

"Who?" says Mortimer.

Analytical Chemist again bends and whispers.

Mortimer stares at him, and unfolds the paper. Reads it, reads it twice, turns it over to look at the blank outside, reads it a third time.

"This arrives in an extraordinary opportune manner," says Mortimer then, looking with an altered face round the table: "this is the conclusion of the story of the identical man."

"Already married?" one guesses.

"Declines to marry?" another guesses.

"Codicil among the dust?" another guesses.

"Why, no," says Mortimer; "remarkable thing, you are all wrong. The story is completer and rather more exciting than I supposed. Man's drowned!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### ANOTHER MAN.

AS the disappearing skirts of the ladies ascended the veneering staircase, Mortimer, following them forth from the dining-room, turned into a library of bran-new books, in bran-new bindings liberally gilded, and requested to see the messenger who had brought the paper. He was a boy of about fifteen. Mortimer looked at the boy, and the boy looked at the bran-new pilgrims on the wall, going to Canterbury in more gold frame than procession, and more carving than country.

"Whose writing is this?"

"Mine, sir."

"Who told you to write it?"

"My father, Jesse Hexam."

"Is it he who found the body?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your father?"

The boy hesitated, looked reproachfully at the pilgrims as if they had involved him in a little difficulty, then said,

folding a plait in the right leg of his trousers, "He gets his living along-shore."

"Is it far?"

"Is which far?" asked the boy, upon his guard, and again upon the road to Canterbury.

"To your father's?"

"It's a goodish stretch, sir. I come up in a cab, and the cab's waiting to be paid. We could go back in it before you paid it, if you liked. I went first to your office, according to the direction of the papers found in the pockets, and there I see nobody but a chap of about my age who sent me on here."

There was a curious mixture in the boy, of uncompleted savagery, and uncompleted civilization. His voice was hoarse and coarse, and his face was coarse, and his stunted figure was coarse; but he was cleaner than other boys of his type; and his writing, though large and round, was good; and he glanced at the backs of the books, with an awakened curiosity that went below the binding. No one who can read, ever looks at a book, even unopened on a shelf, like one who cannot.

"Were any means taken, do you know, boy, to ascertain if it was possible to restore life?" Mortimer inquired, as he sought for his hat.

"You wouldn't ask, sir, if you knew his state. Pharaoh's multitude that were drowned in the Red Sea, ain't more beyond restoring to life. If Lazarus was only half as far gone, that was the greatest of all the miracles."

"Halloa!" cried Mortimer, turning round with his hat upon his head, "you seem to be at home in the Red Sea, my young friend?"

"Read of it with teacher at the school," said the boy.

"And Lazarus?"

"Yes, and him too. But don't you tell my father! We should have no peace in our place, if that got touched upon. It's my sister's contriving."

"You seem to have a good sister."

"She ain't half bad," said the boy; "but if she knows her letters it's the most she does—and them I learned her."

The gloomy Eugene, with his hands in his pockets, had strolled in and assisted at the latter part of the dialogue;

when the boy spoke these words slightly of his sister, he took him roughly enough by the chin, and turned up his face to look at it.

"Well, I'm sure, sir!" said the boy, resisting; "I hope you'll know me again."

Eugene vouchsafed no answer: but made the proposal to Mortimer, "I'll go with you, if you like?" So, they all three went away together in the vehicle that had brought the boy; the two friends (once boys together at a public school) inside, smoking cigars; the messenger on the box beside the driver.

"Let me see," said Mortimer, as they went along; "I have been, Eugene, upon the honourable roll of solicitors of the High Court of Chancery, and attorneys at Common Law, five years; and—except gratuitously taking instructions, on an average once a fortnight, for the will of Lady Tippins who has nothing to leave—I have had no scrap of business but this romantic business."

"And I," said Eugene, "have been 'called' seven years, and have had no business at all, and never shall have any. And if I had, I shouldn't know how to do it."

"I am far from being clear as to the last particular," returned Mortimer, with great composure, "that I have much advantage over you."

