

BY GRANT ALLEN.



WE had a terrible passage home from New York. The Captain told us he "knew every drop of water in the Atlantic personally"; and he had never seen them so uniformly obstreperous. The ship rolled in the trough; Charles rolled in his cabin, and would not be comforted. As we approached the Irish coast, I scrambled up on deck in a violent gale, and retired again somewhat precipitately to announce to my brother-in-law that we had just come in sight of the Fastnet Rock Lighthouse. Charles merely turned over in his berth and groaned. "I don't believe it," he answered. "I expect it is probably Colonel Clay, in another of his manifold disguises!"

At Liverpool, however, the Adelphi consoled him. We dined luxuriously in the Louis Quinze restaurant, as only millionaires can dine, and proceeded next day by Pullman car to London.

We found Amelia dissolved in tears at a domestic cataclysm. It seemed that Césarine had given notice.

Charles was scarcely home again when he began to bethink him of the least among his investments. Like many other wealthy men, my respected connection is troubled more or less, in the background of his consciousness, by a pervading dread that he will die a beggar. To guard against this misfortune—which I am bound to admit nobody else fears for him—he invested several years ago a sum of two hundred thousand pounds in Consols, to serve as a nest-egg, in case of the collapse of Golcondas and South Africa generally. It is part of the same amiable mania, too, that he will not

allow the dividend-warrants on this sum to be sent to him by post, but insists, after the fashion of old ladies and country parsons, upon calling personally at the Bank of England four times a year to claim his interest. He is well known by sight to not a few of the clerks; and his appearance in Thread-needle Street is looked forward to with great regularity within a few weeks of each lawful quarter-day.

So, on the morning after our arrival in town, Charles observed to me, cheerfully, "Sey, I must run into the City to-day, to claim my dividends. There are two quarters owing."

I accompanied him in to the Bank. Even that mighty official, the beadle at the door, unfastened the handle of the millionaire's carriage. The clerk who received us smiled and nodded. "How much?" he asked, after the stereotyped fashion.

"Two hundred thousand," Charles answered, looking affable.

The clerk turned up the books. "Paid!" he said, with decision. "What's your game, sir, if I may ask you?"

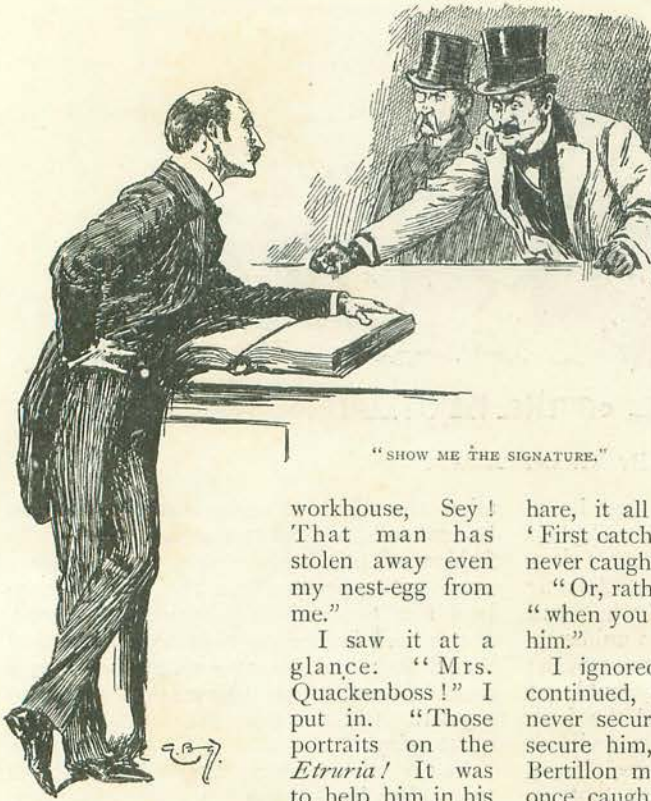
"Paid!" Charles echoed, drawing back.

The clerk gazed across at him. "Yes, Sir Charles," he answered, in a somewhat severe tone. "You must remember you drew a quarter's dividend from myself—last week—at this very counter."

