galloping off again on horseback was another of Mr. Franklinâ##s freaks, I said, â##Yes, it wasâ##; and slipped out of itâ##I think very cleverlyâ##in that way.

Having got over my difficulties with the ladies, I found more difficulties waiting for me when I went back to my own room. In came Penelopeâ##with the natural sweetness of womenâ##to kiss and make it up again; andâ##with the natural curiosity of womenâ##to ask another question. This time she only wanted me to tell her what was the matter with our second housemaid, Rosanna Spearman.

After leaving Mr. Franklin and me at the Shivering Sand, Rosanna, it appeared, had returned to the house in a very unaccountable state of mind. She had turned (if Penelope was to be believed) all the colours of the rainbow. She had been merry without reason, and sad without reason. In one breath she asked hundreds of questions about Mr. Franklin Blake, and in another breath she had been angry with Penelope for presuming to suppose that a strange gentleman could possess any interest for her. She had been surprised, smiling, and scribbling Mr. Franklinâ##s name inside her workbox. She had been surprised again, crying and looking at her deformed shoulder in the glass. Had she and Mr. Franklin known anything of each other before to-day? Quite impossible! Had they heard anything of each other! Impossible again! I could speak to Mr. Franklinâ##s astonishment as genuine, when he saw how the girl stared at him. Penelope could speak to the girlâ##s inquisitiveness as genuine, when she asked questions about Mr. Franklin. The conference between us, conducted in this way, was tiresome enough, until my daughter suddenly ended it by bursting out with what I thought the most monstrous supposition I had ever heard in my life.

â##Father!â## says Penelope, quite seriously, â##thereâ##s only one explanation of it. Rosanna has fallen in love with Mr. Franklin Blake at first sight!â##

You have heard of beautiful young ladies falling in love at first sight, and have thought it natural enough. But a housemaid out of a reformatory, with a plain face and a deformed shoulder, falling in love, at first sight, with a gentleman who comes on a visit to her mistressâ##s house, match me that, in the way of an absurdity, out of any story-book in Christendom, if you can! I laughed till the tears rolled down my cheeks. Penelope resented my merriment, in rather a strange way. â##I never knew you cruel before, father,â## she said, very gently, and went out.

My girlâ##s words fell upon me like a splash of cold water. I was savage with myself, for feeling uneasy in myself the moment she had spoken themâ##but so it was. We will change the subject, if you please. I am sorry I drifted into writing about it; and not without reason, as you will see when we have gone on together a little longer.

The evening came, and the dressing-bell for dinner rang, before Mr. Franklin returned from Frizinghall. I took his hot water up to his room myself, expecting to hear, after this extraordinary delay, that something had happened. To my great disappointment (and no doubt to yours also), nothing had happened. He had not met with the Indians, either going or returning. He had deposited the Moonstone in the bankâ##describing it merely as a valuable of great priceâ##and had got the receipt for it safe in his pocket. I went downstairs, feeling that this was rather a flat ending, after all our excitement about the Diamond earlier in the day.

How the meeting between Mr. Franklin and his aunt and cousin went off, is more than I can tell you.

I would have given something to have waited at table that day. But, in my position in the household, waiting at dinner (except on high family festivals) was letting down my dignity in the eyes of the other servantsâ##a thing which my lady considered me quite prone enough to do already, without seeking occasions for it. The news brought to me from the upper regions, that evening, came from Penelope and the footman. Penelope mentioned that she had never known Miss Rachel so particular about the dressing of her hair, and had never seen her look so bright and pretty as she did when she went down to meet Mr. Franklin in the drawing-room. The footmanâ##s report was, that the preservation of a respectful composure in the presence of his betters, and the waiting on Mr. Franklin Blake at dinner, were two of the hardest things to reconcile with each other that had ever tried his training in service. Later in the evening, we heard them singing and playing duets, Mr. Franklin piping high, Miss Rachel piping higher, and my lady, on the piano, following them as it were over hedge and ditch, and seeing them safe through it in a manner most wonderful and pleasant to hear through the open windows, on the terrace at night. Later still, I went to Mr. Franklin in the smoking-room, with the soda-water and brandy, and found that Miss Rachel had put the Diamond clean out of his head. â##Sheâ##s the most charming girl I have seen since I came back to England!â## was all I could extract from him, when I endeavoured to lead the conversation to more serious things.

Towards midnight, I went round the house to lock up, accompanied by my second in command (Samuel, the footman), as usual. When all the doors were made fast, except the side door that opened on the terrace, I sent Samuel to bed, and stepped out for a breath of fresh air before I too went to bed in my turn.

The night was still and close, and the moon was at the full in the heavens. It was so silent out of doors, that I heard from time to time, very faint and low, the fall of the sea, as the ground-swell heaved it in on the sand-bank near the mouth of our little bay. As the house stood, the terrace side was the dark side; but the broad moonlight showed fair on the gravel walk that ran along the next side to the terrace. Looking this way, after looking up at the sky, I saw the shadow of a person in the moonlight thrown forward from behind the corner of the house.

Being old and sly, I forbore to call out; but being also, unfortunately, old and heavy, my feet betrayed me on the gravel. Before I could steal suddenly round the corner, as I had proposed, I heard lighter feet than mineâ##and more than one pair of them as I thoughtâ##retreating in a hurry. By the time I had got to the corner, the trespassers, whoever they were, had run into the shrubbery at the off side of the walk, and were hidden from sight among the thick trees and bushes in that part of the grounds. From the shrubbery, they could easily make their way, over our fence into the road. If I had been forty years younger I might have had a chance of catching them before they got clear of our premises. As it was, I went back to set a-going a younger pair of legs than mine. Without disturbing anybody, Samuel and I got a couple of guns, and went all round the house and through the shrubbery. Having made sure that no persons were lurking about anywhere in our grounds, we turned back. Passing over the walk where I had seen the shadow, I now noticed, for the first time, a little bright object, lying on the clean gravel, under the light of the moon. Picking the object up, I discovered it was a small bottle, containing a thick sweet-smelling liquor, as black as ink.

I said nothing to Samuel. But, remembering what Penelope had told me about the jugglers, and the pouring of the little pool of ink into the palm of the boyâ##s hand, I instantly suspected that I had disturbed the three Indians lurking about the house, and bent, in their heathenish way, on discovering the whereabouts of the Diamond that night.

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Here, for one moment, I find it necessary to call a halt.

On summoning up my own recollectionsâ##and on getting Penelope to help me, by consulting her journalâ##I find that we may pass pretty rapidly over the interval between Mr. Franklin Blakeâ##s arrival and Miss Rachelâ##s birthday. For the greater part of that time the days passed, and brought nothing with them worth recording. With your good leave, then, and with Penelopeâ##s help, I shall notice certain dates only in this place; reserving to myself to tell the story day by day, once more, as soon as we get to the time when the business of the Moonstone became the chief business of everybody in our house.

This said, we may now go on againâ##beginning, of course, with the bottle of sweet-smelling ink which I found on the gravel walk at night.

On the next morning (the morning of the twenty-sixth) I showed Mr. Franklin this article of jugglery, and told him what I have already told you. His opinion was, not only that the Indians had been lurking about after the Diamond, but also that they were actually foolish enough to believe in their own magicâ##meaning thereby the making of signs on a boyâ##s head, and the pouring of ink into a boyâ##s hand, and then expecting him to see persons and things beyond the reach of human vision. In our country, as well as in the East, Mr. Franklin informed me, there are people who practise this curious hocus-pocus (without the ink, however); and who call it by a French name, signifying something like brightness of sight. â##Depend upon it,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##the Indians took it for granted that we should keep the Diamond here; and they brought their clairvoyant boy to show them the way to it, if they succeeded in getting into the house last night.â##

â##Do you think theyâ##ll try again, sir?â## I asked.

â##It depends,â## says Mr. Franklin, â##on what the boy can really do. If he can see the Diamond through the iron safe of the bank at Frizinghall, we shall be troubled with no more visits from the Indians for the present. If he canâ##t, we shall have another chance of catching them in the shrubbery, before many more nights are over our heads.â##

I waited pretty confidently for that latter chance; but, strange to relate, it never came.

Whether the jugglers heard, in the town, of Mr. Franklin having been seen at the bank, and drew their conclusions accordingly; or whether the boy really did see the Diamond where the Diamond was now lodged (which I, for one, flatly disbelieve); or whether, after all, it was a mere effect of chance, this at any rate is the plain truthâ##not the ghost of an Indian came near the house again, through the weeks that passed before Miss Rachelâ##s birthday. The jugglers remained in and about the town plying their trade; and Mr. Franklin and I remained waiting to see what might happen, and resolute not to put the rogues on their guard by showing our suspicions of them too soon. With this report of the proceedings on either side, ends all that I have to say about the Indians for the present.

On the twenty-ninth of the month, Miss Rachel and Mr. Franklin hit on a new method of working their way together through the time which might otherwise have hung heavy on their hands. There are reasons for taking particular notice here of the occupation that amused them. You will find it has a bearing on something that has still to come.

Gentlefolks in general have a very awkward rock ahead in lifeâ##the rock ahead of their own idleness. Their lives being, for the most part, passed in looking about them for something to do, it is curious to seeâ##especially when their tastes are of what is called the intellectual sortâ##how often they drift blindfold into some nasty pursuit. Nine times out of ten they take to torturing something, or to spoiling somethingâ##and they firmly believe they are improving their minds, when the plain truth is, they are only making a mess in the house. I have seen them (ladies, I am sorry to say, as well as gentlemen) go out, day after day, for example, with empty pill-boxes, and catch newts, and beetles, and spiders, and frogs, and come home and stick pins through the miserable wretches, or

cut them up, without a pang of remorse, into little pieces. You see my young master, or my young mistress, poring over one of their spidersâ## insides with a magnifying glass; or you meet one of their frogs walking downstairs without his headâ##and when you wonder what this cruel nastiness means, you are told that it means a taste in my young master or my young mistress for natural history. Sometimes, again, you see them occupied for hours together in spoiling a pretty flower with pointed instruments, out of a stupid curiosity to know what the flower is made of. Is its colour any prettier, or its scent any sweeter, when you *do* know? But there! the poor souls must get through the time, you seeâ##they must get through the time. You dabbled in nasty mud, and made pies, when you were a child; and you dabble in nasty science, and dissect spiders, and spoil flowers, when you grow up. In the one case and in the other, the secret of it is, that you have got nothing to think of in your poor empty head, and nothing to do with your poor idle hands. And so it ends in your spoiling canvas with paints, and making a smell in the house; or in keeping tadpoles in a glass box full of dirty water, and turning everybodyâ##s stomach in the house; or in chipping off bits of stone here, there, and everywhere, and dropping grit into all the victuals in the house; or in staining your fingers in the pursuit of photography, and doing justice without mercy on everybodyâ##s face in the house. It often falls heavy enough, no doubt, on people who are really obliged to get their living, to be forced to work for the clothes that cover them, the roof that shelters them, and the food that keeps them going. But compare the hardest dayâ##s work you ever did with the idleness that splits flowers and pokes its way into spiderâ##s stomach, and thank your stars that your head has got something it *must* think of, and your hands something that they *must* do.

As for Mr. Franklin and Miss Rachel, they tortured nothing, I am glad to say. They simply confined themselves to making a mess; and all they spoilt, to do them justice, was the panelling of a door.

Mr. Franklinâ##s universal genius, dabbling in everything, dabbled in what he called â##decorative painting.â## He had invented, he informed us, a new mixture to moisten paint with, which he described as a â##vehicleâ##. What it was made of, I donâ##t know. What it did, I can tell you in two wordsâ##it stank. Miss Rachel being wild to try her hand at the new process, Mr. Franklin sent to London for the materials; mixed them up, with accompaniment of a smell which made the very dogs sneeze when they came into the room; put an apron and a bib over Miss Rachelâ##s gown, and set her to work decorating her own little sitting-roomâ##called, for want of English to name it in, her â##boudoir.â## They began with the inside of the door. Mr. Franklin scraped off all the nice varnish with pumice-stone, and made what he described as a surface to work on. Miss Rachel then covered the surface, under his directions and with his help, with patterns and devicesâ##griffins, birds, flowers, cupids, and such likeâ##copied from designs made by a famous Italian painter, whose name escapes me: the one, I mean, who stocked the world with Virgin Maries and had a sweetheart at the bakerâ##s. Viewed as work, this decoration was slow to do, and dirty to deal with. But our young lady and gentleman never seemed to tire of it. When they were not riding, or seeing company, or taking their meals, or piping their songs, there they were with their heads together, as busy as bees, spoiling the door. Who was the poet who said Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do? If he had occupied my place in the family, and had seen Miss Rachel with her brush, and Mr. Franklin with his vehicle, he could have written nothing truer of either of them than that.

The next date worthy of notice is Sunday the fourth of June.

On that evening, we in the servantsâ## hall, debated a domestic question for the first time, which, like the decoration of the door, has its bearings on something that is still to come.

Seeing the pleasure which Mr. Franklin and Miss Rachel took in each otherâ##s society, and noting what a pretty match they were in all personal respects, we naturally speculated on the chance of their putting their heads together with other objects in view besides the ornamenting of a door. Some of us said there would be a wedding in the house before the summer was over. Others (led by

me) admitted it was likely enough Miss Rachel might be married; but we doubted (for reasons which will presently appear) whether her bridegroom would be Mr. Franklin Blake.

That Mr. Franklin Blake was in love, on his side, nobody who saw and heard him could doubt. The difficulty was to fathom Miss Rachel. Let me do myself the honour of making you acquainted with her; after which, I will leave you to fathom for yourselfâ##if you can.

My young ladyâ##s eighteenth birthday was the birthday now coming, on the twenty-first of June. If you happen to like dark women (who, I am informed, have gone out of fashion latterly in the gay world), and if you have no particular prejudice in favour of size, I answer for Miss Rachel as one of the prettiest girls your eyes ever looked on. She was small and slim, but all in fine proportion from top to toe. To see her sit down, to see her get up, and especially to see her walk, was enough to satisfy any man in his senses that the graces of her figure (if you will pardon me the expression) were in her flesh and not in her clothes. Her hair was the blackest I ever saw. Her eyes matched her hair. Her nose was not quite large enough, I admit. Her mouth and chin were (to quote Mr. Franklin) morsels for the gods; and her complexion (on the same undeniable authority) was as warm as the sun itself, with this great advantage over the sun, that it was always in nice order to look at. Add to the foregoing that she carried her head as upright as a dart, in a dashing, spirited, thoroughbred wayâ##that she had a clear voice, with a ring of the right metal in it, and a smile that began very prettily in her eyes before it got to her lipsâ##and there behold the portrait of her, to the best of my painting, as large as life!

And what about her disposition next? Had this charming creature no faults? She had just as many faults as you have, maâ##amâ##neither more nor less.

To put it seriously, my dear pretty Miss Rachel, possessing a host of graces and attractions, had one defect, which strict impartiality compels me to acknowledge. She was unlike most other girls of her age, in thisâ##that she had ideas of her own, and was stiff-necked enough to set the fashions themselves at defiance, if the fashions didnâ##t suit her views. In trifles, this independence of hers was all well enough; but in matters of importance, it carried her (as my lady thought, and as I thought) too far. She judged for herself, as few women of twice her age judge in general; never asked your advice; never told you beforehand what she was going to do; never came with secrets and confidences to anybody, from her mother downwards. In little things and great, with people she loved, and people she hated (and she did both with equal heartiness), Miss Rachel always went on a way of her own, sufficient for herself in the joys and sorrows of her life. Over and over again I have heard my lady say, â##Rachelâ##s best friend and Rachelâ##s worst enemy are, one and the otherâ##Rachel herself.â##

Add one more thing to this, and I have done.

With all her secrecy, and self-will, there was not so much as the shadow of anything false in her. I never remember her breaking her word; I never remember her saying No, and meaning Yes. I can call to mind, in her childhood, more than one occasion when the good little soul took the blame, and suffered the punishment, for some fault committed by a playfellow whom she loved. Nobody ever knew her to confess to it, when the thing was found out, and she was charged with it afterwards. But nobody ever knew her to lie about it, either. She looked you straight in the face, and shook her little saucy head, and said plainly, â##I wonâ##t tell you!â## Punished again for this, she would own to being sorry for saying â##wonâ##tâ##; but, bread and water notwithstanding, she never told you. Self-willedâ##devilish self-willed sometimesâ##I grant; but the finest creature, nevertheless, that ever walked the ways of this lower world. Perhaps you think you see a certain contradiction here? In that case, a word in your ear. Study your wife closely, for the next four-and-twenty hours. If your good lady doesnâ##t exhibit something in the shape of a contradiction in that time, Heaven help you! â##you have married a monster.