"I hate," said Eugene, putting his legs up on the opposite seat, "I hate my profession."

"Shall I incommode you, if I put mine up too?" returned Mortimer. "Thank you. I hate mine."

"It was forced upon me," said the gloomy Eugene, "because it was understood that we wanted a barrister in the family. We have got a precious one."

"It was forced upon me," said Mortimer, "because it was understood that we wanted a solicitor in the family. And we have got a precious one."

"There are four of us, with our names painted on a doorpost in right of one black hole called a set of chambers," said Eugene; "and each of us has the fourth of a clerk—Cassim Baba, in the robber's cave—and Cassim is the only respectable member of the party."

"I am one by myself, one," said Mortimer, "high up an awful staircase commanding a burial-ground, and I have a whole clerk to myself, and he has nothing to do but look at

the burial-ground, and what he will turn out when arrived at maturity, I cannot conceive. Whether, in that shabby rook's nest, he is always plotting wisdom, or plotting murder; whether he will grow up, after so much solitary brooding, to enlighten his fellow-creatures, or to poison them; is the only speck of interest that presents itself to my professional view. Will you give me a light? Thank you."

"Then idiots talk," said Eugene, leaning back, folding his arms, smoking with his eyes shut, and speaking slightly through his nose, "of Energy. If there is a word in the dictionary under any letter from A to Z that I abominate, it is energy. It is such a conventional superstition, such parrot gabble! What the deuce! Am I to rush out into the street, collar the first man of a wealthy appearance that I meet, shake him, and say, 'Go to law upon the spot, you dog, and retain me, or I'll be the death of you'? Yet that would be energy."

"Precisely my view of the case, Eugene. But show me a good opportunity, show me something really worth being energetic about, and I'll show you energy."

"And so will I," said Eugene.

And it is likely enough that ten thousand other young men, within the limits of the London Post-office town delivery, made the same hopeful remark in the course of the same evening.

The wheels rolled on, and rolled down by the Monument and by the Tower, and by the Docks; down by Ratcliffe, and by Rotherhithe; down by where accumulated scum of humanity seemed to be washed from higher grounds, like so much moral sewage, and to be pausing until its own weight forced it over the bank and sunk it in the river. In and out among vessels that seemed to have got ashore, and houses that seemed to have got afloat—among bowsprits staring into windows, and windows staring into ships—the wheels rolled on, until they stopped at a dark corner, river-washed and otherwise not washed at all, where the boy alighted and opened the door.

"You must walk the rest, sir; it's not many yards." He spoke in the singular number, to the express exclusion of Eugene.

"This is a confoundedly out-of-the-way place," said Mor-

timer, slipping over the stones and refuse on the shore, as the boy turned the corner sharp.

"Here's my father's, sir; where the light is."

The low building had the look of having once been a mill. There was a rotten wart of wood upon its forehead that seemed to indicate where the sails had been, but the whole was very indistinctly seen in the obscurity of the night. The boy lifted the latch of the door, and they passed at once into a low circular room, where a man stood before a red fire, looking down into it, and a girl sat engaged in needle-work. The fire was in a rusty brazier, not fitted to the hearth; and a common lamp, shaped like a hyacinth-root, smoked and flared in the neck of a stone bottle on the table. There was a wooden bunk or berth in a corner, and in another corner a wooden stair leading above—so clumsy and steep that it was little better than a ladder. Two or three old sculls and oars stood against the wall, and against another part of the wall was a small dresser, making a spare show of the commonest articles of crockery and cooking-vessels. The roof of the room was not plastered, but was formed of the flooring of the room above. This, being very old, knotted, seamed, and beamed, gave a lowering aspect to the chamber; and roof, and walls, and floor, alike abounding in old smears of flour, red-lead (or some such stain which it had probably acquired in warehousing), and damp, alike had a look of decomposition.

"The gentleman, father."

The figure at the red fire turned, raised its ruffled head, and looked like a bird of prey.