Charles stared at him fixedly. "Show me the signature," he said at last, in a slow, dazed fashion. I suspected mischief.

The clerk pushed the book across to him. Charles examined the name close.

"Colonel Clay again!" he cried, turning to me with a despondent air. "He must have dressed the part. I shall die in the



"SHOW ME THE SIGNATURE."

workhouse, Sey! That man has stolen away even my nest-egg from me."

I saw it at a glance. "Mrs. Quackenboss!" I put in. "Those portraits on the *Etruria*! It was to help him in his make-up! You recollect, she

sketched your face and figure at all possible angles."

"And last quarter's?" Charles inquired, staggering.

The clerk turned up the entry. "Drawn on the 10th of July," he answered, carelessly, as if it mattered nothing.

Then I knew why the Colonel had run across to England.

Charles positively reeled. "Take me home, Sey," he cried. "I am ruined, ruined! He will leave me with not half a million in the world. My poor, poor boys will beg their bread, unheeded, through the streets of London!"

(As Amelia has landed estate settled upon her worth a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, this last contingency affected me less to tears than Charles seemed to think necessary.)

We made all needful inquiries, and put the police upon the quest at once, as always. But no redress was forthcoming. The money, once paid, could not be recovered. It is a playful little privilege of Consols that the Government declines under any circum-

stances to pay twice over. Charles drove back to Mayfair a crushed and broken man. I think if Colonel Clay himself could have seen him just then, he would have pitied that vast intellect in its grief and bewilderment.

After lunch, however, my brother-in-law's natural buoyancy reasserted itself by degrees. He rallied a little. "Seymour," he said to me, "you've heard, of course, of the Bertillon system of measuring and registering criminals."

"I have," I answered. "And it's excellent as far as it goes.

But, like Mrs. Glasse's juggled hare, it all depends upon the initial step. 'First catch your criminal.' Now, we have never caught Colonel Clay——"

"Or, rather," Charles interposed, unkindly, "when you *did* catch him, you didn't hold him."

I ignored the unkindly suggestion, and continued, in the same voice, "We have never secured Colonel Clay; and until we secure him, we cannot register him by the Bertillon method. Besides, even if we had once caught him and duly noted the shape of his nose, his chin, his ears, his forehead, of what use would that be against a man who turns up with a fresh face each time, and can mould his features into what form he likes, to deceive and foil us?"

"Never mind, Sey," my brother-in-law said. "I was told in New York that Dr. Frank Beddersley, of London, was the best exponent of the Bertillon system now living in England; and to Beddersley I shall go. Or, rather, I'll invite him here to lunch to-morrow."

"Who told you of him?" I inquired. "Not Dr. Quackenboss, I hope; nor yet Mr. Algernon Coleyard?"

Charles paused and reflected. "No, neither of them," he answered, after a short internal deliberation. "It was that magazine editor chap we met at Wrengold's."

"*He's* all right," I said: "or, at least, I think so."

So we wrote a polite invitation to Dr. Beddersley, who pursued the method professionally, asking him to come and lunch with us at Mayfair at two next day.

Dr. Beddersley came—a dapper little man, with pent-house eyebrows, and keen, small eyes, whom I suspected at sight of being Colonel Clay himself in another of his clever

polymorphic embodiments. He was clear and concise. His manner was scientific. He told us at once that though the Bertillon method was of little use till the expert had seen the criminal once, yet if we had consulted him earlier, he might probably have saved us some serious disasters. "A man so ingenious as this," he said, "would no doubt have studied Bertillon's principles himself, and would take every possible means to prevent recognition by them. Therefore, you might almost disregard the nose, the chin, the moustache, the hair, all of which are capable of such easy alteration. But there remain some features which are more likely to persist—height, shape of head, neck, build, and fingers; the *timbre* of the voice, the colour of the iris. Even these, again, may be partially disguised or concealed; the way the hair is dressed, the amount of padding, a high collar round the throat, a dark line about the eyelashes, may do more to alter the appearance of a face than you could readily credit."

"So we know," I answered.

"The voice, again," Dr. Beddersley continued.