I have now brought you acquainted with Miss Rachel, which you will find puts us face to face, next, with the question of that young ladyâ##s matrimonial views.

On June the twelfth, an invitation from my mistress was sent to a gentleman in London, to come and help to keep Miss Rachelâ##s birthday. This was the fortunate individual on whom I believed

her heart to be privately set! Like Mr. Franklin, he was a cousin of hers. His name was Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite.

My ladyâ##s second sister (donâ##t be alarmed; we are not going very deep into family matters this time)â##my ladyâ##s second sister, I say, had a disappointment in love; and taking a husband afterwards, on the neck or nothing principle, made what they call a misalliance. There was terrible work in the family when the Honourable Caroline insisted on marrying plain Mr. Ablewhite, the banker at Frizinghall. He was very rich and very respectable, and he begot a prodigious large familyâ##all in his favour, so far. But he had presumed to raise himself from a low station in the worldâ##and that was against him. However, Time and the progress of modern enlightenment put things right; and the misalliance passed muster very well. We are all getting liberal now; and (provided you can scratch me, if I scratch you) what do I care, in or out of Parliament, whether you are a Dustman or a Duke? Thatâ##s the modern way of looking at itâ##and I keep up with the modern way. The Ablewhites lived in a fine house and grounds, a little out of Frizinghall. Very worthy people, and greatly respected in the neighbourhood. We shall not be much troubled with them in these pagesâ##excepting Mr. Godfrey, who was Mr. Ablewhiteâ##s second son, and who must take his proper place here, if you please, for Miss Rachelâ##s sake.

With all his brightness and cleverness and general good qualities, Mr. Franklinâ##s chance of topping Mr. Godfrey in our young ladyâ##s estimation was, in my opinion, a very poor chance indeed.

In the first place, Mr. Godfrey was, in point of size, the finest man by far of the two. He stood over six feet high; he had a beautiful red and white colour; a smooth round face, shaved as bare as your hand; and a head of lovely long flaxen hair, falling negligently over the poll of his neck. But why do I try to give you this personal description of him? If you ever subscribed to a Ladiesâ## Charity in London, you know Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite as well as I do. He was a barrister by profession; a ladiesâ## man by temperament; and a good Samaritan by choice. Female benevolence and female destitution could do nothing without him. Maternal societies for confining poor women; Magdalen societies for rescuing poor women; strong-minded societies for putting poor women into poor menâ##s places, and leaving the men to shift for themselves;â##he was vice-president, manager, referee to them all. Wherever there was a table with a committee of ladies sitting round it in council, there was Mr. Godfrey at the bottom of the board, keeping the temper of the committee, and leading the dear creatures along the thorny ways of business, hat in hand. I do suppose this was the most accomplished philanthropist (on a small independence) that England ever produced. As a speaker at charitable meetings the like of him for drawing your tears and your money was not easy to find. He was quite a public character. The last time I was in London, my mistress gave me two treats. She sent me to the theatre to see a dancing woman who was all the rage; and she sent me to Exeter Hall to hear Mr. Godfrey. The lady did it, with a band of music. The gentleman did it, with a handkerchief and a glass of water. Crowds at the performance with the legs. Ditto at the performance with the tongue. And with all this, the sweetest-tempered person (I allude to Mr. Godfrey)â##the simplest and pleasantest and easiest to pleaseâ##you ever met with. He loved everybody. And everybody loved *him.* What chance had Mr. Franklinâ##what chance had anybody of average reputation and capacitiesâ##against such a man as this?

On the fourteenth, came Mr. Godfreyâ##s answer.

He accepted my mistressâ##s invitation, from the Wednesday of the birthday to the evening of Fridayâ##when his duties to the Ladiesâ## Charities would oblige him to return to town. He also enclosed a copy of verses on what he elegantly called his cousinâ##s â##natal day.â## Miss Rachel, I was informed, joined Mr. Franklin in making fun of the verses at dinner; and Penelope, who was all on Mr. Franklinâ##s side, asked me, in great triumph, what I thought of that. â##Miss Rachel has led *you* off on a false scent, my dear,â## I replied; â##but *my* nose is not so easily mystified. Wait till Mr. Ablewhiteâ##s verses are followed by Mr. Ablewhite himself.â##

My daughter replied, that Mr. Franklin might strike in, and try his luck, before the verses were followed by the poet. In favour of this view, I must acknowledge that Mr. Franklin left no chance untried of winning Miss Rachelâ##s good graces.

Though one of the most inveterate smokers I ever met with, he gave up his cigar, because she said, one day, she hated the stale smell of it in his clothes. He slept so badly, after this effort of self-denial, for want of the composing effect of the tobacco to which he was used, and came down morning after morning looking so haggard and worn, that Miss Rachel herself begged him to take to his cigars again. No! he would take to nothing again that would cause her a momentâ##s annoyance; he would fight it out resolutely, and get back his sleep, sooner or later, by main force of patience in waiting for it. Such devotion as this, you may say (as some of them said downstairs), could never fail of producing the right effect on Miss Rachelâ##backed up, too, as it was, by the decorating work every day on the door. All very wellâ##but she had a photograph of Mr. Godfrey in her bedroom; represented speaking at a public meeting, with all his hair blown out by the breath of his own eloquence, and his eyes, most lovely, charming the money out of your pockets. What do you say to that? Every morningâ##as Penelope herself owned to meâ##there was the man whom the women couldnâ##t do without, looking on, in effigy, while Miss Rachel was having her hair combed. He would be looking on, in reality, before longâ##that was my opinion of it.

June the sixteenth brought an event which made Mr. Franklinâ##s chance look, to my mind, a worse chance than ever.

A strange gentleman, speaking English with a foreign accent, came that morning to the house, and asked to see Mr. Franklin Blake on business. The business could not possibly have been connected with the Diamond, for these two reasonsâ##first, that Mr. Franklin told me nothing about it; secondly, that he communicated it (when the gentleman had gone, I suppose) to my lady. She probably hinted something about it next to her daughter. At any rate, Miss Rachel was reported to have said some severe things to Mr. Franklin, at the piano that evening, about the people he had lived among, and the principles he had adopted in foreign parts. The next day, for the first time, nothing was done towards the decoration of the door. I suspect some imprudence of Mr. Franklinâ##s on the Continentâ##with a woman or a debt at the bottom of itâ##had followed him to England. But that is all guesswork. In this case, not only Mr. Franklin, but my lady too, for a wonder, left me in the dark.

On the seventeenth, to all appearance, the cloud passed away again. They returned to their decorating work on the door, and seemed to be as good friends as ever. If Penelope was to be believed, Mr. Franklin had seized the opportunity of the reconciliation to make an offer to Miss Rachel, and had neither been accepted nor refused. My girl was sure (from signs and tokens which I need not trouble you with) that her young mistress had fought Mr. Franklin off by declining to believe that he was in earnest, and had then secretly regretted treating him in that way afterwards. Though Penelope was admitted to more familiarity with her young mistress than maids generally areâ##for the two had been almost brought up together as childrenâ##still I knew Miss Rachelâ##s reserved character too well to believe that she would show her mind to anybody in this way. What my daughter told me, on the present occasion, was, as I suspected, more what she wished than what she really knew.

On the nineteenth another event happened. We had the doctor in the house professionally. He was summoned to prescribe for a person whom I have had occasion to present to you in these pagesâ##our second housemaid, Rosanna Spearman.

This poor girlâ##who had puzzled me, as you know already, at the Shivering Sandâ##puzzled me more than once again, in the interval time of which I am now writing. Penelopeâ##s notion that her fellow servant was in love with Mr. Franklin (which my daughter, by my orders, kept strictly secret) seemed to be just as absurd as ever. But I must own that what I myself saw, and what my daughter saw also, of our second housemaidâ##s conduct, began to look mysterious, to say the least of it.

For example, the girl constantly put herself in Mr. Franklinâ##s wayâ##very slyly and quietly, but she did it. He took about as much notice of her as he took of the cat: it never seemed to occur

to him to waste a look on Rosannaâ##s plain face. The poor thingâ##s appetite, never much, fell away dreadfully; and her eyes in the morning showed plain signs of waking and crying at night. One day Penelope made an awkward discovery, which we hushed up on the spot. She caught Rosanna at Mr. Franklinâ##s dressing-table, secretly removing a rose which Miss Rachel had given him to wear in his button-hole, and putting another rose like it, of her own picking, in its place. She was, after that, once or twice impudent to me, when I gave her a well-meant general hint to be careful in her conduct; and, worse still, she was not over-respectful now, on the few occasions when Miss Rachel accidentally spoke to her.

My lady noticed the change, and asked me what I thought about it. I tried to screen the girl by answering that I thought she was out of health; and it ended in the doctor being sent for, as already mentioned, on the nineteenth. He said it was her nerves, and doubted if she was fit for service. My lady offered to remove her for change of air to one of our farms, inland. She begged and prayed, with the tears in her eyes, to be let to stop; and, in an evil hour, I advised my lady to try her for a little longer. As the event proved, and as you will soon see, this was the worst advice I could have given. If I could only have looked a little way into the future, I would have taken Rosanna Spearman out of the house, then and there, with my own hand.

On the twentieth, there came a note from Mr. Godfrey. He had arranged to stop at Frizinghall that night, having occasion to consult his father on business. On the afternoon of the next day, he and his two eldest sisters would ride over to us on horseback, in good time before dinner. An elegant little casket in China accompanied the note, presented to Miss Rachel, with her cousinâ##s love and best wishes. Mr. Franklin had only given her a plain locket not worth half the money. My daughter Penelope, neverthelessâ##such is the obstinacy of womenâ##still backed him to win.

Thanks be to Heaven, we have arrived at the eve of the birthday at last! You will own, I think, that I have got you over the ground this time, without loitering by the way. Cheer up! Iâ##ll ease you with another new chapter hereâ##and, what is more, that chapter shall take you straight into the thick of the story.

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June twenty-first, the day of the birthday, was cloudy and unsettled at sunrise, but towards noon it cleared up bravely.

We, in the servantsâ## hall, began this happy anniversary, as usual, by offering our little presents to Miss Rachel, with the regular speech delivered annually by me as the chief. I follow the plan adopted by the Queen in opening Parliamentâ##namely, the plan of saying much the same thing regularly every year. Before it is delivered, my speech (like the Queenâ##s) is looked for as eagerly as if nothing of the kind had ever been heard before. When it is delivered, and turns out not to be the novelty anticipated, though they grumble a little, they look forward hopefully to something newer next year. An easy people to govern, in the Parliament and in the Kitchenâ##thatâ##s the moral of it.

After breakfast, Mr. Franklin and I had a private conference on the subject of the Moonstoneâ##the time having now come for removing it from the bank at Frizinghall, and placing it in Miss Rachelâ##s own hands.

Whether he had been trying to make love to his cousin again, and had got a rebuffâ##or whether his broken rest, night after night, was aggravating the queer contradictions and uncertainties in his characterâ##I donâ##t know. But certain it is, that Mr. Franklin failed to show himself at his best on the morning of the birthday. He was in twenty different minds about the Diamond in as many minutes. For my part, I stuck fast by the plain facts as we knew them. Nothing had happened to justify us in alarming my lady on the subject of the jewel; and nothing could alter the legal obligation that now lay on Mr. Franklin to put it in his cousinâ##s possession. That was my view of the matter; and, twist and turn it as he might, he was forced in the end to make it his view too. We arranged that he was to ride over, after lunch, to Frizinghall, and bring the Diamond back, with Mr. Godfrey and the two ladies, in all probability, to keep him company on the way home again.

This settled, our young gentleman went back to Miss Rachel.

They consumed the whole morning, and part of the afternoon, in the everlasting business of decorating the door, Penelope standing by to mix the colours as, directed; and my lady, as luncheon time drew near, going in and out of the room, with her handkerchief to her nose (for they used a deal of Mr. Franklinâ##s vehicle that day), and trying vainly to get the two artists away from their work. It was three oâ##clock before they took off their aprons, and released Penelope (much the worse for the vehicle), and cleaned themselves of their mess. But they had done what they wantedâ##they had finished the door on the birthday, and proud enough they were of it. The griffins, cupids, and so on, were, I must own, most beautiful to behold; though so many in number, so entangled in flowers and devices, and so topsy-turvy in their actions and attitudes, that you felt them unpleasantly in your head for hours after you had done with the pleasure of looking at them. If I add that Penelope ended her part of the morningâ##s work by being sick in the back-kitchen, it is in no unfriendly spirit towards the vehicle. No! no! It left off stinking when it dried; and if Art requires these sort of sacrificesâ##though the girl is my own daughterâ##I say, let Art have them!

Mr. Franklin snatched a morsel from the luncheon-table, and rode off to Frizinghallâ##to escort his cousins, as he told my lady. To fetch the Moonstone, as was privately known to himself and to me.

This being one of the high festivals on which I took my place at the sideboard, in command of the attendance at table, I had plenty to occupy my mind while Mr. Franklin was away. Having seen to the wine, and reviewed my men and women who were to wait at dinner, I retired to collect myself before the company came. A whiff ofâ##you know what, and a turn at a certain book which I have had occasion to mention in these pages, composed me, body and mind. I was aroused from what I am inclined to think must have been, not a nap, but a reverie, by the clatter of horsesâ## hoofs outside; and going to the door, received a cavalcade comprising Mr. Franklin and his three cousins, escorted by one of old Mr. Ablewhiteâ##s grooms.

Mr. Godfrey struck me, strangely enough as being like Mr. Franklin in this respectâ##that he did not seem to be in his customary spirits. He kindly shook hands with me as usual, and was most politely glad to see his old friend Betteredge wearing so well. But there was a sort of cloud over him, which I couldnâ##t at all account for; and when I asked how he had found his father in health, he answered rather shortly, â##Much as usual.â## However, the two Miss Ablewhites were cheerful enough for twenty, which more than restored the balance. They were nearly as big as their brother; spanking, yellow-haired, rosy lasses, overflowing-with superabundant flesh and blood; bursting from head to foot with health and spirits. The legs of the poor horses trembled with carrying them; and when they jumped down from their saddles (without waiting to be helped), I declare they bounced on the ground as if they were made of india-rubber. Everything the Miss Ablewhites said began with a large O; everything they did was done with a bang; and they giggled and screamed, in season and out of season, on the smallest provocation. Bouncersâ##thatâ##s what I call them.

Under cover of the noise made by the young ladies, I had an opportunity of saying a private word to Mr. Franklin in the hall.

â##Have you got the Diamond safe, sir?â##

He nodded, and tapped the breast-pocket of his coat.

â##Have you seen anything of the Indians?â##

â##Not a glimpse.â## With that answer, he asked for my lady, and, hearing she was in the small drawing-room, went there straight. The bell rang, before he had been a minute in the room, and Penelope was sent to tell Miss Rachel that Mr. Franklin Blake wanted to speak to her.

Crossing the hall, about half an hour afterwards, I was brought to a sudden standstill by an outbreak of screams from the small drawing-room. I canâ##t say I was at all alarmed; for I recognised in the screams the favourite large O of the Miss Ablewhites. However, I went in (on pretence of asking for instructions about the dinner) to discover whether anything serious had really happened.

There stood Miss Rachel at the table, like a person fascinated, with the Colonelâ##s unlucky Diamond in her hand. There, on either side of her, knelt the two Bouncers, devouring the jewel with their eyes, and screaming with ecstasy every time it flashed on them in a new light. There, at the opposite side of the table, stood Mr. Godfrey, clapping his hands like a large child, and singing out softly, â##Exquisite! exquisite!â## There sat Mr. Franklin in a chair by the bookcase, tugging at his beard, and looking anxiously towards the window. And there, at the window stood the object he was contemplatingâ##my lady, having the extract from the Colonelâ##s Will in her hand, and keeping her back turned on the whole of the company.

She faced me, when I asked for my instructions; and I saw the family frown gathering over her eyes, and the family temper twitching at the corners of her mouth.

