

"I do," affirmed Stephen.

"I saw you looking closely and rather peculiarly at Mr. Bennet and John Kelley to-day, and coupling that with what I knew of you, I suspected that you were Stephen Bennet and were ferreting out John's plot. Then I am correct?"

"Yes, Sir," again affirmed Stephen.

"Then I will at once proceed to make a disclosure to you. I will begin with myself. I was born at Easton, in this State and lived there until three years ago, when I came here. I had received considerable schooling, but being of a wild turn, and as little restraint was laid upon me at home, I gradually plunged into all kinds of rascality. I have a brother, Jack, who is older than I, much less educated, and, if anything, worse.

"One of my bosom friends there was John Kelley, an orphan, and a son of a daughter of Mr. Bennet. He is, therefore, your cousin. He often told me of his grandfather, and wanted very much to be acknowledged his heir, but the old man knew too much of him, and John found this out indirectly. Some five years ago, he went to Boston but never forgot me, and about two years later wrote to me, asking me to come here and spy on Mr. Fleming. He agreed to pay me five dollars a month and to give me a good slice of the property, if ever he got possession of it.

"I came, got a situation in the mansion, and spied to my utmost, facilitating this by some of the closets, passage ways, etc. Last March, I overheard a very important conversation between Mr. Fleming and his nephew. The old man relented of his past conduct and resolved to look up you and your brother. I immediately wrote to Sohn, who kept a constant watch on the mails. He then concocted a scheme to throw some crime on you, and, by playing a part, to work himself into the favor of the old man. As you must be familiar with the events that transpired at Meredith and vicinity last year, I need say but little on that point.

"John employed Jack, and kept himself in the background. Hearing that you and your brother were going to Meredith—for he kept a watch on you as well—he went to Moultonborough, hired out, and lived to all appearances blamelessly. Jack stole the articles which were found in your cellar and put them there. John himself warned Mr. Sykes. He had meanwhile caused an article to be inserted in a Boston newspaper taken by Mr. Bennet.

"It had the desired effect, yet had it failed John would have tried a more effective way, for I had informed him of Mr. Bennet's weak points. He came, and you know the rest. The assault upon Mr. Bennet in the woods was a part of the scheme. Jack was the one who carried Mr. Bennet to Moultonborough. The case was stronger against you than John intended that it should be. He was less particular about you than your brother, knowing that it would be all the same in Mr. Bennet's eyes.

"I had wormed myself pretty well into the good graces of Mr. Bennet, and having behaved well, was thought much of. Kelley did not like this at all. It was perhaps natural, but of course Mr. Bennet knew nothing of our previous relations. Kelly at once, though very cautiously, set to work to get me ousted. At last, Mr. Bennet was persuaded that it was unnecessary to employ me, and so I was dismissed. I thought that I would not go to a distance, and so I am staying here on a scanty allowance.

"You may think it strange that he should treat me in this way, knowing that unfair treatment of me would provoke his exposure, yet such is the case. I know that he is restive under the burden that I have been to him, and wishes that I were out of his way. As yet, he and Jack are harmonious, and they keep the other side of the fence toward me.

"During the past year, I have been awakening up to a full sense of the wickedness of my past life. They suspect