"The voice itself may be most fallacious. The man is no doubt a clever mimic. He could, perhaps, compress or enlarge his larynx. And I judge from what you tell me that he took characters each time which necessitated him largely to alter and modify his tone and accent."

"Yes," I said. "As the Mexican Seer, he had of course a Spanish intonation. As the little curate, he was a cultivated North-countryman. As David Granton, he spoke gentlemanly Scotch. As Von Lebenstein, naturally, he was a South-German, trying to express himself in French. As Professor Schleiermacher, he was a North-German speaking broken English. As Elihu Quack-enboss, he had a fine and pronounced Kentucky flavour. And as the poet, he drawled after the fashion of the clubs,

with lingering remnants of a Devonshire ancestry."

"Quite so," Dr. Beddersley answered. "That is just what I should expect. Now, the question is, do you know him to be one man, or is he really a gang? Is he a name for a syndicate? Have you any photographs of Colonel Clay himself in any of his disguises?"

"Not one," Charles answered. "He produced some himself, when he was Medhurst the detective. But he pocketed them at once; and we never recovered them."

"Could you get any?" the doctor asked. "Did you note the name and address of the photographer?"

"Unfortunately, no," Charles replied. "But the police at Nice showed us two. Perhaps we might borrow them."

"Until we get them," Dr. Beddersley said, "I don't know that we can do anything. But if you can once give me two distinct photographs of the real man, no matter how much disguised, I could tell you whether they were taken from one person; and, if so, I think I could point out certain details in common which might aid us to go upon."

All this was at lunch. Amelia's niece, Dolly Lingfield, was there, as it happened; and I chanced to note a most guilty look stealing over her face all the while we were talking. Suspicious as I had learned to become by this time, however, I did not suspect Dolly of being in league with Colonel Clay; but I confess, I wondered what her blush could indicate. After lunch, to my surprise, Dolly called me away from the rest into the library. "Uncle Seymour," she said to me—the dear child calls me Uncle Seymour, though of course I am not in any way related to her—"I have some photographs of Colonel Clay, if you want them."

"You?" I cried, astonished. "Why, Dolly, how did you get them?"

For a minute or two she showed some



"DR. BEDDERSLEY."

little hesitation in telling me. At last she whispered, "You won't be angry if I confess?" (Dolly is just nineteen, and remarkably pretty.)

"My child," I said, "why *should* I be angry? You may confide in me implicitly." (With a blush like that, who on earth could be angry with her?)

"And you won't tell Aunt Amelia or Aunt Isabel?" she inquired, somewhat anxiously.

"Not for worlds," I answered. (As a matter of fact, Amelia and Isabel are the last people in the world to whom I should dream of confiding anything that Dolly might tell me.)

"Well, I was stopping at Seldon, you know, when Mr. David Granton was there," Dolly went on; "—or, rather, when that scamp pretended he was David Granton; and—and—you won't be angry with me, will you?—one day I took a snap-shot with my kodak at him and Aunt Amelia!"

"Why, what harm was there in that?" I asked, bewildered. The wildest stretch of fancy could hardly conceive that the Honourable David had been *flirting* with Amelia.

Dolly coloured still more deeply. "Oh, you know Bertie Winslow?" she said. "Well, he's interested in photography—and—and also in *me*. And he's invented a process, which isn't of the slightest practical use, he says; but its peculiarity is, that it reveals textures. At least, that's what Bertie calls it. It makes things come out so. And he gave me some plates of his own for my kodak—half-a-dozen or more, and—I took Aunt Amelia with them."

"I still fail to see," I murmured, looking at her comically.

"Oh, Uncle Seymour," Dolly cried. "How

blind you men are! If Aunt Amelia knew, she would never forgive me. Why, you *must* understand. The—the rouge, you know, and the pearl powder!"

"Oh, it comes out, then, in the photograph?" I inquired.

"Comes out! I should *think* so! It's like little black spots all over auntie's face. *Such* a guy as she looks in it!"

"And Colonel Clay is in them too?"

"Yes; I took them when he and auntie were talking together, without either of them noticing. And Bertie developed them. I've three of David Granton. Three beauties; *most* successful."

"Any other character?" I asked, seeing business ahead.