â##Come to my room in half an hour,â## she answered. â##I shall have something to say to you then.â##

With those words she went out. It was plain enough that she was posed by the same difficulty which had posed Mr. Franklin and me in our conference at the Shivering Sand. Was the legacy of the Moonstone a proof that she had treated her brother with cruel injustice? or was it a proof that he was worse than the worst she had ever thought of him? Serious questions those for my lady to determine, while her daughter, innocent of all knowledge of the Colonelâ##s character, stood there with the Colonelâ##s birthday gift in her hand.

Before I could leave the room in my turn, Miss Rachel always considerate to the old servant who had been in the house when she was born, stopped me. â##Look, Gabriel!â## she said, and flashed the jewel before my eyes in a ray of sunlight that poured through the window.

Lord bless us! it *was* a Diamond! As large, or nearly, as a ploverâ##s egg! The light that streamed from it was like the light of the harvest moon. When you looked down into the stone, you looked into a yellow deep that drew your eyes into it so that they saw nothing else. It seemed unfathomable; this jewel, that you could hold between your finger and thumb, seemed unfathomable

as the heavens themselves. We set it in the sun, and then shut the light out of the room, and it shone awfully out of the depths of its own brightness, with a moony gleam, in the dark. No wonder Miss Rachel was fascinated: no wonder her cousins screamed. The Diamond laid such a hold on *me* that I burst out with as large an â##Oâ## as the Bouncers themselves. The only one of us who kept his senses was Mr. Godfrey. He put an arm round each of his sistersâ## waists, and, looking compassionately backwards and forwards between the Diamond and me, said, â##Carbon, Betteredge! mere carbon, my good friend, after all!â##

His object, I suppose, was to instruct me. All he did, however, was to remind me of the dinner. I hobbled off to my army of waiters downstairs. As I went out, Mr. Godfrey said, â##Dear old Betteredge, I have the truest regard for him!â## He was embracing his sisters, and ogling Miss Rachel, while he honoured me with that testimony of affection. Something like a stock of love to draw on *there*! Mr. Franklin was a perfect savage by comparison with him.

At the end of half an hour, I presented myself, as directed in my ladyâ##s room.

What passed between my mistress and me, on this occasion, was, in the main, a repetition of what had passed between Mr. Franklin and me at the Shivering Sandâ##with this difference, that I took care to keep my own counsel about the jugglers, seeing that nothing had happened to justify me in alarming my lady on this head. When I received my dismissal, I could see that she took the blackest view possible of the Colonelâ##s motives, and that she was bent on getting the Moonstone out of her daughterâ##s possession at the first opportunity.

On my way back to my own part of the house, I was encountered by Mr. Franklin. He wanted to know if I had seen anything of his cousin Rachel. I had seen nothing of her. Could I tell him where his cousin Godfrey was? I didnâ##t know; but I began to suspect that cousin Godfrey might not be far away from cousin Rachel. Mr. Franklinâ##s suspicions apparently took the same turn. He tugged hard at his beard, and went and shut himself up in the library with a bang of the door that had a world of meaning in it.

I was interrupted no more in the business of preparing for the birthday dinner till it was time for me to smarten myself up for receiving the company. Just as I had got my white waistcoat on, Penelope presented herself at my toilet, on the pretence of brushing what little hair I have got left, and improving the tie of my white cravat. My girl was in high spirits, and I saw she had something to say to me. She gave me a kiss on the top of my bald head, and whispered, â##News for you, father! Miss Rachel has refused him.â##

â##Whoâ##s â##*him*â##?â## I asked.

â##The ladiesâ## committee-man, father,â## says Penelope. â##A nasty fly fellow. I hate him for trying to supplant Mr. Franklin!â##

If I had had breath enough, I should have certainly protested against this indecent way of speaking of an eminent philanthropic character. But my daughter happened to be improving the tie of my cravat at that moment, and the whole strength of her feelings found its way into her fingers. I never was more nearly strangled in my life.

â##I saw him take her away alone into the rose-garden,â## says Penelope. â##And I waited behind the holly to see how they came back. They had gone out arm-in-arm, both laughing. They came back, walking separate, as grave as grave could be, and looking straight away from each other in a manner which there was no mistaking. I never was more delighted, father, in my life! Thereâ##s one woman in the world who can resist Mr. Godfrey Ablewhite, at any rate; and, if I was a lady, I should be another!â##

Here I should have protested again. But my daughter had got the hair-brush by this time, and the whole strength of her feelings had passed into *that.* If you are bald, you will understand how she scarified me. If you are not, skip this bit, and thank God you have got something in the way of a defence between your hair-brush and your head.

â##Just on the other side of the holly,â## Penelope went on, â##Mr. Godfrey came to a standstill. â##You prefer,â## says he, â##that I should stop here as if nothing had happened?â## Miss Rachel turned on him like lightning. â##You have accepted my motherâ##s invitation,â## she said; â##and you are here to meet her guests. Unless you wish to make a scandal in the house, you will remain, of course!â## She went on a few steps, and then seemed to relent a little. â##Let us forget what has passed, Godfrey,â## she said, â##and let us remain cousins still.â## She gave him her hand. He kissed it, which *I* should have considered taking a liberty, and then she left him. He waited a little, by himself, with his head down, and his heel grinding a hole slowly in the gravel walk; you never saw a man look more put out in your life. â##Awkward!â## he said between his teeth, when he looked up, and went to the houseâ##â##very awkward!â## If that was his opinion of himself, he was quite right. Awkward enough, Iâ##m sure. And the end of it is, father what I told you all along,â## cries Penelope, finishing me off with a last scarification, the hottest of all. â##Mr. Franklinâ##s the man!â##

I got possession of the hair-brush, and opened my lips to administer the reproof which, you will own, my daughterâ##s language and conduct richly deserved.

Before I could say a word, the crash of carriage-wheels outside struck in, and stopped me. The first of the dinner-company had come. Penelope instantly ran off. I put on my coat, and looked in the glass. My head was as red as a lobster; but, in other respects I was as nicely dressed for the ceremonies of the evening as a man need be. I got into the hall just in time to announce the two first of the guests. You neednâ##t feel particularly interested about them. Only the philanthropistâ##s father and motherâ##Mr. and Mrs. Ablewhite.

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One on top of the other the rest of the company followed the Ablewhites, till we had the whole tale of them complete. Including the family, they were twenty-four in all. It was a noble sight to see, when they were settled in their places round the dinner-table and the Rector of Frizinghall (with beautiful elocution) rose and said grace.

There is no need to worry you with a list of the guests. You will meet none of them a second timeâ##in my part of the story, at any rateâ##with the exception of two.

Those two sat on either side of Miss Rachel, who, as queen of the day, was naturally the great attraction of the party. On this occasion she was more particularly the centre-point towards which everybodyâ##s eyes were directed; for (to my ladyâ##s secret annoyance) she wore her wonderful birthday present, which eclipsed all the restâ##the Moonstone. It was without any setting when it had been placed in her hands; but that universal genius, Mr. Franklin, had contrived, with the help of his neat fingers and a little bit of silver wire, to fix it as a brooch in the bosom of her white dress. Everybody wondered at the prodigious size and beauty of the Diamond, as a matter of course. But the only two of the company who said anything out of the common way about it were those two guests I have mentioned, who sat by Miss Rachel on her right hand and on her left.

The guest on her left was Mr. Candy, our doctor at Frizinghall.

This was a pleasant, companionable little man, with the drawback, however, I must own, of being too fond, in season and out of season, of his joke, and of his plunging in rather a headlong manner into talk with strangers, without waiting to feel his way first. In society he was constantly making mistakes, and setting people unintentionally by the ears together. In his medical practice he was a more prudent man; picking up his discretion (as his enemies said) by a kind of instinct, and proving to be generally right where more carefully conducted doctors turned out to be wrong. What *he* said about the Diamond to Miss Rachel was said, as usual, by way of a mystification or joke. He gravely entreated her (in the interests of science) to let him take it home and burn it. â##We will first heat it, Miss Rachel,â## says the doctor, â##to such and such a degree; then we will expose it to a current of air; and, little by littleâ##puff!â##we evaporate the Diamond, and spare you a world of anxiety about the safe keeping of a valuable precious stone!â## My lady, listening with rather a careworn expression on her face, seemed to wish that the doctor had been in earnest, and that he could have found Miss Rachel zealous enough in the cause of science to sacrifice her birthday gift.

The other guest, who sat on my young ladyâ##s right hand, was an eminent public characterâ##being no other than the celebrated Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite, who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before.

This was a long, lean, wiry, brown, silent man. He had a weary look, and a very steady, attentive eye. It was rumoured that he was tired of the humdrum life among the people in our parts, and longing to go back and wander off on the tramp again in the wild places of the East. Except what he said to Miss Rachel about her jewel, I doubt if he spoke six words or drank so much as a single glass of wine, all through the dinner. The Moonstone was the only object that interested him in the smallest degree. The fame of it seemed to have reached him, in some of those perilous Indian places where his wanderings had lain. After looking at it silently for so long a time that Miss Rachel began to get confused, he said to her in his cool immovable way, â##If you ever go to India, Miss Verinder, donâ##t take your uncleâ##s birthday gift with you. A Hindoo diamond is sometimes part of a Hindoo religion. I know a certain city, and a certain temple in that city, where, dressed as you are now, your life would not be worth five minutesâ## purchase.â## Miss Rachel, safe in England, was quite delighted to hear of her danger in India. The Bouncers were more delighted still; they dropped their knifes and forks with a crash, and burst out together vehemently, â##O! how interesting!â## My lady fidgeted in her chair, and changed the subject.

As the dinner got on, I became aware, little by little, that this festival was not prospering as other like festivals had prospered before it.

Looking back at the birthday now, by the light of what happened afterwards, I am half inclined to think that the cursed Diamond must have cast a blight on the whole company. I plied them well with wine; and being a privileged character, followed the unpopular dishes round the table, and whispered to the company confidentially, â##Please to change your mind and try it; for I know it will do you good.â## Nine times out of ten they changed their mindsâ##out of regard for their old original Betteredge, they were pleased to sayâ##but all to no purpose. There were gaps of silence in the talk, as the dinner got on, that made me feel personally uncomfortable. When they did use their tongues again, they used them innocently, in the most unfortunate manner and to the worst possible purpose. Mr. Candy, the doctor, for instance, said more unlucky things than I ever knew him to say before. Take one sample of the way in which he went on, and you will understand what I had to put up with at the sideboard, officiating as I was in the character of a man who had the prosperity of the festival at heart.

One of our ladies present at dinner was worthy Mrs. Threadgall, widow of the late Professor of that name. Talking of her deceased husband perpetually, this good lady never mentioned to strangers that he *was* deceased. She thought, I suppose, that every able-bodied adult in England ought to know as much as that. In one of the gaps of silence, somebody mentioned the dry and rather nasty subject of human anatomy; whereupon good Mrs. Threadgall straightway brought in her late husband as usual, without mentioning that he was dead. Anatomy she described as the Professorâ##s favourite recreation in his leisure hours. As ill-luck would have it, Mr. Candy, sitting opposite (who knew nothing of the deceased gentleman), heard her. Being the most polite of men, he seized the opportunity of assisting the Professorâ##s anatomical amusements on the spot.

â##They have got some remarkably fine skeletons lately at the College of Surgeons,â## says Mr. Candy, across the table, in a loud cheerful voice. â##I strongly recommend the Professor, maâ##am, when he next has an hour to spare, to pay them a visit.â##

You might have heard a pin fall. The company (out of respect to the Professorâ##s memory) all sat speechless. I was behind Mrs. Threadgall at the time, plying her confidentially with a glass of hock. She dropped her head, and said in a very low voice, â##My beloved husband is no more.â##

Unlucky Mr. Candy, hearing nothing, and miles away from suspecting the truth, went on across the table louder and politer than ever.

â##The Professor may not be aware,â## says he, â##that the card of a member of the College will admit him, on any day but Sunday, between the hours of ten and four.â##

Mrs. Threadgall dropped her head right into her tucker, and in a lower voice still, repeated the solemn words, â##My beloved husband is no more.â##

I winked hard at Mr. Candy across the table. Miss Rachel touched his arm. My lady looked unutterable things at him. Quite useless! On he went, with a cordiality that there was no stopping any how. â##I shall be delighted,â## says he, â##to send the Professor my card, if you will oblige me by mentioning his present address.â##

â##His present address, sir, is the *grave*,â## says Mrs. Threadgall, suddenly losing her temper, and speaking with an emphasis and fury that made the glasses ring again. â##The Professor has been dead these ten years.â##

â##Oh, good heavens!â## says Mr. Candy. Excepting the Bouncers, who burst out laughing, such a blank now fell on the company, that they might all have been going the way of the Professor, and hailing as he did from the direction of the grave.

So much for Mr. Candy. The rest of them were nearly as provoking in their different ways as the doctor himself. When they ought to have spoken, they didnâ##t speak; or when they did speak they were perpetually at cross purposes. Mr. Godfrey, though so eloquent in public, declined to exert himself in private. Whether he was sulky, or whether he was bashful, after his discomfiture in the

rose-garden, I canâ##t say. He kept all his talk for the private ear of the lady (a member of our family) who sat next to him. She was one of his committee-womenâ##a spiritually-minded person, with a fine show of collar-bone and a pretty taste in champagne; liked it dry, you understand, and plenty of it. Being close behind these two at the sideboard, I can testify, from what I heard pass between them, that the company lost a good deal of very improving conversation, which I caught up while drawing the corks, and carving the mutton, and so forth. What they said about their Charities I didnâ##t hear. When I had time to listen to them, they had got a long way beyond their women to be confined, and their women to be rescued, and were disputing on serious subjects. Religion (I understand Mr. Godfrey to say, between the corks and the carving) meant love. And love meant religion. And earth was heaven a little the worse for wear. And heaven was earth, done up again to look like new. Earth had some very objectionable people in it; but, to make amends for that, all the women in heaven would be members of a prodigious committee that never quarrelled, with all the men in attendance on them as ministering angels. Beautiful! beautiful! But why the mischief did Mr. Godfrey keep it all to his lady and himself?

Mr. Franklin againâ##surely, you will say, Mr. Franklin stirred the company up into making a pleasant evening of it?

Nothing of the sort! He had quite recovered himself, and he was in wonderful force and spirits, Penelope having informed him, I suspect, of Mr. Godfreyâ##s reception in the rose-garden. But, talk as he might, nine times out often he pitched on the wrong subject, or he addressed himself to the wrong person; the end of it being that he offended some, and puzzled all of them. That foreign training of hisâ##those French and German and Italian sides of him, to which I have already alludedâ##came out, at my ladyâ##s hospitable board, in a most bewildering manner.

What do you think, for instance, of his discussing the lengths to which a married woman might let her admiration go for a man who was not her husband, and putting it in his clear-headed witty French way to the maiden aunt of the Vicar of Frizinghall? What do you think, when he shifted to the German side, of his telling the lord of the manor, while that great authority on cattle was quoting his experience in the breeding of bulls, that experience, properly understood, counted for nothing, and that the proper way to breed bulls was to look deep into your own mind, evolve out of it the idea of a perfect bull, and produce him? What do you say, when our county member, growing hot, at cheese and salad time, about the spread of democracy in England, burst out as follows: â##If we once lose our ancient safeguards, Mr. Blake, I beg to ask you, what have we got left?â##â##what do you say to Mr. Franklin answering, from the Italian point of view: â##We have got three things left, sirâ##Love, Music, and saladâ##? He not only terrified the company with such outbreaks as these, but, when the English side of him turned up in due course, he lost his foreign smoothness; and, getting on the subject of the medical profession, said such downright things in ridicule of doctors, that he actually put good-humoured little Mr. Candy in a rage.

The dispute between them began in Mr. Franklin being ledâ##I forget howâ##to acknowledge that he had latterly slept very badly at night. Mr. Candy thereupon told him that his nerves were all out of order, and that he ought to go through a course of medicine immediately. Mr. Franklin replied that a course of medicine, and a course of groping in the dark, meant, in his estimation, one and the same thing. Mr. Candy, hitting back smartly, said that Mr. Franklin himself was, constitutionally speaking, groping in the dark after sleep, and that nothing but medicine could help him to find it. Mr. Franklin, keeping the ball up on his side, said he had often heard of the blind leading the blind, and now, for the first time, he knew what it meant. In this way, they kept it going briskly, cut and thrust, till they both of them got hotâ##Mr. Candy, in particular, so completely losing his self-control, in defence of his profession, that my lady was obliged to interfere, and forbid the dispute to go on. This necessary act of authority put the last extinguisher on the spirits of the company. The talk spurted up again here and there, for a minute or two at a time; but there was a miserable lack of life and sparkle

in it. The Devil (or the Diamond) possessed that dinner-party; and it was a relief to everybody when my mistress rose, and gave the ladies the signal to leave the gentlemen over their wine.