"You're Mortimer Lightwood, Esquire; are you, sir?"

"Mortimer Lightwood is my name. What you found," said Mortimer, glancing rather shrinkingly towards the bunk; "is it here?"

"Tain't not to say here, but it's close by. I do every-thing reg'lar. I've giv' notice of the circumstarnee to the police, and the police have took possession of it. No time ain't been lost, on any hand. The police have put it into print already, and here's what the print says of it."

Taking up the bottle with the lamp in it, he held it near a paper on the wall, with the police heading, **BODY FOUND**. The two friends read the handbill as it stuck against the wall, and Gaffer read them as he held the light.

"Only papers on the unfortunate man, I see," said Lightwood, glancing from the description of what was found, to the finder.

"Only papers."

Here the girl arose with her work in her hand, and went out at the door.

"No money," pursued Mortimer; "but threepence in one of the skirt-pockets."

"Three. Penny. Pieces," said Gaffer Hexam, in as many sentences.

"The trousers pockets empty, and turned inside out."

Gaffer Hexam nodded. "But that's common. Whether it's the wash of the tide or no, I can't say. Now, here," moving the light to another similar placard, "*his* pockets was found empty, and turned inside out. And here, moving the light to another, "*her* pocket was found empty, and turned inside out. And so was this one's. And so was that one's. I can't read, nor I don't want to it, for I know 'em by their places on the wall. This one was a sailor, with two anchors and a flag and G. F. T. on his arm. Look and see if he warn't."

"Quite right."

"This one was the young woman in grey boots, and her linen marked with a cross. Look and see if she warn't."

"Quite right."

"This is him as had a nasty cut over the eye. This is them two young sisters what tied themselves together with a handkecher. This is the drunken old chap, in a pair of list slippers and a nightcap, wot had offered—it afterwards come out—to make a hole in the water for a quartern of rum stood aforehand, and kept to his word for the first and last time in his life. They pretty well papers the room, you see; but I know 'em all. I'm scholar enough!"

He waved the light over the whole, as if to typify the light of his scholarly intelligence, and then put it down on the table and stood behind it looking intently at his visitors. He had the special peculiarity of some birds of prey, that when he knitted his brow, his ruffled crest stood highest.

"You did not find all these yourself; did you?" asked Eugene.

To which the bird of prey slowly rejoined, "And what might *your* name be, now?"

"This is my friend," Mortimer Lightwood interposed; "Mr Eugene Wrayburn."

"Mr Eugene Wrayburn, is it? And what might Mr Eugene Wrayburn have asked of me?"

"I asked you, simply, if you found all these yourself?"

"I answer you, simply, most on 'em."

"Do you suppose there has been much violence and robbery, beforehand, among these cases?"

"I don't suppose at all about it," returned Gaffer. "I ain't one of the supposing sort. If you'd got your living to haul out of the river every day of your life, you mightn't be much given to supposing. Am I to show the way?"

As he opened the door, in pursuance of a nod from Lightwood, an extremely pale and disturbed face appeared in the doorway—the face of a man much agitated.

"A body missing?" asked Gaffer Hexam, stopping short; "or a body found? Which?"

"I am lost!" replied the man, in a hurried and an eager manner.

"Lost?"

"I—I—am a stranger, and don't know the way. I—I want to find the place where I can see what is described here. It is possible I may know it." He was panting, and could hardly speak; but he showed a copy of the newly-printed bill that was still wet upon the wall. Perhaps its newness, or perhaps the accuracy of his observations of its general look, guided Gaffer to a ready conclusion.

"This gentleman, Mr Lightwood, is on that business."

"Mr Lightwood?"

During a pause, Mortimer and the stranger confronted each other. Neither knew the other.

"I think, sir," said Mortimer, breaking the awkward silence with his airy self-possession, "that you did me the honour to mention my name?"

"I repeated it, after this man."

"You said you were a stranger in London?"

"An utter stranger."

"Are you seeking a Mr Harmon?"

"No."