Dolly hung back, still redder. "Well, the rest are with Aunt Isabel," she answered, after a struggle.

"My dear child," I replied, hiding my feelings as a husband, "I will be brave. I will bear up even against that last misfortune!"

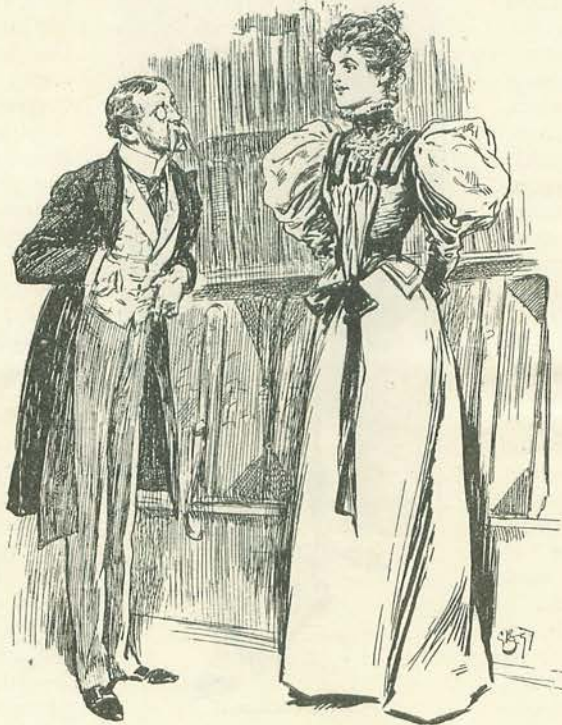
Dolly looked up at me pleadingly. "It was here in London," she went on; "—when I was last with auntie. Medhurst was stopping in the house at the time; and I took him twice, *tête-à-tête* with Aunt Isabel!"

"Isabel does not paint," I murmured, stoutly.

Dolly hung back again. "No, but—her hair!" she suggested, in a faint voice.

"Its colour," I admitted, "is in places assisted by a—well, you know, a restorer."

Dolly broke into a mischievous, sly smile. "Yes, it is," she continued. "And, oh, Uncle Sey, where the restorer has—er—restored it, you know, it comes out in the photograph with a sort of brilliant iridescent metallic sheen on it!"



"HOW BLIND YOU MEN ARE!"

"Bring them down, my dear," I said, gently patting her head with my hand. In the interests of justice, I thought it best not to frighten her.

Dolly brought them down. They seemed to me poor things, yet well worth trying. We found it possible, on further confabulation, by the simple aid of a pair of scissors, so to cut each in two, that all trace of Amelia and Isabel was obliterated. Even so, however, I judged it best to call Charles and Dr. Beddersley to a private consultation in the library with Dolly, and not to submit the mutilated photographs to public inspection by their joint subjects. Here, in fact, we had five patchy portraits of the redoubtable Colonel, taken at various angles, and in characteristic unstudied attitudes. A child had outwitted the cleverest sharper in Europe!

The moment Beddersley's eye fell upon them, a curious look came over his face. "Why, these," he said, "are taken on Herbert Winslow's method, Miss Lingfield."

"Yes," Dolly admitted, timidly. "They are. He's—a friend of mine, don't you know: and—he gave me some plates that just fitted my camera."

Beddersley gazed at them steadily. Then he turned to Charles. "And this young lady," he said, "has quite unintentionally and unconsciously succeeded in tracking Colonel Clay to earth at last. They are genuine photographs of the man—as he is—*without* the disguises!"

"They look to me most blotchy," Charles murmured. "Great black lines down the nose, and such spots on the cheek, too!"

"Exactly," Beddersley put in. "Those are *differences in texture*. They show just how much of the man's face is human flesh —"

"And how much wax," I ventured.

"Not wax," the expert answered, gazing close. "This is some harder mixture. I should guess a composition of gutta-percha and india-rubber, which takes colour well, and hardens when applied, so as to lie quite evenly, and resist heat or melting. Look here; that's an artificial scar, filling up a real hollow; and *this* is an added bit to the tip of the nose; and *those* are shadows, due to inserted cheek-pieces, within the mouth, to make the man look fatter!"