I had just ranged the decanters in a row before old Mr. Ablewhite (who represented the master of the house), when there came a sound from the terrace which startled me out of my company manners on the instant. Mr. Franklin and I looked at each other; it was the sound of the Indian drum. As I live by bread, here were the jugglers returning to us with the return of the Moonstone to the house!

As they rounded the corner of the terrace, and came in sight I hobbled out to warn them off. But, as ill-luck would have it, the two Bouncers were beforehand with me. They whizzed out on to the terrace like a couple of sky-rockets, wild to see the Indians exhibit their tricks. The other ladies followed; the gentlemen came out on their side. Before you could say, â##Lord bless us!â## the rogues were making their salaams; and the Bouncers were kissing the pretty little boy.

Mr. Franklin got on one side of Miss Rachel, and I put myself behind her. If our suspicions were right, there she stood, innocent of all knowledge of the truth, showing the Indians the Diamond in the bosom of her dress!

I canâ##t tell you what tricks they performed, or how they did it. What with the vexation about the dinner, and what with the provocation of the rogues coming back just in the nick of time to see the jewel with their own eyes, I own I lost my head. The first thing that I remember noticing was the sudden appearance on the scene of the Indian traveller, Mr. Murthwaite. Skirting the half-circle in which the gentlefolks stood or sat, he came quietly behind the jugglers and spoke to them on a sudden in the language of their own country.

If he had pricked them with a bayonet, I doubt if the Indians could have started and turned on him with a more tigerish quickness than they did, on hearing the first words that passed his lips. The next moment they were bowing and salaaming to him in their most polite and snaky way. After a few words in the unknown tongue had passed on either side, Mr. Murthwaite withdrew as quietly as he had approached. The chief Indian, who acted as interpreter, thereupon wheeled about again towards the gentlefolks. I noticed that the fellowâ##s coffee-coloured face had turned grey since Mr. Murthwaite had spoken to him. He bowed to my lady, and informed her that the exhibition was over. The Bouncers, indescribably disappointed, burst out with a loud â##O!â## directed against Mr. Murthwaite for stopping the performance. The chief Indian laid his hand humbly on his breast, and said a second time that the juggling was over. The little boy went round with the hat. The ladies withdrew to the drawing-room; and the gentlemen (excepting Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite) returned to their wine. I and the footman followed the Indians, and saw them safe off the premises.

Going back by way of the shrubbery, I smelt tobacco, and found Mr. Franklin and Mr. Murthwaite (the latter smoking a cheroot) walking slowly up and down among the trees. Mr. Franklin beckoned to me to join them.

â##This,â## says Mr. Franklin, presenting me to the great traveller, â##is Gabriel Betteredge, the old servant and friend of our family of whom I spoke to you just now. Tell him, if you please, what you have just told me.â##

Mr. Murthwaite took his cheroot out of his mouth, and leaned, in his weary way, against the trunk of a tree.

â##Mr. Betteredge,â## he began, â##those three Indians are no more jugglers than you and I are.â##

Here was a new surprise! I naturally asked the traveller if he had ever met with the Indians before.

â##Never,â## says Mr. Murthwaite; â##but I know what Indian juggling really is. All you have seen to-night is a very bad and clumsy imitation of it. Unless, after long experience, I am utterly mistaken, those men are high-caste Brahmins. I charged them with being disguised, and you saw how it told on them, clever as the Hindoo people are in concealing their feelings. There is a mystery

about their conduct that I canâ##t explain. They have doubly sacrificed their casteâ##first, in crossing the sea; secondly, in disguising themselves as jugglers. In the land they live in that is a tremendous sacrifice to make. There must be some very serious motive at the bottom of it, and some justification of no ordinary kind to plead for them, in recovery of their caste, when they return to their own country.â##

I was struck dumb. Mr. Murthwaite went on with his cheroot. Mr. Franklin, after what looked to me like a little private veering about between the different sides of his character, broke the silence as follows:

â##I feel some hesitation, Mr. Murthwaite, in troubling you with family affairs, in which you can have no interest and which I am not very willing to speak of out of our own circle. But, after what you have said, I feel bound, in the interests of Lady Verinder and her daughter, to tell you something which may possibly put the clue into your hands. I speak to you in confidence; you will oblige me, I am sure, by not forgetting that?â##

With this preface, he told the Indian traveller all that he had told me at the Shivering Sand. Even the immovable Mr. Murthwaite was so interested in what he had heard, that he let his cheroot go out.

â##Now,â## says Mr. Franklin, when he had done, â##what does your experience say?â##

â##My experience,â## answered the traveller, â##says that you have had more narrow escapes of your life, Mr. Franklin Blake, than I have had of mine; and that is saying a great deal.â##

It was Mr. Franklinâ##s turn to be astonished now.

â##Is it really as serious as that?â## he asked.

â##In my opinion it is,â## answered Mr. Murthwaite. â##I canâ##t doubt, after what you have told me, that the restoration of the Moonstone to its place on the forehead of the Indian idol, is the motive and the justification of that sacrifice of caste which I alluded to just now. Those men will wait their opportunity with patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers. How you have escaped them I canâ##t imagine,â## says the eminent traveller, lighting his cheroot again, and staring hard at Mr. Franklin. â##You have been carrying the Diamond backwards and forwards, here and in London, and you are still a living man! Let us try and account for it. It was daylight, both times, I suppose, when you took the jewel out of the bank in London?â##

â##Broad daylight,â## says Mr. Franklin.

â##And plenty of people in the streets?â##

â##Plenty.â##

â##You settled, of course, to arrive at Lady Verinderâ##s house at a certain time? Itâ##s a lonely country between this and the station. Did you keep your appointment?â##

â##No. I arrived four hours earlier than my appointment.â##

â##I beg to congratulate you on that proceeding! When did you take the Diamond to the bank at the town here?â##

â##I took it an hour after I had brought it to this houseâ##and three hours before anybody was prepared for seeing me in these parts.â##

â##I beg to congratulate you again! Did you bring it back here alone?â##

â##No. I happened to ride back with my cousins and the groom.â##

â##I beg to congratulate you for the third time! If you ever feel inclined to travel beyond the civilised limits, Mr. Blake, let me know, and I will go with you. You are a lucky man.â##

Here I struck in. This sort of thing didnâ##t at all square with my English ideas.

â##You donâ##t really mean to say, sir,â## I asked, â##that they would have taken Mr. Franklinâ##s life, to get their Diamond, if he had given them the chance?â##

â##Do you smoke, Mr. Betteredge?â## says the traveller.

â##Yes, sir.â##

â##Do you care much for the ashes left in your pipe when you empty it?â##

â##No, sir.â##

â##In the country those men came from, they care just as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and the getting back of their Diamondâ##and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discoveryâ##they would take them all. The sacrifice of caste is a serious thing in India, if you like. The sacrifice of life is nothing at all.â##

I expressed my opinion upon this, that they were a set of murdering thieves. Mr. Murthwaite expressed *his* opinion that they were a wonderful people. Mr. Franklin, expressing no opinion at all, brought us back to the matter in hand.

â##They have seen the Moonstone on Miss Verinderâ##s dress,â## he said. â##What is to be done?â##

â##What your uncle threatened to do,â## answered Mr. Murthwaite. â##Colonel Herncastle understood the people he had to deal with. Send the Diamond to-morrow (under guard of more than one man) to be cut up at Amsterdam. Make half a dozen diamonds of it, instead of one. There is an end of its sacred identity as the Moonstoneâ##and there is an end of the conspiracy.â##

Mr. Franklin turned to me.

â##There is no help for it,â## he said. â##We must speak to Lady Verinder to-morrow.â##

â##What about to-night, sir?â## I asked. â##Suppose the Indians come back?â##

Mr. Murthwaite answered me before Mr. Franklin could speak,

â##The Indians wonâ##t risk coming back to-night,â## he said. â##The direct way is hardly ever the way they take to anythingâ##let alone a matter like this, in which the slightest mistake might be fatal to their reaching their end.â##

â##But suppose the rogues are bolder than you think, sir?â## I persisted.

â##In that case,â## says Mr. Murthwaite, â##let the dogs loose. Have you got any big dogs in the yard?â##

â##Two, sir. A mastiff and a bloodhound.â##

â##They will do. In the present emergency, Mr. Betteredge, the mastiff and the bloodhound have one great meritâ##they are not likely to be troubled with your scruples about the sanctity of human life.â##

The strumming of the piano reached us from the drawing-room, as he fired that shot at me. He threw away his cheroot, and took Mr. Franklinâ##s arm, to go back to the ladies. I noticed that the sky was clouding over fast, as I followed them to the house. Mr. Murthwaite noticed it too. He looked round at me, in his dry, drolling way, and said:

â##The Indians will want their umbrellas, Mr. Betteredge, to-night!â##

It was all very well for *him* to joke. But I was not an eminent travellerâ##and my way in this world had not led me into playing ducks and drakes with my own life, among thieves and murderers in the outlandish places of the earth. I went into my own little room, and sat down in my chair in a perspiration, and wondered helplessly what was to be done next. In this anxious frame of mind, other men might have ended by working themselves up into a fever; *I* ended in a different way. I lit my pipe, and took a turn at *Robinson Crusoe.*

Before I had been at it five minutes, I came to this amazing bitâ##page one hundred and sixty oneâ##as follows:

Fear of Danger is ten thousand times more terrifying than Danger itself, when apparent to the Eyes; and we find the Burthen of Anxiety greater, by much, than the Evil which we are anxious about.

The man who doesnâ##t believe in *Robinson Crusoe*, after *that*, is a man with a screw loose in his understanding, or a man lost in the mist of his own self-conceit! Argument is thrown away upon him; and pity is better reserved for some person with a livelier faith.

I was far on with my second pipe, and still lost in admiration of that wonderful book, when Penelope (who had been handing round the tea) came in with her report from the drawing-room. She had left the Bouncers singing a duetâ##words beginning with a large â##O,â## and music to

correspond. She had observed that my lady made mistakes in her game of whist for the first time in our experience of her. She had seen the great traveller asleep in a corner. She had overheard Mr. Franklin sharpening his wits on Mr. Godfrey, at the expense of Ladiesâ## Charities in general; and she had noticed that Mr. Godfrey hit him back again rather more smartly than became a gentleman of his benevolent character. She had detected Miss Rachel, apparently engaged in appeasing Mrs. Threadgall by showing her some photographs, and really occupied in stealing looks at Mr. Franklin, which no intelligent ladyâ##s maid could misinterpret for a single instant. Finally, she had missed Mr. Candy, the doctor, who had mysteriously disappeared from the drawing-room, and had then mysteriously returned, and entered into conversation with Mr. Godfrey. Upon the whole, things were prospering better than the experience of the dinner gave us any right to expect. If we could only hold on for another hour, old Father Time would bring up their carriages, and relieve us of them all together.

Everything wears off in this world; and even the comforting effect of *Robinson Crusoe* wore off, after Penelope left me. I got fidgety again, and resolved on making a survey of the grounds before the rain came. Instead of taking the footman, whose nose was human, and therefore useless in any emergency, I took the bloodhound with me. *His* nose for a stranger was to be depended on. We went all round the premises, and out into the roadâ##and returned as wise as we went, having discovered no such thing as a lurking human creature anywhere.

The arrival of the carriages was the signal for the arrival of the rain. It poured as if it meant to pour all night. With the exception of the doctor, whose gig was waiting for him, the rest of the company went home snugly, under cover, in close carriages. I told Mr. Candy that I was afraid he would get wet through. He told me, in return, that he wondered if I had arrived at my time of life, without knowing that doctorâ##s skin was waterproof. So he drove away in the rain, laughing over his own little joke; and so we got rid of our dinner company.

The next thing to tell is the story of the night.

11

When the last of the guests had driven away, I went back into the inner hall and found Samuel at the side-table presiding over the brandy and soda-water. My lady and Miss Rachel came out of the drawing-room, followed by the two gentlemen. Mr. Godfrey had some brandy and soda-water. Mr. Franklin took nothing. He sat down, looking dead tired; the talking on this birthday occasion had, I suppose, been too much for him.

My lady, turning round to wish them goodnight, looked hard at the wicked Colonelâ##s legacy shining in her daughterâ##s dress.

â##Rachel,â## she asked, â##where are you going to put your Diamond to-night?â##

Miss Rachel was in high good spirits, just in that humour for talking nonsense, and perversely persisting in it as if it was sense, which you may sometimes have observed in young girls, when they are highly wrought up, at the end of an exciting day. First, she declared she didnâ##t know where to put the Diamond. Then she said, â##on her dressing-table, of course along with her other things.â## Then she remembered that the Diamond might take to shining of itself, with its awful moony light in the darkâ##and that would terrify her in the dead of night. Then she bethought herself of an Indian cabinet which stood in her sitting-room; and instantly made up her mind to put the Indian diamond in the Indian cabinet, for the purpose of permitting two beautiful native productions to admire each other. Having let her little flow of nonsense run on as far as that point, her mother interposed and stopped her.

â##My dear! your Indian cabinet has no lock to it,â## says my lady!

â##Good Heavens, mamma!â## cried Miss Rachel, â##is this an hotel? Are there thieves in the house?â##

Without taking notice of this fantastic way of talking, my lady wished the gentlemen good-night. She next turned to Miss Rachel, and kissed her. â##Why not let *me* keep the Diamond for you to-night?â## she asked.

Miss Rachel received that proposal as she might, ten years since, have received a proposal to part from a new doll. My lady saw there was no reasoning with her that night. â##Come into my room, Rachel, the first thing to-morrow morning,â## she said. â##I shall have something to say to you.â## With those last words she left us slowly; thinking her own thoughts, and, to all appearance, not best pleased with the way by which they were leading her.

Miss Rachel was the next to say goodnight. She shook hands first with Mr. Godfrey, who was standing at the other end of the hall, looking at a picture. Then she turned back to Mr. Franklin, still very weary and silent in a corner.

What words passed between them I canâ##t say. But standing near the old oak frame which holds our large looking glass, I saw her reflected in it, slyly slipping the locket which Mr. Franklin had given to her, out of the bosom of her dress, and showing it to him for a moment, with a smile which certainly meant something out of the common, before she tripped off to bed. This incident staggered me a little in the reliance I had previously felt on my own judgment. I began to think that Penelope might be right about the state of her young ladyâ##s affections after all.

As soon as Miss Rachel left him eyes to see with, Mr. Franklin noticed me. His variable humour, shifting about everything, had shifted about the Indians already.

â##Betteredge,â## he said, â##Iâ##m half inclined to think I took Mr. Murthwaite too seriously, when we had that talk in the shrubbery. I wonder whether he has been trying any of his travellerâ##s tales on us? Do you really mean to let the dogs loose?â##

â##Iâ##ll relieve them of their collars, sir,â## I answered, â##and leave them free to take a turn in the night, if they smell a reason for it.â##

â##All right,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##Weâ##ll see what is to be done to-morrow. I am not all disposed to alarm my aunt, Betteredge, without a very pressing reason for it. Goodnight.â##

He looked so worn and pale as he nodded to me, and took his candle to go upstairs, that I ventured to advise his having a drop of brandy-and-water, by the way of a nightcap. Mr. Godfrey, walking towards us from the other end of the hall, backed me. He pressed Mr. Franklin, in the friendliest manner, to take something, before he went to bed.

I only note these trifling circumstances, because, after all I had seen and heard, that day, it pleased me to observe that our two gentlemen were on just as good terms as ever. Their warfare of words (heard by Penelope in the drawing-room), and their rivalry for the best place in Miss Rachelâ##s good graces, seemed to have set no serious difference between them. But there! they were both good-tempered, and both men of the world. And there is certainly this merit in people of station, that they are not nearly so quarrelsome among each other as people of no station at all.