"Then I believe I can assure you that you are on a fruitless errand and will not find what you fear to find. Will you come with us?"

A little winding through some muddy alleys that might have been deposited by the last ill-savoured tide, brought them to the wicket-gate and bright lamp of a Police Station; where they found the Night-Inspector, with a pen and ink, and ruler, posting up his books in a whitewashed office, as studiously as if it were in a monastery on the top of a mountain, and no howling fury of a drunken woman were banging herself against a cell-door in the backyard at his elbow. With the same air of a recluse much given to study, he desisted from his books to bestow a distrustful nod of recognition upon Gaffer, plainly importing, "Ah! we know all about *you*, and you'll overdo it some day;" and to inform Mr Mortimer Lightwood and friends, that he would attend them immediately. Then, he finished ruling the work he had in his hand (it might have been illuminating a missal, he was so calm), in a very neat and methodical manner, showing not the slightest consciousness of the woman who was banging herself with increased violence, and shrieking most terrifically for some other woman's liver.

"A bull's-eye," said the Night-Inspector, taking up his keys. Which a deferential satellite produced. "Now, gentlemen."

With one of his keys, he opened a cool grot at the end of the yard, and they all went in. They quickly came out again, no one speaking but Eugene: who remarked to Mortimer, in a whisper, "Not *much* worse than Lady Tippins."

So, back to the whitewashed library of the monastery—with that liver still in shrieking requisition, as it had been loudly, while they looked at the silent sight they came to see—and there through the merits of the case as summed up by the Abbot. No clue to how body came into river. Very often was no clue. Too late to know for certain, whether injuries received before or after death; one excellent surgical opinion said, before; other excellent surgical opinion said, after. Steward of ship in which gentleman came home passenger, had been round to view, and could swear to identity. Likewise could swear to clothes. And then, you see, you had the papers, too. How was it he had totally disappeared on leaving ship, till found in river? Well! Probably had been upon some little game. Probably thought it a harmless game, wasn't up to things, and it

turned out a fatal game. Inquest to-morrow, and no doubt open verdict.

"It appears to have knocked your friend over—knocked him completely off his legs," Mr Inspector remarked, when he had finished his summing up. "It has given him a bad turn to be sure!" This was said in a very low voice, and with a searching look (not the first he had cast) at the stranger.

Mr Lightwood explained that it was no friend of his.

"Indeed?" said Mr Inspector, with an attentive ear; "where did you pick him up?"

Mr Lightwood explained further.

Mr Inspector had delivered his summing up, and had added these words, with his elbows leaning on his desk and the fingers and thumb of his right hand, fitting themselves to the fingers and thumb of his left. Mr Inspector moved nothing but his eyes, as he now added, raising his voice:

"Turned you faint, sir! Seems you're not accustomed to this kind of work?"

The stranger, who was leaning against the chimneypiece with drooping head, looked round and answered, "No. It's a horrible sight!"

"You expected to identify, I am told, sir?"

"Yes."

"Have you identified?"

"No. It's a horrible sight. O! a horrible, horrible sight!"

"Who did you think it might have been?" asked Mr Inspector. "Give us a description, sir. Perhaps we can help you."

"No, no," said the stranger; "it would be quite useless. Good-night."

Mr Inspector had not moved, and had given no order; but, the satellite slipped his back against the wicket, and laid his left arm along the top of it, and with his right hand turned the bull's eye he had taken from his chief—in quite a casual manner—towards the stranger.

"You missed a friend, you know; or you missed a foe, you know; or you wouldn't have come here, you know. Well, then; ain't it reasonable to ask, who was it?" Thus, Mr Inspector.

"You must excuse my telling you. No class of man

can understand better than you, that families may not choose to publish their disagreements and misfortunes, except on the last necessity. I do not dispute that you discharge your duty in asking me the question; you will not dispute my right to withhold the answer. Good-night."

Again he turned towards the wicket, where the satellite, with his eye upon his chief, remained a dumb statue.

