

Here, during his intervals of work, he thought much on the calamity which had befallen him, and gradually planned a course of action.

He left his employer in September, having received his pay, and then entered upon the prosecution of his scheme. He first revisited Meredith, and when he heard of Mr. Bennet and his mysterious mission there, his departure with John Kelley, and the assault upon them, new light was imparted, for it was not at first that he regarded the conduct of John Kelley as suspicious, of whom he had known but little. He at once began to follow the supposed clue. He was unable to find out where Mr. Bennet lived, but he discovered the fact that his cousin had formerly frequented Boston and its vicinity. Thither he went and Kelley's previous life received a thorough investigation from his hands. The very unfavorable character given it strengthened Stephen's suspicions of him.

He now proceeded to find out more than he had yet known concerning his father's early life. This was not so easy inasmuch as neither his father nor mother had said much to him about it. He soon bethought himself, however, that his father had once lived in Salem, and had been in the employ of an old and well-known man engaged in commercial affairs. He knew moreover, that he had been a steadfast friend and helper of his father. To consult him was accordingly the next step in his programme.

From him he learned so much as to leave no doubt in his mind that his father was the wayward son of the mysterious old man that had visited Meredith the Spring before, and had taken Daniel Johnson under his charge.

When this problem was solved, he was not slow to suspect his cousin of plotting a scheme to remove his brother and himself from his path, and inherit the whole property of his grandfather.

But, although he did not yet feel prepared to face his grandfather, alone and

unsupported as he was, he determined to visit Cherryville in an assumed character and still further investigate the matter.

A few hours after his arrival in Cherryville, he saw Mr. Bennet and John riding into the village and recognised the latter. Upon inquiry, he ascertained so much about them as to still farther strengthen his suspicions.

While he was yet standing upon the sidewalk, hesitating as to the course which would be best for him to pursue, a letter was suddenly slipped into his pocket by a person approaching him from behind, who as quickly disappeared.

Stephen retired to a secluded place to read the missive, which had no signature and ran as follows:

To Mr. Stephen Bennet:—

If you would be acquainted with a piece of villainy that directly concerns you and your brother, and if both of you would be set to rights, meet me at the Post Office this evening at six o'clock. You will recognize me by my black fur cap.

CHAPTER VI.

DECEIVED.

Mr. Bennet's assailant had borne him to the earth and had raised a club, when the newcomer appeared upon the scene of the disturbance. The struggle was then between the ruffian and John Kelley, for it was he, and the latter appeared to handle his assailant with considerable ease. After a prolonged bout, John wrenched the club from his opponent, and struck a blow with it that caused him to drop heavily to the ground. John then turned to his grandfather, exhibiting much solicitude in both his actions and words.

"I hope you are not much hurt, sir," he said, at the same time carefully assisting the old man to arise.

"No, I am not seriously hurt," replied Mr. Bennet. "He jerked me around roughly, but inflicted no injuries to speak of. I am very greatly indebted to you. He would, doubtless, have robbed me of all, and, perhaps, have done more. Who are you?"

"I am Daniel Johnson, and I work for