Mr. Franklin declined the brandy-and-water, and next went upstairs with Mr. Godfrey, their rooms being next door to each other. On the landing, however, either his cousin persuaded him, or he veered about and changed his mind as usual. â##Perhaps I may want it in the night,â## he called down to me. â##Send up some brandy-and-water into my room.â##

I sent up Samuel with the brandy-and-water; and then went out and unbuckled the dogsâ## collars. They both lost their heads with astonishment on being set loose at that time of night, and jumped upon me like a couple of puppies! However, the rain soon cooled them down again: they lapped a drop of water each, and crept back into their kennels. As I went into the house I noticed signs in the sky which betokened a break in the weather for the better. For the present, it still poured heavily, and the ground was in a perfect sop.

Samuel and I went all over the house, and shut up as usual. I examined everything myself, and trusted nothing to my deputy on this occasion. All was safe and fast when I rested my old bones in bed, between midnight and one in the morning.

The worries of the day had been a little too much for me, I suppose. At any rate, I had a touch of Mr. Franklinâ##s malady that night. It was sunrise before I fell off at last into a sleep. All the time I lay awake the house was as quiet as the grave. Not a sound stirred but the splash of the rain, and the sighing of the wind among the trees as a breeze sprang up with the morning.

About half-past seven I woke, and opened my window on a fine sunshiny day. The clock had struck eight, and I was just going out to chain up the dogs again, when I heard a sudden whisking of petticoats on the stairs behind me.

I turned about, and there was Penelope flying down after me like mad. â##Father!â## she screamed, â##come upstairs, for Godâ##s sake! *The Diamond is gone!*â##

â##Are you out of your mind?â## I asked her.

â##Gone!â## says Penelope. â##Gone, nobody knows how! Come up and see.â##

She dragged me after her into our young ladyâ##s sitting-room, which opened into her bedroom. There, on the threshold of her bedroom door, stood Miss Rachel, almost as white in the face as the white dressing-gown that clothed her. There also stood the two doors of the Indian cabinet, wide open. One of the drawers inside was pulled out as far as it would go.

â##Look!â## says Penelope. â##I myself saw Miss Rachel put the Diamond into that drawer last night.â##

I went to the cabinet. The drawer was empty.

â##Is this true, miss?â## I asked.

With a look that was not like herself, with a voice that was not like her own, Miss Rachel answered as my daughter had answered: â##The Diamond is gone!â##

Having said those words, she withdrew into her bedroom, and shut and locked the door.

Before we knew which way to turn next, my lady came in, hearing my voice in her daughterâ##s sitting-room, and wondering what had happened. The news of the loss of the Diamond seemed to

petrify her. She went straight to Miss Rachelâ##s bedroom, and insisted on being admitted. Miss Rachel let her in.

The alarm, running through the house like a fire, caught the two gentlemen next.

Mr. Godfrey was the first to come out of his room. All he did when he heard what had happened was to hold up his hands in a state of bewilderment, which didnâ##t say much for his natural strength of mind. Mr. Franklin, whose clear head I had confidently counted on to advise us, seemed to be as helpless as his cousin when he heard the news in his turn. For a wonder, he had had a good nightâ##s rest at last; and the unaccustomed luxury of sleep had, as he said himself, apparently stupefied him. However, when he had swallowed his cup of coffeeâ##which he always took, on the foreign plan, some hours before he ate any breakfastâ##his brains brightened; the clear-headed side of him turned up, and took the matter in hand, resolutely and cleverly, much as follows:

He first sent for the servants, and told them to leave all the lower doors and windows (with the exception of the front door, which I had opened) exactly as they had been left when we locked up overnight, He next proposed to his cousin and to me to make quite sure, before we took any further steps, that the Diamond had not accidentally dropped somewhere out of sightâ##say at the back of the cabinet, or down behind the table on which the cabinet stood. Having searched in both places, and found nothingâ##having also questioned Penelope, and discovered from her no more than the little she had already told meâ##Mr. Franklin suggested next extending our enquiries to Miss Rachel, and sent Penelope to knock at her bedroom door.

My lady answered the knock, and closed the door behind her. The moment after we heard it locked inside by Miss Rachel. My mistress came out among us, looking sorely puzzled and distressed. â##The loss of the Diamond seems to have quite overwhelmed Rachel,â## she said, in reply to Mr. Franklin. â##She shrinks, in the strangest manner, from speaking of it, even to *me.* It is impossible you can see her for the present.â##

Having added to our perplexities by this account of Miss Rachel, my lady, after a little effort, recovered her usual composure, and acted with her usual decision.

â##I suppose there is no help for it?â## she said, quietly. â##I suppose I have no alternative but to send for the police?â##

â##And the first thing for the police to do,â## added Mr. Franklin, catching her up, â##is to lay hands on the Indian jugglers who performed here last night.â##

My lady and Mr. Godfrey (not knowing what Mr. Franklin and I knew) both started, and both looked surprised.

â##I canâ##t stop to explain myself now,â## Mr. Franklin went on. â##I can only tell you that the Indians have certainly stolen the Diamond. Give me a letter of introduction,â## says he, addressing my lady, â##to one of the magistrates at Frizinghallâ##merely telling him that I represent your interests and wishes, and let me ride off with it instantly. Our chance of catching the thieves may depend on our not wasting one unnecessary minute.â## (*Nota bene:* Whether it was the French side or the English, the right side of Mr. Franklin seemed to be uppermost now. The only question was, How long would it last?)

He put pen, ink, and paper before his aunt, who (as it appeared to me) wrote the letter he wanted a little unwillingly. If it had been possible to overlook such an event as the loss of a jewel worth twenty thousand pounds, I believeâ##with my ladyâ##s opinion of her late brother, and her distrust of his birthday-giftâ##it would have been privately a relief to her to let the thieves get off with the Moonstone scot free.

I went out with Mr. Franklin to the stables, and took the opportunity of asking him how the Indians (whom I suspected, of course, as shrewdly as he did) could possibly have got into the house.

â##One of them might have slipped into the hall, in the confusion, when the dinner company were going away,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##The fellow may have been under the sofa while my aunt and Rachel were talking about where the Diamond was to be put for the night. He would only have to

wait till the house was quiet, and there it would be in the cabinet, to be had for the taking.â## With those words, he called to the groom to open the gate, and galloped off.

This seemed certainly to be the only rational explanation. But how had the thief contrived to make his escape from the house? I had found the front door locked and bolted, as I had left it at night, when I went to open it, after getting up. As for the other doors and windows, there they were still, all safe and fast, to speak for themselves. The dogs, too? Suppose the thief had got away by dropping from one of the upper windows, how had he escaped the dogs? Had he come provided for them with drugged meat? As the doubt crossed my mind, the dogs themselves came galloping at me round a corner, rolling each other over on the wet grass, in such lively health and spirits that it was with no small difficulty I brought them to reason, and chained them up again. The more I turned it over in my mind, the less satisfactory Mr. Franklinâ##s explanation appeared to be.

We had our breakfastsâ##whatever happens in a house, robbery or murder, it doesnâ##t matter, you must have your breakfast. When we had done, my lady sent for me; and I found myself compelled to tell her all that I had hitherto concealed, relating to the Indians and their plot. Being a woman of high courage, she soon got over the first startling effect of what I had to communicate. Her mind seemed to be far more perturbed about her daughter than about the heathen rogues and their conspiracy. â##You know how odd Rachel is, and how differently she behaves sometimes from other girls,â## my lady said to me. â##But I have never, in all my experience, seen her so strange and so reserved as she is now. The loss of her jewel seems almost to have turned her brain. Who would have thought that horrible Diamond could have laid such a hold on her in so short a time?â##

It was certainly strange. Taking toys and trinkets in general. Miss Rachel was nothing like so mad after them as most young girls. Yet there she was, still locked up inconsolably in her bedroom. It is but fair to add that she was not the only one of us in the house who was thrown out of the regular groove. Mr. Godfrey, for instanceâ##though professionally a sort of consoler-generalâ##seemed to be at a loss where to look for his own resources. Having no company to amuse him, and getting no chance of trying what his experience of women in distress could do towards comforting Miss Rachel, he wandered hither and thither about the house and gardens in an aimless and uneasy way. He was in two different minds about what it became him to do, after the misfortune that had happened to us. Ought he to relieve the family, in their present situation, of the responsibility of him as a guest, or ought he to stay on the chance that even his humble services might be of some use? He decided ultimately that the last course was perhaps the most customary and considerate course to take, in such a very peculiar case of family distress as this was. Circumstances try the metal a man is really made of. Mr. Godfrey, tried by circumstances, showed himself of weaker metal than I had thought him to be. As for the women-servantsâ##excepting Rosanna Spearman, who kept by herselfâ##they took to whispering together in corners, and staring at nothing suspiciously, as is the manner of that weaker half of the human family, when anything extraordinary happens in a house. I myself acknowledge to have been fidgety and ill-tempered. The cursed Moonstone had turned us all upside down.

A little before eleven Mr. Franklin came back. The resolute side of him had, to all appearance, given way, in the interval since his departure, under the stress that had been laid on it. He had left us at a gallop; he came back to us at a walk. When he went away, he was made of iron. When he returned, he was stuffed with cotton, as limp as limp could be.

â##Well,â## says my lady, â##are the police coming?â##

â##Yes,â## says Mr. Franklin; â##they said they would follow me in a fly. Superintendent Seegrave, of your local police force, and two of his men. A mere form! The case is hopeless.â##

â##What! have the Indians escaped, sir?â## I asked.

â##The poor ill-used Indians have been most unjustly put in prison,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##They are as innocent as the babe unborn. My idea that one of them was hidden in the house has ended, like all the rest of my ideas, in smoke. Itâ##s been proved,â## says Mr. Franklin, dwelling with great relish on his own incapacity, â##to be simply impossible.â##

After astonishing us by announcing this totally new turn in the matter of the Moonstone, our young gentleman, at his auntâ##s request, took a seat, and explained himself.

It appeared that the resolute side of him had held out as far as Frizinghall. He had put the whole case plainly before the magistrate, and the magistrate had at once sent for the police. The first inquiries instituted about the Indians showed that they had not so much as attempted to leave the town. Further questions addressed to the police proved that all three had been seen returning to Frizinghall with their boy, on the previous night between ten and elevenâ##which (regard being had to hours and distances) also proved that they had walked straight back after performing on our terrace. Later still, at midnight, the police, having occasion to search the common lodging-house where they lived, had seen them all three again, and their little boy with them as usual. Soon after midnight I myself had safely shut up the house. Plainer evidence than this, in favour of the Indians, there could not well be. The magistrate said there was not even a case of suspicion against them so far. But, as it was just possible, when the police came to investigate the matter, that discoveries affecting the jugglers might be made, he would contrive, by committing them as rogues and vagabonds, to keep them at our disposal, under lock and key, for a week. They had ignorantly done something (I forget what) in the town, which barely brought them within the peroration of the law. Every human institution (Justice included) will stretch a little, if you only pull it the right way. The worthy magistrate was an old friend of my ladyâ##s, and the Indians were â##committedâ## for a week, as soon as the court opened that morning.

Such was Mr. Franklinâ##s narrative of events at Frizinghall. The Indian clue to the mystery of the lost jewel was now, to all appearance, a clue that had broken in our hands. If the jugglers were innocent, who, in the name of wonder, had taken the Moonstone out of Miss Rachelâ##s drawer?

Ten minutes later, to our infinite relief, Superintendent Seegrave arrived at the house. He reported passing Mr. Franklin on the terrace, sitting in the sun (I suppose with the Italian side of him uppermost), and warning the police, as they went by, that the investigation was hopeless, before the investigation had begun.

For a family in our situation, the Superintendent of the Frizinghall police was the most comforting officer you could wish to see. Mr. Seegrave was tall and portly, and military in his manners. He had a fine commanding voice, and a mighty resolute eye, and a grand frock-coat which buttoned beautifully up to his leather stock. â##Iâ##m the man you want!â## was written all over his face; and he ordered his two inferior policemen about with a severity which convinced us all that there was no trifling with *him.*

He began by going round the premises, outside and in; the result of that investigation proving to him that no thieves had broken in upon us from the outside, and that the robbery, consequently, must have been committed by some person in the house. I leave you to imagine the state the servants were in when this official announcement first reached their ears. The Superintendent decided to begin by examining the boudoir, and, that done, to examine the servants next. At the same time, he posted one of his men on the staircase which led to the servantsâ## bedrooms, with instructions to let nobody in the house pass him, till further orders.

At this latter proceeding, the weaker half of the human family went distracted on the spot. They bounced out of their corners, whisked upstairs in a body to Miss Rachelâ##s room (Rosanna Spearman being carried away among them this time), burst in on Superintendent Seegrave, and, all looking equally guilty, summoned him to say which of them he suspected, at once.

Mr. Superintendent proved equal to the occasion; he looked at them with his resolute eye, and he cowed them with his military voice.

â##Now, then, you women, go downstairs again, every one of you; I wonâ##t have you here. Look!â## says Mr. Superintendent, suddenly pointing to a little smear of the decorative painting on Miss Rachelâ##s door, at the outer edge, just under the lock. â##Look what mischief the petticoats of some of you have done already. Clear out! clear out!â## Rosanna Spearman, who was nearest

to him, and nearest to the little smear on the door, set the example of obedience, and slipped off instantly to her work. The rest followed her out. The Superintendent finished his examination of the room, and, making nothing of it, asked me who had first discovered the robbery. My daughter had first discovered it. My daughter was sent for.

Mr. Superintendent proved to be a little too sharp with Penelope at starting. â##Now, young woman, attend to me, and mind you speak the truth.â## Penelope fired up instantly. â##Iâ##ve never been taught to tell lies, Mr. Policeman!â##and if father can stand there and hear me accused of falsehood and thieving, and my own bedroom shut against me, and my character taken away, which is all a poor girl has left, heâ##s not the good father I take him for!â## A timely word from me put Justice and Penelope on a pleasanter footing together. The questions and answers went swimmingly, and ended in nothing worth mentioning. My daughter had seen Miss Rachel put the Diamond in the drawer of the cabinet the last thing at night. She had gone in with Miss Rachelâ##s cup of tea at eight the next morning, and had found the drawer open and empty. Upon that, she had alarmed the houseâ##and there was an end of Penelopeâ##s evidence.

Mr. Superintendent next asked to see Miss Rachel herself. Penelope mentioned his request through the door. The answer reached us by the same road: â##I have nothing to tell the policemanâ##I canâ##t see anybody.â## Our experienced officer looked equally surprised and offended when he heard that reply. I told him my young lady was ill, and begged him to wait a little and see her later. We thereupon went downstairs again, and were met by Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Franklin crossing the hall.

The two gentlemen, being inmates of the house, were summoned to say if they could throw any light on the matter. Neither of them knew anything about it. Had they heard any suspicious noises during the previous night? They had heard nothing but the pattering of the rain. Had I, lying awake longer than either of them, heard nothing either? Nothing! Released from examination, Mr. Franklin, still sticking to the helpless view of our difficulty, whispered to me: â##That man will be of no earthly use to us. Superintendent Seegrave is an ass.â## Released in his turn, Mr. Godfrey whispered to meâ##â##Evidently a most competent person. Betteredge, I have the greatest faith in him!â## Many men, many opinions, as one of the ancients said, before my time.

Mr. Superintendentâ##s next proceeding took him back to the â##boudoirâ## again, with my daughter and me at his heels. His object was to discover whether any of the furniture had been moved, during the night, out of its customary placeâ##his previous investigation in the room having, apparently, not gone quite far enough to satisfy his mind on this point.

While we were still poking about among the chairs and tables, the door of the bedroom was suddenly opened. After having denied herself to everybody, Miss Rachel, to our astonishment, walked into the midst of us of her own accord. She took up her garden hat from a chair, and then went straight to Penelope with this question:

â##Mr. Franklin Blake sent you with a message to me this morning?â##

â##Yes, miss.â##

â##He wished to speak to me, didnâ##t he?â##

â##Yes, miss.â##

â##Where is he now?â##

Hearing voices on the terrace below, I looked out of the window, and saw the two gentlemen walking up and down together. Answering for my daughter, I said, â##Mr. Franklin is on the terrace, miss.â##

Without another word, without heeding Mr. Superintendent, who tried to speak to her, pale as death, and wrapped up strangely in her own thoughts, she left the room, and went down to her cousins on the terrace.