"At least," said Mr Inspector, "you will not object to leave me your card, sir?"

"I should not object, if I had one; but I have not." He reddened and was much confused as he gave the answer.

"At least," said Mr Inspector, with no change of voice or manner, "you will not object to write down your name and address?"

"Not at all."

Mr Inspector dipped a pen in his inkstand, and deftly laid it on a piece of paper close beside him; then resumed his former attitude. The stranger stepped up to the desk, and wrote in a rather tremulous hand—Mr Inspector taking sidelong note of every hair of his head when it was bent down for the purpose—"Mr Julius Handford, Exchequer Coffee House, Palace Yard, Westminster."

"Staying there, I presume, sir?"

"Staying there."

"Consequently from the country?"

"Eh? Yes—from the country."

"Good-night, sir."

The satellite removed his arm and opened the wicket, and Mr Julius Handford went out.

"Reserve!" said Mr Inspector. "Take care of this piece of paper, keep him in view without giving offence, ascertain that he is staying there, and find out anything you can about him."

The satellite was gone; and Mr Inspector, becoming once again the quiet Abbot of that Monastery, dipped his pen in his ink and resumed his books. The two friends who had watched him, more amused by the professional manner than suspicious of Mr Julius Handford, inquired before taking their departure too, whether he believed there was anything that really looked bad here?

The Abbot replied with reticence, couldn't say. If a murderer, anybody might have done it. Burglary or pocket-pick-

ing wanted 'prenticeship. Not so, murder. We were all of us up to that. Had seen scores of people come to identify, and never saw one person struck in that particular way. Might, however, have been Stomach and not Mind. If so, rum stomach. But to be sure there were rum everythings. Pity there was not a word of truth in that superstition about bodies bleeding when touched by the hand of the right person; you never got a sign out of bodies. You got row enough out of such as her—she was good for all night now" (referring here to the banging demands for the liver), "but you got nothing out of bodies if it was ever so."

There being nothing more to be done until the Inquest was held next day, the friends went away together, and Gaffer Hexam and his son went their separate way. But, arriving at the last corner, Gaffer bade his boy go home while he turned into a red-curtained tavern, that stood drop-sically bulging over the causeway, "for a half-a-pint."

The boy lifted the latch he had lifted before, and found his sister again seated before the fire at her work. Who raised her head upon his coming in and asking:

"Where did you go, Liz?"

"I went out in the dark."

"There was no necessity for that. It was all right enough."

"One of the gentlemen, the one who didn't speak while I was there, looked hard at me. And I was afraid he might know what my face meant. But there! Don't mind me, Charley! I was all in a tremble of another sort when you owned to father you could write a little."

"Ah! But I made believe I wrote so badly, as that it was odds if any one could read it. And when I wrote slowest and smeared out with my finger most, father was best pleased, as he stood looking over me."

The girl put aside her work, and drawing her seat close to his seat by the fire, laid her arm gently on his shoulder.

"You'll make the most of your time, Charley; won't you?"

"Won't I? Come! I like that. Don't I?"

"Yes, Charley, yes. You work hard at your learning, I know. And I work a little, Charley, and plan and contrive a little (wake out of my sleep, contriving sometimes), how

to get together a shilling now, and a shilling then, that shall make father believe you are beginning to earn a stray living along shore."

"You are father's favourite, and can make him believe anything."

"I wish I could, Charley! For if I could make him believe that learning was a good thing, and that we might lead better lives, I should be a'most content to die."

"Don't talk stuff about dying, Liz."

She placed her hands on one another on his shoulder, and laying her rich brown cheek against them as she looked down at the fire, went on thoughtfully:

"Of an evening, Charley, when you are at the school, and father's—"

"At the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters," the boy struck in, with a backward nod of his head towards the public-house.

"Yes. Then as I sit a-looking at the fire, I seem to see in the burning coal—like where that glow is now—"

"That's gas, that is," said the boy, "coming out of a bit of a forest that's been under the mud that was under the water in the days of Noah's Ark. Look here! When I take the poker—so—and give it a dig—"

"Don't disturb it, Charley, or it'll be all in a blaze. It's that dull glow near it, coming and going, that I mean. When I look at it of an evening, it comes like pictures to me, Charley."