"Why, of course," Charles cried. "India-rubber it must be. That's why in France they call him *le Colonel Caoutchouc*!"

"Can you reconstruct the real face from them?" I inquired, anxiously.

Dr. Beddersley gazed hard at them. "Give me an hour or two," he said—"and a box of water-colours. I *think* by that time—putting two and two together—I can eliminate the false and build up for you a tolerably correct idea of what the actual man himself looks like."

We turned him into the library for a couple of hours, with the materials he needed; and by tea-time he had completed his first rough sketch of the elements common to the two faces. He brought it out to us in the drawing-room. I glanced at it first. It was a curious countenance, slightly wanting in definiteness, and not unlike those "composite photographs" which Mr. Galton produces by exposing two negatives on the same sensitized paper for ten seconds or so consecutively. Yet it struck me at once as containing something of Colonel Clay in every one of his many representations. The little curate, in real life, did not recall the seer; nor did Elihu Quackenboss suggest Count von Lebenstein or Professor Schleiermacher. Yet in this compound face, produced only from photographs of David Granton and Medhurst, I could distinctly trace a certain underlying likeness to every one of the forms which the impostor had assumed for us. In other words, though he could make up so as to mask the likeness to his other characters, he could not make up so as to mask the likeness to his own personality. He could not wholly get rid of his native build and his genuine features.

Besides these striking suggestions of the seer and the curate, however, I felt vaguely conscious of having seen and observed *the man himself* whom the water-colour represented, at some time, somewhere. It was not at Nice; it was not at Seldon; it was not at Meran; it was not in America. I believed I had been in a room with him somewhere in London.

Charles was looking over my shoulder. He gave a sudden little start. "Why, I know that fellow!" he cried. "You recollect him, Sey; he's Finglemore's brother—the chap that didn't go out to China!"

Then I remembered at once where it was that I had seen him—at the broker's in the City, before we sailed for America.

"What Christian name?" I asked.

Charles reflected a moment. "The same as the one in the note we got with the dust-coat," he answered, at last. "The man is Paul Finglemore!"

"You will arrest him?" I asked.

"Can I on this evidence?"

"We might bring it home to him."

Charles mused for a moment. "We shall have nothing against him," he said, slowly, "except in so far as we can swear to his identity. And that may be difficult."

Just at that moment the footman brought in tea. Charles wondered apparently whether the man, who had been with us at Seldon when Colonel Clay was David Granton, would recollect the face or recognise having seen it. "Look here, Dudley," he said, holding up the water-colour, "do you know that person?"

Dudley gazed at it a moment. "Certainly, sir," he answered, briskly.

"Who is it?" Amelia asked. We expected him to answer, "Count von Lebenstein," or "Mr. Granton," or "Medhurst."

Instead of that, he replied, to our utter surprise, "That's Césarine's young man, my lady."

"Césarine's young man?" Amelia repeated, taken aback. "Oh, Dudley, surely, you must be mistaken!"

"No, my lady," Dudley replied, in a tone of conviction. "He comes to see her quite reg'lar; he come to see her, off and on, from time to time, ever since I've been in Sir Charles's service."

"When will he be coming again?" Charles asked, breathless.

"He's downstairs now, sir," Dudley answered, unaware of the bombshell he was flinging into the midst of a respectable family.

Charles rose, excitedly, and put his back against the door. "Secure that man," he said to me, sharply, pointing with his finger.

"What man?" I asked, amazed. "Colonel Clay? The young man who's downstairs now with Césarine?"

"No," Charles answered, with decision; "Dudley!"

I laid my hand on the footman's shoulder, not understanding what Charles meant. Dudley, terrified, drew back, and would have rushed from the room; but Charles, with his back against the door, prevented him.

"I—I've done nothing to be arrested, Sir Charles," Dudley cried, in abject terror, looking appealingly at Amelia. "It—it wasn't me as cheated you." And he certainly didn't look it.