It showed a want of due respect, it showed a breach of good manners, on my part, but, for the life of me, I couldnâ##t help looking out of the window when Miss Rachel met the gentlemen

outside. She went up to Mr. Franklin without appearing to notice Mr. Godfrey, who thereupon drew back and left them by themselves. What she said to Mr. Franklin appeared to be spoken vehemently. It lasted but for a short time, and, judging by what I saw of his face from the window, seemed to astonish him beyond all power of expression. While they were still together, my lady appeared on the terrace. Miss Rachel saw herâ##said a few last words to Mr. Franklinâ##and suddenly went back into the house again, before her mother came up with her. My lady, surprised herself, and noticing Mr. Franklinâ##s surprise, spoke to him. Mr. Godfrey joined them, and spoke also. Mr. Franklin walked away a little, between the two, telling them what had happened I suppose, for they both stopped short, after taking a few steps, like persons struck with amazement. I had just seen as much as this, when the door of the sitting-room was opened violently. Miss Rachel walked swiftly through to her bedroom, wild and angry, with fierce eyes and flaming cheeks. Mr. Superintendent once more attempted to question her. She turned round on him at her bedroom door. â##*I* have not sent for you!â## she cried out vehemently. â##*I* donâ##t want you. My Diamond is lost. Neither you nor anybody else will ever find it!â## With those words she went in, and locked the door in our faces. Penelope, standing nearest to it, heard her burst out crying the moment she was alone again.

In a rage, one moment; in tears, the next! What did it mean?

I told the Superintendent it meant that Miss Rachelâ##s temper was upset by the loss of her jewel. Being anxious for the honour of the family, it distressed me to see my young lady forget herselfâ##even with a police-officerâ##and I made the best excuse I could accordingly. In my own private mind, I was more puzzled by Miss Rachelâ##s extraordinary language and conduct than words can tell. Taking what she had said at her bedroom door as a guide to guess by, I could only conclude that she was mortally offended by our sending for the police, and that Mr. Franklinâ##s astonishment on the terrace was caused by her having expressed herself to him (as the person chiefly instrumental in fetching the police) to that effect. If this guess was right, whyâ##having lost her Diamondâ##should she object to the presence in the house of the very people whose business it was to recover it for her? And how, in Heavenâ##s name, could *she* know that the Moonstone would never be found again?

As things stood, at present, no answer to those questions was to be hoped for from anybody in the house. Mr. Franklin appeared to think it a point of honour to forbear repeating to a servantâ##even to so old a servant as I wasâ##what Miss Rachel had said to him on the terrace. Mr. Godfrey, who, as a gentleman and a relative, had been probably admitted into Mr. Franklinâ##s confidence, respected that confidence as he was bound to do. My lady, who was also in the secret no doubt, and who alone had access to Miss Rachel, owned openly that she could make nothing of her. â##You madden me when you talk of the Diamond!â## All her motherâ##s influence failed to extract from her a word more than that.

Here we were, then, at a deadlock about Miss Rachelâ##and at a deadlock about the Moonstone. In the first case, my lady was powerless to help us. In the second (as you shall presently judge), Mr. Seegrave was fast approaching the condition of a superintendent at his witsâ## end.

Having ferreted about all over the â##boudoir,â## without making any discoveries among the furniture, our experienced officer applied to me to know, whether the servants in general were or were not acquainted with the place in which the Diamond had been put for the night.

â##I knew where it was put, sir,â## I said, â##to begin with. Samuel, the footman, knew alsoâ##for he was present in the hall, when they were talking about where the Diamond was to be kept that night. My daughter knew, as she has already told you. She or Samuel may have mentioned the thing to the other servantsâ##or the other servants may have heard the talk for themselves, through the side-door of the hall, which might have been open to the back staircase. For all I can tell, everybody in the house may have known where the jewel was, last night.â##

My answer presenting rather a wide field for Mr. Superintendentâ##s suspicions to range over, he tried to narrow it by asking about the servantsâ## characters next.

I thought directly of Rosanna Spearman. But it was neither my place nor my wish to direct suspicion against a poor girl, whose honesty had been above all doubt as long as I had known her. The matron of the Reformatory had reported her to my lady as a sincerely penitent and thoroughly trustworthy girl. It was the Superintendentâ##s business to discover reason for suspecting her firstâ##and then, and not till then, it would be my duty to tell him how she came into my ladyâ##s service. â##All our people have excellent characters,â## I said. â##And all have deserved the trust their mistress has placed in them.â## After that, there was but one thing left for Mr. Seegrave to doâ##namely, to set to work, and tackle the servantsâ## characters himself.

One after another, they were examined. One after another, they proved to have nothing to sayâ##and said it (so far as the women were concerned) at great length, and with a very angry sense of the embargo laid on their bedrooms. The rest of them being sent back to their places downstairs, Penelope was then summoned, and examined separately a second time.

My daughterâ##s little outbreak of temper in the â##boudoir,â## and her readiness to think herself suspected, appeared to have produced an unfavourable impression on Superintendent Seegrave. It seemed also to dwell a little on his mind, that she had been the last person who saw the Diamond at night. When the second questioning was over, my girl came back to me in a frenzy. There was no doubt of it any longerâ##the police-officer had almost as good as told her she was the thief! I could scarcely believe him (taking Mr. Franklinâ##s view) to be quite such an ass as that. But, though he said nothing, the eye with which he looked at my daughter was not a very pleasant eye to see. I laughed it off with poor Penelope, as something too ridiculous to be treated seriouslyâ##which it certainly was. Secretly, I am afraid I was foolish enough to be angry too. It was a little tryingâ##it was, indeed. My girl sat down in a corner, with her apron over her head, quite broken-hearted. Foolish of her, you will say: she might have waited till he openly accused her. Well, being a man of just and equal temper, I admit that. Still Mr. Superintendent might have rememberedâ##never mind what he might have remembered. The devil take him!

The next and last step in the investigation brought matters, as they say, to a crisis. The officer had an interview (at which I was present) with my lady. After informing her that the Diamond *must* have been taken by somebody in the house, he requested permission for himself and his men to search the servantsâ## rooms and boxes on the spot. My good mistress, like the generous highbred she was, refused to let us be treated like thieves. â##I will never consent to make such a return as that,â## she said, â##for all I owe to the faithful servants who are employed in my house.â##

Mr. Superintendent made his bow, with a look in my direction, which said plainly, â##Why employ me, if you are to tie my hands in this way?â## As head of the servants, I felt directly that we were bound, in justice to all parties, not to profit by our mistressâ##s generosity. â##We gratefully thank your ladyship,â## I said; â##but we ask permission to do what is right in this matter, by giving up our keys. When Gabriel Betteredge sets the example,â## says I, stopping Superintendent Seegrave at the door, â##the rest of the servants will follow, I promise you. There are my keys, to begin with! â## My lady took me by the hand, and thanked me with the tears in her eyes. Lord! what would I not have given, at that moment, for the privilege of knocking Superintendent Seegrave down!

As I had promised for them, the other servants followed my lead, sorely against the grain, of course, but all taking the view that I took. The women were a sight to see, while the police-officers were rummaging among their things. The cook looked as if she could grill Mr. Superintendent alive on a furnace, and the other women looked as if they could eat him when he was done.

The search over, and no Diamond or sign of a Diamond being found, of course, anywhere, Superintendent Seegrave retired to my little room to consider with himself what he was to do next. He and his men had now been hours in the house, and had not advanced us one inch towards a discovery of how the Moonstone had been taken, or of whom we were to suspect as the thief.

While the police-officer was still pondering in solitude, I was sent for to see Mr. Franklin in the library. To my unutterable astonishment, just as my hand was on the door, it was suddenly opened from the inside, and out walked Rosanna Spearman!

After the library had been swept and cleaned in the morning, neither first nor second housemaid had any business in that room at any later period of the day. I stopped Rosanna Spearman, and charged her with a breach of domestic discipline on the spot.

â##What might you want in the library at this time of day?â## I inquired.

â##Mr. Franklin Blake dropped one of his rings upstairs,â## says Rosanna; â##and I have been into the library to give it to him.â## The girlâ##s face was all in a flush as she made me that answer; and she walked away with a toss of her head and a look of self-importance which I was quite at a loss to account for. The proceedings in the house had doubtless upset all the women-servants more or less; but none of them had gone clean out of their natural characters, as Rosanna, to all appearance, had now gone out of hers.

I found Mr. Franklin writing at the library-table. He asked for a conveyance to the railway station the moment I entered the room. The first sound of his voice informed me that we now had the resolute side of him uppermost once more. The man made of cotton had disappeared, and the man made of iron sat before me again.

â##Going to London, sir?â## I asked.

â##Going to telegraph to London,â## says Mr. Franklin. â##I have convinced my aunt that we must have a cleverer head than Superintendent Seegraveâ##s to help us; and I have got her permission to despatch a telegram to my father. He knows the Chief Commissioner of Police, and the Commissioner can lay his hand on the right man to solve the mystery of the Diamond. Talking of mysteries, by-the-by,â## says Mr. Franklin, dropping his voice, â##I have another word to say to you before you go to the stables. Donâ##t breathe a word of it to anybody as yet; but either Rosanna Spearmanâ##s head is not quite right, or I am afraid she knows more about the Moonstone than she ought to know.â##

I can hardly tell whether I was more startled or distressed at hearing him say that. If I had been younger, I might have confessed as much to Mr. Franklin. But when you are old, you acquire one excellent habit. In cases where you donâ##t see your way clearly, you hold your tongue.

â##She came in here with a ring I dropped in my bedroom,â## Mr. Franklin went on. â##When I had thanked her, of course I expected her to go. Instead of that, she stood opposite to me at the table, looking at me in the oddest mannerâ##half frightened, and half familiarâ##I couldnâ##t make it out. â##This is a strange thing about the Diamond, sir,â## she said, in a curiously sudden, headlong way. I said, â##Yes, it was,â## and wondered what was coming next. Upon my honour, Betteredge, I think she must be wrong in the head! She said, â##They will never find the Diamond, sir, will they? No! nor the person who took itâ##Iâ##ll answer for that.â## She actually nodded and smiled at me! Before I could ask her what she meant, we heard your step outside. I suppose she was afraid of your catching her here. At any rate, she changed colour, and left the room. What on earth does it mean?â##

I could not bring myself to tell him the girlâ##s story, even then. It would have been almost as good as telling him that she was the thief. Besides, even if I had made a clean breast of it, and even supposing she was the thief, the reason why she should let out her secret to Mr. Franklin, of all the people in the world, would have been still as far to seek as ever.

â##I canâ##t bear the idea of getting the poor girl into a scrape, merely because she has a flighty way with her, and talks very strangely,â## Mr. Franklin went on. â##And yet if she had said to the Superintendent what she said to me, fool as he is, Iâ##m afraidâ##â## He stopped there, and left the rest unspoken.

â##The best way, sir,â## I said, â##will be for me to say two words privately to my mistress about it at the first opportunity. My lady has a friendly interest in Rosanna; and the girl may only have been forward and foolish, after all. When thereâ##s a mess of any kind in the house, sir, the

women-servants like to look at the gloomy sideâ##it gives the poor wretches a kind of importance in their own eyes. If thereâ##s anybody ill, trust the women for prophesying that the person will die. If itâ##s a jewel lost, trust them for prophesying that it will never be found again.â##

This view (which, I am bound to say, I thought a probable view myself, on reflection) seemed to relieve Mr. Franklin mightily: he folded up his telegram, and dismissed the subject. On my way to the stables, to order the pony-chaise, I looked in at the servantsâ## hall, where they were at dinner. Rosanna Spearman was not among them. On inquiry, I found that she had been suddenly taken ill, and had gone upstairs to her own room to lie down.

â##Curious! She looked well enough when I saw her last,â## I remarked.

Penelope followed me out. â##Donâ##t talk in that way before the rest of them, father,â## she said. â##You only make them harder on Rosanna than ever. The poor thing is breaking her heart about Mr. Franklin Blake.â##

Here was another view of the girlâ##s conduct. If it was possible for Penelope to be right, the explanation of Rosannaâ##s strange language and behaviour might have been all in thisâ##that she didnâ##t care what she said, so long as she could surprise Mr. Franklin into speaking to her. Granting that to be right reading of the riddle, it accounted, perhaps, for her flighty, self-conceited manner when she passed me in the hall. Though he had only said three words, still she had carried her point, and Mr. Franklin *had* spoken to her.

I saw the pony harnessed myself. In the infernal network of mysteries and uncertainties that now surrounded us, I declare it was a relief to observe how well the buckles and straps understood each other! When you had seen the pony backed into the shafts of the chaise, you had seen something there was no doubt about. And that, let me tell you, was becoming a treat of the rarest kind in our household.

Going round with the chaise to the front door, I found not only Mr. Franklin, but Mr. Godfrey and Superintendent Seegrave also waiting for me on the steps.

Mr. Superintendentâ##s reflections (after failing to find the Diamond in the servantsâ## rooms or boxes) had led him, it appeared, to an entirely new conclusion. Still sticking to his first text, namely, that somebody in the house had stolen the jewel, our experienced officer was now of opinion that the thief (he was wise enough not to name poor Penelope, whatever he might privately think of her!) had been acting in concert with the Indians; and he accordingly proposed shifting his inquiries to the jugglers in the prison at Frizinghall. Hearing of this new move, Mr. Franklin had volunteered to take the Superintendent back to the town, from which he could telegraph to London as easily as from our station. Mr. Godfrey, still devoutly believing in Mr. Seegrave, and greatly interested in witnessing the examination of the Indians, had begged leave to accompany the officer to Frizinghall. One of the two inferior policemen was to be left at the house, in case anything happened. The other was to go back with the Superintendent to the town. So the four places in the pony-chaise were just filled.

Before he took the reins to drive off, Mr. Franklin walked me away a few steps out of hearing of the others.

â##I will wait to telegraph to London,â## he said, â##till I see what comes of our examination of the Indians. My own conviction is, that this muddle-headed local police-officer is as much in the dark as ever, and is simply trying to gain time. The idea of any of the servants being in league with the Indians is preposterous absurdity, in my opinion. Keep about the house, Betteredge, till I come back, and try what you can make of Rosanna Spearman. I donâ##t ask you to do anything degrading to your own self-respect, or anything cruel towards the girl. I only ask you to exercise your observation more carefully than usual. We will make as light of it as we can before my auntâ##but this is a more important matter than you may suppose.â##

â##It is a matter of twenty thousand pounds, sir,â## I said, thinking of the value of the Diamond.

â##Itâ##s a matter of quieting Rachelâ##s mind,â## answered Mr. Franklin gravely. â##I am very uneasy about her.â##

He left me suddenly, as if he desired to cut short any further talk between us. I thought I understood why. Further talk might have let me into the secret of what Miss Rachel had said to him on the terrace.

So they drove away to Frizinghall. I was ready enough, in the girlâ##s own interest, to have a little talk with Rosanna in private. But the needful opportunity failed to present itself. She only came downstairs again at tea-time. When she did appear, she was flighty and excited, had what they call an hysterical attack, took a dose of sal-volatile by my ladyâ##s order, and was sent back to her bed.

The day wore on to its end drearily and miserably enough, I can tell you. Miss Rachel still kept her room, declaring that she was too ill to come down to dinner that day. My lady was in such low spirits about her daughter, that I could not bring myself to make her additionally anxious, by reporting what Rosanna Spearman had said to Mr. Franklin. Penelope persisted in believing that she was to be forthwith tried, sentenced, and transported for the theft. The other women took to their Bibles and hymn-books, and looked as sour as verjuice over their readingâ##a result, which I have observed, in my sphere of life, to follow generally on the performance of acts of piety at unaccustomed periods of the day. As for me, I hadnâ##t even heart enough to open my *Robinson Crusoe.* I went out into the yard, and, being hard up for a little cheerful society, set my chair by the kennels, and talked to the dogs.

Half an hour before dinner-time, the two gentlemen came back from Frizinghall, having arranged with Superintendent Seegrave that he was to return to us the next day. They had called on Mr. Murthwaite, the Indian traveller, at his present residence, near the town. At Mr. Franklinâ##s request, he had kindly given them the benefit of his knowledge of the language, in dealing with those two, out of the three Indians, who knew nothing of English, The examination, conducted carefully, and at great length, had ended in nothing; not the shadow of a reason being discovered for suspecting the jugglers of having tampered with any of our servants. On reaching that conclusion, Mr. Franklin had sent his telegraphic message to London, and there the matter now rested till to-morrow came.