"Show us a picture," said the boy. "Tell us where to look."

"Ah! It wants my eyes, Charley."

"Cut away, then, and tell us what your eyes make of it."

"Why, there are you and me, Charley, when you were quite a baby that never knew a mother—"

"Don't go saying I never knew a mother," interposed the boy, "for I knew a little sister that was sister and mother both."

The girl laughed delightedly, and her eyes filled with pleasant tears, as he put both his arms round her waist and so held her.

"There are you and me, Charley, when father was away at work and locked us out, for fear we should set ourselves afire or fall out of window, sitting on the door-sill, sitting on other door-steps, sitting on the bank of a river, wander-

ing about to get through the time. You are rather heavy to carry, Charley, and I am often obliged to rest. Sometimes we are sleepy and fall asleep together in a corner, sometimes we are very hungry, sometimes we are a little frightened, but what is oftenest hard upon us is the cold. You remember, Charley."

"I remember," said the boy, pressing her to him twice or thrice, "that I snuggled under a little shawl, and it was warm there."

"Sometimes it rains, and we creep under a boat or the like of that; sometimes it's dark, and we get among the gaslights, sitting watching the people as they go along the streets. At last, up comes father and takes us home. And home seems such a shelter after out of doors! And father pulls my shoes off, and dries my feet at the fire, and has me to sit by him while he smokes his pipe long after you are abed, and I notice that father's is a large hand but never a heavy one when it touches me, and that father's is a rough voice but never an angry one when it speaks to me. So, I grow up, and little by little father trusts me, and makes me his companion, and, let him be put out as he may, never once strikes me."

The listening boy gave a grunt here, as much as to say, "But he strikes *me* though!"

"Those are some of the pictures of what is past, Charley."

"Cut away again," said the boy, "and give us a fortune-telling one; a future one."

"Well! There am I, continuing with father and holding to father, because father loves me and I love father. I can't so much as read a book, because, if I had learned, father would have thought I was deserting him, and I should have lost my influence. I have not the influence I want to have, I cannot stop some dreadful things I try to stop, but I go on in the hope and trust that the time will come. In the mean while I know that I am in some things a stay to father, and that if I was not faithful to him he would—in revenge-like, or in disappointment, or both—go wild and bad."

"Give us a touch of the fortune-telling pictures about me."

"I was passing on to them, Charley," said the girl, who had not changed her attitude since she began, and who now mournfully shook her head; "the others were all leading up. There are you—"

"Where am I, Liz?"

"Still in the hollow down by the flare."

"There seems to be the deuce-and-all in the hollow down by the flare," said the boy, glancing from her eyes to the brazier, which had a grisly skeleton look on its long thin legs.

"There are you, Charley, working your way, in secret from father, at the school; and you get prizes; and you go on better and better; and you come to be a—what was it you called it when you told me about that?"

"Ha, ha! Fortune-telling not know the name!" cried the boy, seeming to be rather relieved by this default on the part of the hollow down by the flare. "Pupil-teacher."

"You come to be a pupil-teacher, and you still go on better and better, and you rise to be a master full of learning and respect. But the secret has come to father's knowledge long before, and it has divided you from father, and from me."

"No, it hasn't!"

"Yes, it has, Charley. I see, as plain as plain can be, that your way is not ours, and that even if father could be got to forgive your taking it (which he never could be), that way of yours would be darkened by our way. But I see too, Charley—"

"Still as plain as plain can be, Liz?" asked the boy playfully.

"Ah! Still. That it is a great work to have cut you away from father's life, and to have made a new and good beginning. So there am I, Charley, left alone with father, keeping him as straight as I can, watching for more influence than I have, and hoping that through some fortunate chance, or when he is ill, or when—I don't know what—I may turn him to wish to do better things."

