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## The Missing Letters.

I thought perhaps Robbins would pity me, and help me to recover the papers, if he knew anything about them.

"Really, Dick," he said, "this is a hard place you are in. I am sorry for you."

"I would sooner have had the rascal take my life! I exclaimed. "I can never face Peckerton again."

"Well, no, I don't see how you can, if the papers are as important as you say, and you say, and you lost them by going on that little spree last night," said Robbins. "But don't be cut up by it. A smart young fellow like you needn't be long out of a place. Let Peckerton slide and go in for your chances somewhere else. Don't you say so, Bill?"

Kneeland shook his head.

"It will be hard for him get in with another man like Peckerton," he replied.

"Well, I suppose so. Then I'll tell you what you'd better do. Go to him boldly with a made-up story. Tell him your room was broken into,—not while you were off on a spree, of course, but after you had taken a nap over your work. You were awakened by a noise lamp suddenly extinguished, violent scuffle with an unknown antagonist, who tore himself from your hands, knocked you down and fled with the papers. You can give yourself a little knock, and show a torn and blooded shirt-front, in corroboration. Am't this his cue, Bill?"

Bill's small bright eyes sparkled with lively cunning as he proposed this. I turned to Bill, who was more grave, but who answered like the old friend and false counselor he was.

"Really, I don't see but what it will have to get out of the scrape."

I listened with astonishment to these base suggestions. Such, then, were the friends I had cherished, for the sake of whose society I had neglected my trust, and risked disgrace and ruin!

I started up, and retorted with indignation.—

"Because I have been a fool, would you have me be a coward and a rascal?"

My suspicions of Robbins were fully confirmed, and I now more than half believed Bill to have been in league with him. Why not, since they were so ready to counsel me to base conduct? It is safe to conclude that those who would have me act falsely, are capable of acting falsely themselves.

I left them in anger and disgust but their words had quite another effect on me from what might have been expected. They roused my manhood. I was revolted by the dishonorable proposal, and stood into forming a different resolution.

It would not do to leave Judge Peckerton in ignorance of what had occurred. The least I could do af

ter the papers was to give him warning of the fact. I would go to him confess everything, denounce myself, and accuse my false friends.

It was now just six o'clock. I hurried home to make final search and inquiry, and get at some solution of the mystery, if possible, before meeting the judge.

I could learn nothing, except that a gentleman had called for me about ten o'clock the evening before, when I was out. He had gone away, however, without leaving his name.

"Did he go to my room?" I asked.

"I went with him to your room and tried the door," said the housekeeper, "but it was locked."

"And you saw him go out of the house?"

"Yes, and nobody could have got in after that without a latch-key. The servants were all abed."

This caller who did not leave his name might have been another spy of Kneeland's, but this was a mere conjecture, and it threw no light on the robbery. The boarders were not yet astir, and it would not go from room to room at that hour, questioning them. Two or three appeared just as I was leaving the house but they had seen no strange person in the halls of night before, except the young man who came to see Kneeland, and went out with Kneeland and me.

"But I did hear some odd stumping up stairs at about midnight," said one; a point of which I was not sure to check further information.

I had now barely time to reach Peckerton's house at seven o'clock,—the hour he had appointed for receiving the copied letters. I don't know now it seems to have several pintas of water in my own bosom, but that's what my heart seemed like,—it was so heavy, and yet so fiery hot, when I set out on my unadvised errand.

It was raining sun,—a cold, fine, astringent rain, but that did not cool my fever.

I saw one a watch going to the galley; but worse than that; he knows the fate before him; his name is made up to it; he is at peace compared with a culprit like me, going to confess to a man like Peckerton the ruin that brought upon his client's honest cause.

Only those who have been in a like situation will know just what I mean when I say that death would have been welcome if the other had relieved me of that terrible necessity and saved me from disgrace.

When I reached the house, I was kept by, leaning to enter; I wished to put out into the last moment the ordeal I was to go through. As I hesitated sick, faint, unsteady, and saw a man coming from the opposite direction.

It was Fenimore, Peckerton's young-est partner. The sight of him added to my misery. He was going to the house; he would witness my humili-

ation and would be obliged to tell the truth to the judge.

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