So much for the history of the day that followed the birthday. Not a glimmer of light had broken in on us, so far. A day or two after, however, the darkness lifted a little. How, and with what result, you shall presently see.

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The Thursday night passed, and nothing happened. With the Friday morning came two pieces of news.

Item the first: the bakerâ##s man declared he had met Rosanna Spearman, on the previous afternoon, with a thick veil on, walking towards Frizinghall by the footpath way over the moor. It seemed strange that anybody should be mistaken about Rosanna, whose shoulder marked her out pretty plainly, poor thingâ##but mistaken the man must have been; for Rosanna, as you know, had been all the Thursday afternoon ill upstairs in her room.

Item the second came through the postman. Worthy Mr. Candy had said one more of his many unlucky things, when he drove off in the rain on the birthday night, and told me that a doctorâ##s skin was waterproof. In spite of his skin, the wet had got through him. He had caught a chill that night, and was now down with a fever. The last accounts, brought by the postman, represented him to be light-headedâ##talking nonsense as glibly, poor man, in his delirium as he often talked it in his sober senses. We were all sorry for the little doctor; but Mr. Franklin appeared to regret his illness, chiefly on Miss Rachelâ##s account. From what he said to my lady, while I was in the room at breakfast-time, he appeared to think that Miss Rachelâ##if the suspense about the Moonstone was not soon set at restâ##might stand in urgent need of the best medical advice at our disposal.

Breakfast had not been long over, when a telegram from Mr. Blake, the elder, arrived, in answer to his son. It informed us that he had laid hands (by help of his friend, the Commissioner) on the right man to help us. The name of him was Sergeant Cuff; and the arrival of him from London might be expected by the morning train.

At reading the name of the new police-officer, Mr. Franklin gave a start. It seems that he had heard some curious anecdotes about Sergeant Cuff, from his fatherâ##s lawyer, during his stay in London.

â##I begin to hope we are seeing the end of our anxieties already,â## he said. â##If half the stories I have heard are true, when it comes to unravelling a mystery, there isnâ##t the equal in England of Sergeant Cuff!â##

We all got excited and impatient as the time drew near for the appearance of this renowned and capable character. Superintendent Seegrave, returning to us at his appointed time, and hearing that the Sergeant was expected, instantly shut himself up in a room, with pen, ink, and paper, to make notes of the Report which would be certainly expected from him. I should have liked to have gone to the station myself, to fetch the Sergeant. But my ladyâ##s carriage and horses were not to be thought of, even for the celebrated Cuff; and the pony-chaise was required later for Mr. Godfrey. He deeply regretted being obliged to leave his aunt at such an anxious time; and he kindly put off the hour of his departure till as late as the last train, for the purpose of hearing what the clever London police-officer thought of the case. But on Friday night he must be in town, having a Ladiesâ## Charity, in difficulties, waiting to consult him on Saturday morning.

When the time came for the Sergeantâ##s arrival, I went down to the gate to look out for him.

A fly from the railway drove up as I reached the lodge; and out got a grizzled, elderly man, so miserably lean that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of him. He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat round his neck. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes, of a steely light grey, had a very disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft; his voice was melancholy; his long lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson, or an undertakerâ##or anything else you like, except what he really was. A more complete opposite

to Superintendent Seegrave than Sergeant Cuff, and a less comforting officer to look at, for a family in distress, I defy you to discover, search where you may.

â##Is this Lady Verinderâ##s?â## he asked.

â##Yes, sir.â##

â##I am Sergeant Cuff.â##

â##This way, sir, if you please.â##

On the road to the house, I mentioned my name and position in the family, to satisfy him that he might speak to me about the business on which my lady was to employ him. Not a word did he say about the business, however, for all that. He admired the grounds, and remarked that he felt the sea air very brisk and refreshing. I privately wondered, on my side, how the celebrated Cuff had got his reputation. We reached the house, in the temper of two strange dogs, coupled up together for the first time in their lives by the same chain.

Asking for my lady, and hearing that she was in one of the conservatories, we went round to the gardens at the back, and sent a servant to seek her. While we were waiting, Sergeant Cuff looked through the evergreen arch on our left, spied out our rosery, and walked straight in, with the first appearance of anything like interest that he had shown yet. To the gardenerâ##s astonishment, and to my disgust, this celebrated policeman proved to be quite a mine of learning on the trumpery subject of rose-gardens.

â##Ah, youâ##ve got the right exposure here to the south and souâ##-west,â## says the Sergeant, with a wag of his grizzled head, and a streak of pleasure in his melancholy voice. â##This is the shape for a roseryâ##nothing like a circle set in a square. Yes, yes; with walks between all the beds. But they oughtnâ##t to be gravel walks like these. Grass, Mr. Gardenerâ##grass walks between your roses; gravelâ##s too hard for them. Thatâ##s a sweet pretty bed of white roses and blush roses. They always mix well together, donâ##t they? Hereâ##s the white musk rose, Mr. Betteredgeâ##our old English rose holding up its head along with the best and the newest of them. Pretty dear!â## says the Sergeant, fondling the Musk Rose with his lanky fingers, and speaking to it as if he was speaking to a child.

This was a nice sort of man to recover Miss Rachelâ##s Diamond, and to find out the thief who stole it!

â##You seem to be fond of roses, Sergeant?â## I remarked.

â##I havenâ##t much time to be fond of anything,â## says Sergeant Cuff. â##But when I *have* a momentâ##s fondness to bestow, most times, Mr. Betteredge, the roses get it. I began my life among them in my fatherâ##s nursery garden, and I shall end my life among them, if I can. Yes. One of these days (please God) I shall retire from catching thieves, and try my hand at growing roses. There will be grass walks, Mr. Gardener, between my beds,â## says the Sergeant, on whose mind the gravel paths of our rosery seemed to dwell unpleasantly.

â##It seems an odd taste, sir,â## I ventured to say, â##for a man in your line of life.â##

â##If you will look about you (which most people wonâ##t do),â## says Sergeant Cuff, â##you will see that the nature of a manâ##s tastes is, most times, as opposite as possible to the nature of a manâ##s business. Show me any two things more opposite one from the other than a rose and a thief; and Iâ##ll correct my tastes accordinglyâ##if it isnâ##t too late at my time of life. You find the damask rose a goodish stock for most of the tender sorts, donâ##t you, Mr. Gardener? Ah! I thought so. Hereâ##s a lady coming. Is it Lady Verinder?â##

He had seen her before either I or the gardener had seen her, though we knew which way to look, and he didnâ##t. I began to think him rather a quicker man than he appeared to be at first sight.

The Sergeantâ##s appearance, or the Sergeantâ##s errandâ##one or bothâ##seemed to cause my lady some little embarrassment. She was, for the first time in all my experience of her, at a loss what to say at an interview with a stranger. Sergeant Cuff put her at ease directly. He asked if any other person had been employed about the robbery before we sent for him; and hearing that another

person had been called in, and was now in the house, begged leave to speak to him before anything else was done.

My lady led the way back. Before he followed her, the Sergeant relieved his mind on the subject of the gravel walks by a parting word to the gardener. â##Get her ladyship to try grass,â## he said, with a sour look at the paths. â##No gravel! no gravel!â##

Why Superintendent Seegrave should have appeared to be several sizes smaller than life, on being presented to Sergeant Cuff, I canâ##t undertake to explain. I can only state the fact. They retired together; and remained a weary long time shut up from all mortal intrusion. When they came out, Mr. Superintendent was excited, and Mr. Sergeant was yawning.

â##The Sergeant wishes to see Miss Verinderâ##s sitting-room,â## says Mr. Seegrave, addressing me with great pomp and eagerness. â##The Sergeant may have some questions to ask. Attend the Sergeant, if you please!â##

While I was being ordered about in this way, I looked at the great Cuff. The great Cuff, on his side, looked at Superintendent Seegrave in that quietly expecting way which I have already noticed. I canâ##t affirm that he was on the watch for his brother officerâ##s speedy appearance in the character of an Assâ##I can only say that I strongly suspected it.

I led the way upstairs. The Sergeant went softly all over the Indian cabinet and all round the â##boudoirâ##; asking questions (occasionally only of Mr. Superintendent, and continually of me), the drift of which I believe to have been equally unintelligible to both of us. In due time, his course brought him to the door, and put him face to face with the decorative painting that you know of. He laid one lean inquiring finger on the small smear, just under the lock, which Superintendent Seegrave had already noticed, when he reproved the women-servants for all crowding together in the room.

â##Thatâ##s a pity,â## says Sergeant Cuff. â##How did it happen?â##

He put the question to me. I answered that the women-servants had crowded into the room on the previous morning, and that some of their petticoats had done the mischief. â##Superintendent Seegrave ordered them out, sir,â## I added, â##before they did any more harm.â##

â##Right!â## says Mr. Superintendent in his military way. â##I ordered them out. The petticoats did it, Sergeantâ##the petticoats did it.â##

â##Did you notice which petticoat did it?â## asked Sergeant Cuff, still addressing himself, not to his brother-officer, but to me.

â##No, sir.â##

He turned to Superintendent Seegrave upon that, and said, â##*You* noticed, I suppose?â##

Mr. Superintendent looked a little taken aback; but he made the best of it. â##I canâ##t charge my memory, Sergeant,â## he said, â##a mere trifleâ##a mere trifle.â##

Sergeant Cuff looked at Mr. Seegrave as he had looked at the gravel walks in the rosery, and gave us, in his melancholy way, the first taste of his quality which we had had yet.

â##I made a private inquiry last week, Mr. Superintendent,â## he said. â##At one end of the inquiry there was a murder, and at the other end there was a spot of ink on a tablecloth that nobody could account for. In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world, I have never met with such a thing as a trifle yet. Before we go a step further in this business we must see the petticoat that made the smear, and we must know for certain when that paint was wet.â##

Mr. Superintendentâ##taking his set-down rather sulkilyâ##asked if he should summon the women. Sergeant Cuff, after considering a minute, sighed, and shook his head.

â##No,â## he said, â##weâ##ll take the matter of the paint first. Itâ##s a question of Yes or No with the paintâ##which is short. Itâ##s a question of petticoats with the womenâ##which is long. What oâ##clock was it when the servants were in this room yesterday morning? Eleven oâ##clockâ##eh? Is there anybody in the house who knows whether that paint was wet or dry, at eleven yesterday morning?â##

â##Her ladyshipâ##s nephew, Mr. Franklin Blake, knows,â## I said.

â##Is the gentleman in the house?â##

Mr. Franklin was as close at hand as could beâ##waiting for his first chance of being introduced to the great Cuff. In half a minute he was in the room, and giving his evidence as follows:

â##That door, Sergeant,â## he said, â##has been painted by Miss Verinder, under my inspection, with my help, and in a vehicle of my own composition. The vehicle dries whatever colours may be used with it, in twelve hours.â##

â##Do you remember when the smeared bit was done, sir?â## asked the Sergeant.

â##Perfectly,â## answered Mr. Franklin. â##That was the last morsel of the door to be finished. We wanted to get it done, on Wednesday lastâ##and I myself completed it by three in the afternoon, or soon after.â##

â##To-day is Friday,â## said Sergeant Cuff, addressing himself to Superintendent Seegrave. â##Let us reckon back, sir. At three on the Wednesday afternoon, that bit of painting was completed. The vehicle dried it in twelve hoursâ##that is to say, dried it by three oâ##clock on Thursday morning. At eleven on Thursday morning you held your inquiry here. Take three from eleven, and eight remains. That paint had been *eight hours dry*, Mr. Superintendent, when you supposed that the women-servantsâ## petticoats smeared it.â##

First knock-down blow for Mr. Seegrave! If he had not suspected poor Penelope, I should have pitied him.

Having settled the question of the paint, Sergeant Cuff, from that moment, gave his brother-officer up as a bad jobâ##and addressed himself to Mr. Franklin, as the more promising assistant of the two.

â##Itâ##s quite on the cards, sir,â## he said, â##that you have put the clue into our hands.â##

As the words passed his lips, the bedroom door opened, and Miss Rachel came out among us suddenly.

She addressed herself to the Sergeant, without appearing to notice (or to heed) that he was a perfect stranger to her.

â##Did you say,â## she asked, pointing to Mr. Franklin, â##that *he* had put the clue into your hands?â##

(â##This is Miss Verinder,â## I whispered, behind the Sergeant).

â##That gentleman, miss,â## says the Sergeantâ##with his steely-grey eyes carefully studying my young ladyâ##s faceâ##â##has possibly put the clue into our hands.â##

She turned for one moment, and tried to look at Mr. Franklin. I say, tried, for she suddenly looked away again before their eyes met. There seemed to be some strange disturbance in her mind. She coloured up, and then she turned pale again. With the paleness, there came a new look into her faceâ##a look which it startled me to see.

â##Having answered your question, miss,â## says the Sergeant, â##I beg leave to make an inquiry in my turn. There is a smear on the painting of your door, here. Do you happen to know when it was done? or who did it?â##

Instead of making any reply, Miss Rachel went on with her questions, as if he had not spoken, or as if she had not heard him.

â##Are you another police-officer?â## she asked.

â##I am Sergeant Cuff, miss, of the Detective Police.â##

â##Do you think a young ladyâ##s advice worth having?â##

â##I shall be glad to hear it, miss.â##

â##Do your duty by yourselfâ##and donâ##t allow Mr. Franklin Blake to help you!â##

She said those words so spitefully, so savagely, with such an extraordinary outbreak of ill-will towards Mr. Franklin, in her voice and in her look, thatâ##though I had known her from a baby, though I loved and honoured her next to my lady herselfâ##I was ashamed of Miss Rachel for the first time in my life.

Sergeant Cuffâ##s immovable eyes never stirred from off her face. â##Thank you, miss,â## he said. â##Do you happen to know anything about the smear? Might you have done it by accident yourself?â##

â##I know nothing about the smear.â##

With that answer, she turned away, and shut herself up again in her bedroom. This time, I heard herâ##as Penelope had heard her beforeâ##burst out crying as soon as she was alone again.

I couldnâ##t bring myself to look at the Sergeantâ##I looked at Mr. Franklin, who stood nearest to me. He seemed to be even more sorely distressed at what had passed than I was.

â##I told you I was uneasy about her,â## he said. â##And now you see why.â##

â##Miss Verinder appears to be a little out of temper about the loss of her Diamond,â## remarked the Sergeant. â##Itâ##s a valuable jewel. Natural enough! natural enough!â##

Here was the excuse that I had made for her (when she forgot herself before Superintendent Seegrave, on the previous day) being made for her over again, by a man who couldnâ##t have had *my* interest in making itâ##for he was a perfect stranger! A kind of cold shudder ran through me, which I couldnâ##t account for at the time. I know, now, that I must have got my first suspicion, at that moment, of a new light (and horrid light) having suddenly fallen on the case, in the mind of Sergeant Cuffâ##purely and entirely in consequence of what he had seen in Miss Rachel, and heard from Miss Rachel, at that first interview between them.

â##A young ladyâ##s tongue is a privileged member, sir,â## says the Sergeant to Mr. Franklin. â##Let us forget what has passed, and go straight on with this business. Thanks to you, we know when the paint was dry. The next thing to discover is when the paint was last seen without that smear. *You* have got a head on your shouldersâ##and you understand what I mean.â##

Mr. Franklin composed himself, and came back with an effort from Miss Rachel to the matter in hand.

â##I think I do understand,â## he said. â##The more we narrow the question of time, the more we also narrow the field of inquiry.â##

â##Thatâ##s it, sir,â## said the Sergeant. â##Did you notice your work here, on the Wednesday afternoon, after you had done it?â##

Mr. Franklin shook his head, and answered, â##I canâ##t say I did.â##

â##Did *you*?â## inquired Sergeant Cuff, turning to me.

â##I canâ##t say I did either, sir.â##

â##Who was the last person in the room, the last thing on Wednesday night?â##

â##Miss Rachel, I suppose, sir.â##

Mr. Franklin struck in there, â##Or possibly your daughter, Betteredge.â## He turned to Sergeant Cuff, and explained that my daughter was Miss Verinderâ##s maid. â##Mr. Betteredge, ask your daughter to step up. Stop!â## says the Sergeant, taking me away to the window, out of earshot, â##Your Superintendent here,â## he went on, in a whisper, â##has made a pretty full report to me of the manner in which he has managed this case. Among other things, he has, by his own confession, set the servantsâ## backs up. Itâ##s very important to smooth them down again. Tell your daughter, and tell the rest of them, these two things, with my compliments: First, that I have no evidence before me, yet, that the Diamond has been stolen; I only know that the Diamond has been lost. Second, that *my* business here with the servants is simply to ask them to lay their heads together and help me to find it.â##

My experience of the women-servants, when Superintendent Seegrave laid his embargo on their rooms, came in handy here.