"You said you couldn't read a book, Lizzie. Your library of books is the hollow down by the flare, I think."

"I should be very glad to be able to read real books. I feel my want of learning very much, Charley. But I should feel it much more, if I didn't know it to be a tie between me and father.—Hark! Father's tread!"

It being now past midnight, the bird of prey went straight to roost. At mid-day following he reappeared at the Six Jolly Fellowship-Porters, in the character, not new to him, of a witness before a Coroner's Jury.

Mr Mortimer Lightwood, besides sustaining the character of one of the witnesses, doubled the part with that of the eminent solicitor who watched the proceedings on behalf of the representatives of the deceased, as was duly recorded in the newspapers. Mr Inspector watched the proceedings too, and kept his watching closely to himself. Mr Julius Handford having given his right address, and being reported in solvent circumstances as to his bill, though nothing more was known of him at his hotel except that his way of life was very retired, had no summons to appear, and was merely present in the shades of Mr Inspector's mind.

The case was made interesting to the public, by Mr Mortimer Lightwood's evidence touching the circumstances under which the deceased, Mr John Harmon, had returned to England; exclusive private proprietorship in which circumstances was set up at dinner-tables for several days, by Veneering, Twemlow, Podsnap, and all the Buffers: who all related them irreconcilably with one another, and contradicted themselves. It was also made interesting by the testimony of Job Potterson, the ship's steward, and one Mr Jacob Kibble, a fellow-passenger, that the deceased Mr John Harmon did bring over, in a hand-valise with which he did disembark, the sum realized by the forced sale of his little landed property, and that the sum exceeded, in ready money, seven hundred pounds. It was further made interesting, by the remarkable experiences of Jesse Hexham in having rescued from the Thames so many dead bodies, and for whose behoof a rapturous admirer subscribing himself "A friend to Burial" (perhaps an undertaker), sent eighteen postage stamps, and five "Now Sir"s to the editor of the Times.

Upon the evidence adduced before them, the Jury found, That the body of Mr John Harmon had been discovered floating in the Thames, in an advanced state of decay, and much injured; and that the said Mr John Harmon had come by his death under highly suspicious circumstances, though by whose act or in what precise manner there was no evidence before this Jury to show. And they appended to their verdict, a recommendation to the Home Office (which Mr Inspector appeared to think highly sensible), to offer a reward for the solution of the mystery. Within eight-and-forty hours, a reward of One Hundred Pounds was proclaimed, together with a free pardon to any person or

persons not the actual perpetrator or perpetrators, and so forth in due form.

This Proclamation rendered Mr Inspector additionally studious, and caused him to stand meditating on river-stairs and causeways, and to go lurking about in boats, putting this and that together. But, according to the success with which you put this and that together, you get a woman and a fish apart, or a Mermaid in combination. And Mr Inspector could turn out nothing better than a Mermaid, which no Judge and Jury would believe in.

Thus, like the tides on which it had been borne to the knowledge of men, the Harmon Murder—as it came to be popularly called—went up and down, and ebbed and flowed, now in the town, now in the country, now among palaces, now among hovels, now among lords and ladies and gentle-folks, now among labourers and hammerers and ballast-heavers, until at last, after a long interval of slack water, it got out to sea and drifted away.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE R. WILFER FAMILY.

**R**EGINALD WILFER is a name with rather a grand sound, suggesting on first acquaintance brasses in country churches, scrolls in stained-glass windows, and generally the De Wilfers who came over with the Conqueror. For, it is a remarkable fact in genealogy that no De Any ones ever came over with Anybody else.

But, the Reginald Wilfer family were of such commonplace extraction and pursuits that their forefathers had for generations modestly subsisted on the Docks, the Excise Office, and the Custom House, and the existing R. Wilfer was a poor clerk. So poor a clerk, though having a limited salary and an unlimited family, that he had never yet attained the modest object of his ambition: which was, to wear a complete new suit of clothes, hat and boots included, at one time. His black hat was brown before he could