"I daresay not," Charles answered. "But you don't leave this room till Colonel Clay is in custody. No, Amelia, no; it's no use your speaking to me. What he says is true. I see it all now. This villain and

Césarine have long been accomplices! The man's downstairs with her now. If we let Dudley quit the room, he'll go down and tell them; and before we know where we are, that slippery eel will have wriggled through our fingers, as he always wriggles. He is Paul Finglemore; he is Césarine's young man; and unless we arrest him now, without one minute's delay, he'll be off to Madrid or St. Petersburg by this evening!"

"You are right," I answered. "It is now or never!"

"Dudley," Charles said, in his most authoritative voice, "stop here till we tell you you may leave the room. Amelia and Dolly, don't let that man stir from where he's standing. If he does, restrain him. Seymour and Dr. Beddersley, come down with me to the servants' hall. I suppose that's where I shall find this person, Dudley?"

"N—no, sir," Dudley stammered out, half beside himself with fright. "He's in the housekeeper's room, sir!"

We went down to the lower regions in a solid phalanx of three. On the way we met Simpson, Sir Charles's valet, and also the butler, whom we pressed into the service. At the door of the housekeeper's room we paused, strategically. Voices came to us from within; one was Césarine's, the other had a ring that reminded me at once of Medhurst and the seer, of Elihu Quackenboss and Algernon Coleyard. They were talking together in French; and now and then we caught the sound of stifled laughter.

We opened the door. "*Est-il drôle, donc, ce vieux?*" the man's voice was saying.

"*C'est à mourir de rire,*" Césarine's voice responded.

We burst in upon them, red-handed.

Césarine's young man rose, with his hat in his hand, in a respectful attitude. It reminded me at once of Medhurst, as he stood talking his first day at Marvillier's to Charles; and also of the little curate, in his humblest moments as the disinterested pastor.

With a sign to me to do likewise, Charles laid his hand firmly on the young man's shoulder. I looked in the fellow's face; there could be no denying it; Césarine's young man was Paul Finglemore, our broker's brother.

"Paul Finglemore," Charles said, severely "otherwise Cuthbert Clay, I arrest you on several charges of theft and conspiracy!"

The young man glanced around him. He was surprised and perturbed; but, even so, his inexhaustible coolness never once

deserted him. "What, five to one?" he said, counting us over. "Has law and order come down to this? Five respectable rascals to arrest one poor beggar of a *chevalier d'industrie!* Why, it's worse than New York. *There*, it was only you and me, you know, old Ten per Cent.!"

"Hold his hands, Simpson!" Charles cried, trembling lest his enemy should escape him.

Paul Finglemore drew back even while we held his shoulders. "No, not *you*, sir," he said to the man, haughtily. "Don't dare to lay your hands upon me! Send for a constable if you wish, Sir Charles Vandrift: but I decline to be taken into custody by a valet!"

"Go for a policeman," Dr. Beddersley said to Simpson, standing forward.

The prisoner eyed him up and down. "Oh, Dr. Beddersley!" he said, relieved. It was evident he knew him. "If *you've* tracked me strictly in accordance with Bertillon's methods, I don't mind so much. I will not yield to fools; I yield to science. I didn't think this diamond king had sense enough to apply to you. He's the most gullible old ass I ever met in my life. But if it's *you* who have tracked me down, I can only submit to it."

Charles held to him with a fierce grip. "Mind he doesn't break away, Sey," he cried. "He's playing his old game! Distrust the man's patter!"

"Take care," the prisoner put in. "Remember Dr. Polperro! On what charge do you arrest me?"

Charles was bubbling with indignation. "You cheated me at Nice," he said; "at Meran; at New York; at Paris!"

Paul Finglemore shook his head. "Won't do," he answered, calmly. "Be sure of your

ground. Outside the jurisdiction! You can only do that on an extradition warrant."

"Well, then, at Seldon, in London, in this house, and elsewhere," Charles cried out, excitedly. "Hold hard to him, Sey; by law or without it, blessed if he isn't going even now to wriggle away from us!"

At that moment, Simpson returned with a convenient policeman, whom he had happened to find loitering about near the area steps, and whom I half suspected from his furtive smile of being a particular acquaintance of the household.

Charles gave the man in charge formally. Paul Finglemore insisted that he should specify the nature of the particular accusation.