â##May I make so bold, Sergeant, as to tell the women a third thing?â## I asked. â##Are they free (with your compliments) to fidget up and downstairs, and whisk in and out of their bedrooms, if the fit takes them?â##

â##Perfectly free,â## said the Sergeant.

â##*That* will smooth them down, sir,â## I remarked, â##from the cook to the scullion.â##

â##Go, and do it at once, Mr. Betteredge.â##

I did it in less than five minutes. There was only one difficulty when I came to the bit about the bedrooms. It took a pretty stiff exertion of my authority, as chief, to prevent the whole of the female household from following me and Penelope upstairs, in the character of volunteer witnesses in a burning fever of anxiety to help Sergeant Cuff.

The Sergeant seemed to approve of Penelope. He became a trifle less dreary; and he looked much as he had looked when he noticed the white musk rose in the flower-garden. Here is my daughterâ##s evidence, as drawn off from her by the Sergeant. She gave it, I think, very prettilyâ##but, there! she is my child all over: nothing of her mother in her; Lord bless you, nothing of her mother in her!

Penelope examined: Took a lively interest in the painting on the door, having helped to mix the colours. Noticed the bit of work under the lock, because it was the last bit done. Had seen it, some hours afterwards, without a smear. Had left it, as late as twelve at night, without a smear, Had, at that hour, wished her young lady good night in the bedroom; had heard the clock strike in the â##boudoirâ##; had her hand at the time on the handle of the painted door; knew the paint was wet (having helped to mix the colours, as aforesaid); took particular pains not to touch it; could swear that she held up the skirts of her dress, and there was no smear on the paint then; could *not* swear that her dress mightnâ##t have touched it accidentally in going out; remembered the dress she had on, because it was new, a present from Miss Rachel; her father remembered, and could speak to it, too; could, and would, and did fetch it; dress recognised by her father as the dress she wore that night; skirts examined, a long job from the size of them; not the ghost of a paint-stain discovered anywhere. End of Penelopeâ##s evidenceâ##and very pretty and convincing, too, Signed, Gabriel Betteredge.

The Sergeantâ##s next proceeding was to question me about any large dogs in the house who might have got into the room, and done the mischief with a whisk of their tails. Hearing that this was impossible, he next sent for a magnifying-glass, and tried how the smear looked, seen that way. No skin-mark (as of a human hand) printed off on the paint. All the signs visibleâ##signs which told that the paint had been smeared by some loose article of somebodyâ##s dress touching it in going by. That somebody (putting together Penelopeâ##s evidence and Mr. Franklinâ##s evidence) must have been in the room, and done the mischief, between midnight and three oâ##clock on the Thursday morning.

Having brought his investigation to this point, Sergeant Cuff discovered that such a person as Superintendent Seegrave was still left in the room, upon which he summed up the proceedings for his brother-officerâ##s benefit, as follows:

â##This trifle of yours, Mr. Superintendent,â## says the Sergeant, pointing to the place on the door, â##has grown a little in importance since you noticed it last. At the present stage of the inquiry there are, as I take it, three discoveries to make, starting from that smear. Find out (first) whether there is any article of dress in this house with the smear of the paint on it. Find out (second) who that dress belongs to. Find out (third) how the person can account for having been in this room, and smeared the paint, between midnight and three in the morning. If the person canâ##t satisfy you, you havenâ##t far to look for the hand that has got the Diamond. Iâ##ll work this by myself, if you please, and detain you no longer from your regular business in the town. You have got one of your men here, I see. Leave him here at my disposal, in case I want himâ##and allow me to wish you good morning.â##

Superintendent Seegraveâ##s respect for the Sergeant was great; but his respect for himself was greater still. Hit hard by the celebrated Cuff, he hit back smartly, to the best of his ability, on leaving the room.

â##I have abstained from expressing any opinion, so far,â## says Mr. Superintendent, with his military voice still in good working order. â##I have now only one remark to offer on leaving this

case in your hands. There *is* such a thing, Sergeant, as making a mountain out of a molehill. Good morning.â##

â##There is also such a thing as making nothing out of a molehill, in consequence of your head being too high to see it.â## Having returned his brother-officerâ##s compliments in those terms, Sergeant Cuff wheeled about, and walked away to the window by himself.

Mr. Franklin and I waited to see what was coming next. The Sergeant stood at the window with his hands in his pockets, looking out, and whistling the tune of â##The Last Rose of Summerâ## softly to himself. Later in the proceedings, I discovered that he only forgot his manners so far as to whistle, when his mind was hard at work, seeing its way inch by inch to its own private ends, on which occasions â##The Last Rose of Summerâ## evidently helped and encouraged him. I suppose it fitted in somehow with his character. It reminded him, you see, of his favourite roses, and, as *he* whistled it, it was the most melancholy tune going.

Turning from the window, after a minute or two, the Sergeant walked into the middle of the room, and stopped there, deep in thought, with his eyes on Miss Rachelâ##s bedroom door. After a little he roused himself, nodded his head, as much as to say, â##That will do,â## and, addressing me, asked for ten minutesâ## conversation with my mistress, at her ladyshipâ##s earliest convenience.

Leaving the room with this message, I heard Mr. Franklin ask the Sergeant a question, and stopped to hear the answer also at the threshold of the door.

â##Can you guess yet,â## inquired Mr. Franklin, â##who has stolen the Diamond?â##

â##*Nobody has stolen the Diamond*,â## answered Sergeant Cuff.

We both started at that extraordinary view of the case, and both earnestly begged him to tell us what he meant.

â##Wait a little,â## said the Sergeant. â##The pieces of the puzzle are not all put together yet.â##

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I found my lady in her own sitting-room. She started and looked annoyed when I mentioned that Sergeant Cuff wished to speak to her.

â##*Must* I see him?â## she asked. â##Canâ##t you represent me, Gabriel?â##

I felt at a loss to understand this, and showed it plainly, I suppose, in my face. My lady was so good as to explain herself.

â##I am afraid my nerves are a little shaken,â## she said. â##There is something in that police-officer from London which I recoil fromâ##I donâ##t know why. I have a presentiment that he is bringing trouble and misery with him into the house. Very foolish, and very unlike *me*â##but so it is.â##

I hardly knew what to say to this. The more *I* saw of Sergeant Cuff, the better I liked him. My lady rallied a little after having opened her heart to meâ##being, naturally, a woman of a high courage, as I have already told you.

â##If I must see him, I must,â## she said. â##But I canâ##t prevail on myself to see him alone. Bring him in, Gabriel, and stay here as long as he stays.â##

This was the first attack of the megrims that I remembered in my mistress since the time when she was a young girl. I went back to the â##boudoir.â## Mr. Franklin strolled out into the garden, and joined Mr. Godfrey, whose time for departure was now drawing near. Sergeant Cuff and I went straight to my mistressâ##s room.

I declare my lady turned a shade paler at the sight of him! She commanded herself, however, in other respects, and asked the Sergeant if he had any objection to my being present. She was so good as to add, that I was her trusted adviser, as well as her old servant, and that in anything which related to the household I was the person whom it might be most profitable to consult. The Sergeant politely answered that he would take my presence as a favour, having something to say about the servants in general, and having found my experience in that quarter already of some use to him. My lady pointed to two chairs, and we set in for our conference immediately.

â##I have already formed an opinion on this case,â## says Sergeant Cuff, â##which I beg your ladyshipâ##s permission to keep to myself for the present. My business now is to mention what I have discovered upstairs in Miss Verinderâ##s sitting-room, and what I have decided (with your ladyshipâ##s leave) on doing next.â##

He then went into the matter of the smear on the paint, and stated the conclusions he drew from itâ##just as he had stated them (only with greater respect of language) to Superintendent Seegrave. â##One thing,â## he said, in conclusion, â##is certain. The Diamond is missing out of the drawer in the cabinet. Another thing is next to certain. The marks from the smear on the door must be on some article of dress belonging to somebody in this house. We must discover that article of dress before we go a step further.â##

â##And that discovery,â## remarked my mistress, â##implies, I presume, the discovery of the thief?â##

â##I beg your ladyshipâ##s pardonâ##I donâ##t say the Diamond is stolen. I only say, at present, that the Diamond is missing. The discovery of the stained dress may lead the way to finding it.â##

Her ladyship looked at me. â##Do you understand this?â## she said.

â##Sergeant Cuff understands it, my lady,â## I answered.

â##How do you propose to discover the stained dress?â## inquired my mistress, addressing once more to the Sergeant. â##My good servants, who have been with me for years, have, I am ashamed to say, had their boxes and their rooms searched already by the other officer. I canâ##t and wonâ##t permit them to be insulted in that way a second time!â##

(There was a mistress to serve! There was a woman in ten thousand, if you like!)

â##That is the very point I was about to put to your ladyship,â## said the Sergeant. â##The other officer has done a world of harm to this inquiry, by letting the servants see that he suspected them. If I give them cause to think themselves suspected a second time, thereâ##s no knowing what obstacles they may not throw in my wayâ##the women especially. At the same time, their boxes *must* be searched againâ##for this plain reason, that the first investigation only looked for the Diamond, and that the second investigation must look for the stained dress. I quite agree with you, my lady, that the servantsâ## feelings ought to be consulted. But I am equally clear that the servantsâ## wardrobes ought to be searched.â##

This looked very like a deadlock. My lady said so, in choicer language than mine.

â##I have got a plan to meet the difficulty,â## said Sergeant Cuff, â##if your ladyship will consent to it. I propose explaining the case to the servants.â##

â##The women will think themselves suspected directly,â## I said, interrupting him.

â##The women wonâ##t, Mr. Betteredge,â## answered the Sergeant, â##if I can tell them I am going to examine the wardrobes of *everybody*â##from her ladyship downwardsâ##who slept in the house on Wednesday night. Itâ##s a mere formality,â## he added, with a side look at my mistress; â##but the servants will accept it as even dealing between them and their betters; and, instead of hindering the investigation, they will make a point of honour of assisting it.â##

I saw the truth of that. My lady, after her first surprise was over, saw the truth of it also.

â##You are certain the investigation is necessary?â## she said.

â##Itâ##s the shortest way that I can see, my lady, to the end we have in view.â##

My mistress rose to ring the bell for her maid. â##You shall speak to the servants,â## she said, â##with the keys of my wardrobe in your hand.â##

Sergeant Cuff stopped her by a very unexpected question.

â##Hadnâ##t we better make sure first,â## he asked, â##that the other ladies and gentlemen in the house will consent, too?â##

â##The only other lady in the house is Miss Verinder,â## answered my mistress, with a look of surprise. â##The only gentlemen are my nephews, Mr. Blake and Mr. Ablewhite. There is not the least fear of a refusal from any of the three.â##

I reminded my lady here that Mr. Godfrey was going away. As I said the words, Mr. Godfrey himself knocked at the door to say good-bye, and was followed in by Mr. Franklin, who was going with him to the station. My lady explained the difficulty. Mr. Godfrey settled it directly. He called to Samuel, through the window, to take his portmanteau upstairs again, and he then put the key himself into Sergeant Cuffâ##s hand. â##My luggage can follow me to London,â## he said, â##when the inquiry is over.â## The Sergeant received the key with a becoming apology. â##I am sorry to put you to any inconvenience, sir, for a mere formality; but the example of their betters will do wonders in reconciling the servants to this inquiry.â## Mr. Godfrey, after taking leave of my lady, in a most sympathising manner, left a farewell message for Miss Rachel, the terms of which made it clear to my mind that he had not taken No for an answer, and that he meant to put the marriage question to her once more, at the next opportunity. Mr. Franklin, on following his cousin out, informed the Sergeant that all his clothes were open to examination, and that nothing he possessed was kept under lock and key. Sergeant Cuff made his best acknowledgments. His views, you will observe, had been met with the utmost readiness by my lady, by Mr. Godfrey, and by Mr. Franklin. There was only Miss Rachel now wanting to follow their lead, before we called the servants together, and began the search for the stained dress.

My ladyâ##s unaccountable objection to the Sergeant seemed to make our conference more distasteful to her than ever, as soon as we were left alone again. â##If I send you down Miss Verinderâ##s keys,â## she said to him, â##I presume I shall have done all you want of me for the present?â##

â##I beg your ladyshipâ##s pardon,â## said Sergeant Cuff. â##Before we begin, I should like, if convenient, to have the washing-book. The stained article of dress may be an article of linen. If the search leads to nothing, I want to be able to account next for all the linen in the house, and for all the linen sent to the wash. If there is an article missing, there will at least be a presumption that it has got the paint-stain on it, and that it was purposely made away with, yesterday or to-day, by the person owning it. Superintendent Seegrave,â## added the Sergeant, turning to me, â##pointed the attention of the women-servants to the smear, when they all crowded into the room on Thursday morning. That *may* turn out, Mr. Betteredge, to have been one more of Superintendent Seegraveâ##s many mistakes.â##

My lady desired me to ring the bell, and order the washing-book. She remained with us until it was produced, in case Sergeant Cuff had any further request to make of her after looking at it.

The washing-book was brought in by Rosanna Spearman. The girl had come down to breakfast that morning miserably pale and haggard, but sufficiently recovered from her illness of the previous day to do her usual work. Sergeant Cuff looked attentively at our second housemaidâ##at her face, when she came in; at her crooked shoulder, when she went out.

â##Have you anything more to say to me?â## asked my lady, still as eager as ever to be out of the Sergeantâ##s society.

The great Cuff opened the washing-book, understood it perfectly in half a minute, and shut it up again. â##I venture to trouble your ladyship with one last question,â## he said. â##Has the young woman who brought us this book been in your employment as long as the other servants?â##

â##Why do you ask?â## said my lady.

â##The last time I saw her,â## answered the Sergeant, â##she was in prison for theft.â##

After that, there was no help for it, but to tell him the truth. My mistress dwelt strongly on Rosannaâ##s good conduct in her service, and on the high opinion entertained of her by the matron at the reformatory. â##You donâ##t suspect her, I hope?â## my lady added, in conclusion, very earnestly.

â##I have already told your ladyship that I donâ##t suspect any person in the house of thievingâ##up to the present time.â##

After that answer, my lady rose to go upstairs, and ask for Miss Rachelâ##s keys. The Sergeant was beforehand with me in opening the door for her. He made a very low bow. My lady shuddered as she passed him.

We waited, and waited, and no keys appeared. Sergeant Cuff made no remark to me. He turned his melancholy face to the window; he put his lanky hands into his pockets; and he whistled â##The Last Rose of Summerâ## softly to himself.

At last, Samuel came in, not with the keys, but with a morsel of paper for me. I got at my spectacles, with some fumbling and difficulty, feeling the Sergeantâ##s dismal eyes fixed on me all the time. There were two or three lines on the paper, written in pencil by my lady. They informed me that Miss Rachel flatly refused to have her wardrobe examined. Asked for her reasons, she had burst out crying. Asked again, she had said: â##I wonâ##t, because I wonâ##t. I must yield to force if you use it, but I will yield to nothing else.â## I understood my ladyâ##s disinclination to face Sergeant Cuff with such an answer from her daughter as that. If I had not been too old for the amiable weakness of youth, I believe I should have blushed at the notion of facing him myself.

â##Any news of Miss Verinderâ##s keys?â## asked the Sergeant.

â##My young lady refuses to have her wardrobe examined.â##

â##Ah!â## said the Sergeant.

His voice was not quite in such a perfect state of discipline as his face. When he said â##Ah! â## he said it in the tone of a man who had heard something which he expected to hear. He half angered and half frightened meâ##why I couldnâ##t tell, but he did it.

â##Must the search be given up?â## I asked.

â##Yes,â## said the Sergeant, â##the search must be given up, because your young lady refuses to submit to it like the rest. We must examine all the wardrobes in the house or none. Send Mr. Ablewhiteâ##s portmanteau to London by the next train, and return the washing-book, with my compliments and thanks, to the young woman who brought it in.â##

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