To my great chagrin, Charles selected from his rogueries, as best within the jurisdiction of the English courts, the matter of the payment for the Castle of Lebenstein—made in London, and through a London banker. "I have a warrant on that ground," he said. I trembled as he spoke. I felt at once that the episode of the commission, the exposure of which I dreaded so much, must now become public.

The policeman took the man in charge. Charles still held to him, grimly. As they were leaving the room, the prisoner turned to Césarine,

and muttered something rapidly under his breath, in German. "Of which tongue," he said, turning to us, blandly, "in spite of my kind present of a dictionary and grammar, you still doubtless remain in your pristine ignorance!"

Césarine flung herself upon him with wild devotion. "Oh, Paul, darling," she cried, in English, "I will not, I will not! I will never save myself at *your* expense. If they send you to prison—Paul, Paul, I will go with you!"



"A CONVENIENT POLICEMAN."

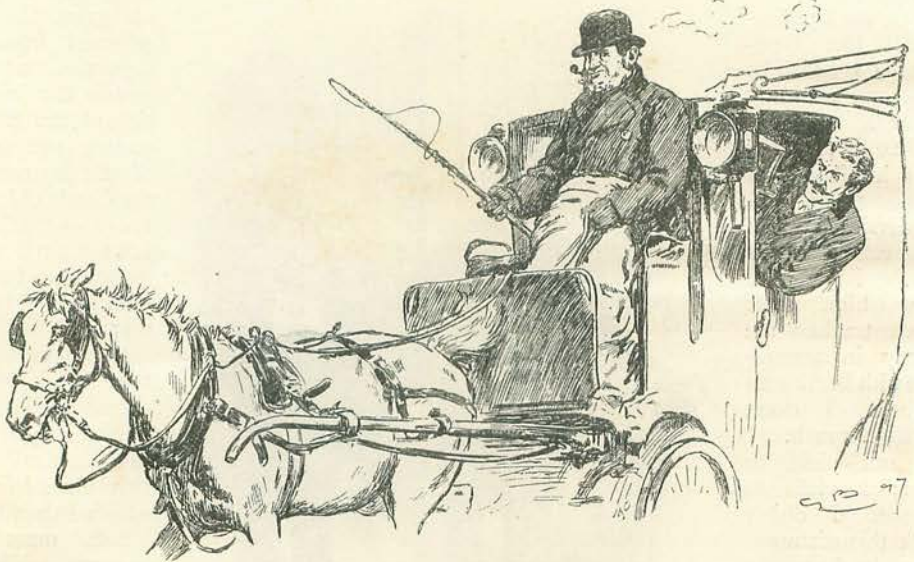
I remembered as she spoke what Mr. Algernon Coleyard had said to us at the Senator's. "Even the worst of rogues have always some good in them. I notice they often succeed to the end in retaining the affection and fidelity of women."

But the man, his hands still free, unwound her clasping arms with gentle fingers. "My child," he answered, in a soft tone, "I am sorry to say the law of England will not permit you to go with me. If it did" (his voice was as the voice of the poet we had met), "'stone walls would not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.'" And bending forward, he kissed her forehead tenderly.

four-wheeler ourselves, in which my brother-in-law, Dr. Beddersley, and myself took our seats. "Follow the hansom!" Charles cried out. "Don't let him out of your sight. After him, close, to Bow Street!"

I looked back, and saw Césarine, half fainting, on the front door steps, while Dolly, bathed in tears, stood supporting the lady's-maid, and trying to comfort her. It was clear she had not anticipated this end to the adventure.

"Goodness gracious!" Charles screamed out, in a fresh fever of alarm, as we turned the first corner; "where's that hansom gone to? How do I know the fellow was a



"WHERE'S THAT HANSOM GONE?"

We led him out to the door. The policeman, in obedience to Charles's orders, held him tight with his hand, but steadily refused, as the prisoner was not violent, to handcuff him. We hailed a passing hansom. "To Bow Street!" Charles cried, unceremoniously pushing in policeman and prisoner. The driver nodded. We called a

policeman at all? We should have taken the man in here. We ought never to have let him get out of our sight. For all we can tell to the contrary, the constable himself — may only be one of Colonel Clay's confederates!"

And we drove in trepidation all the way to Bow Street.