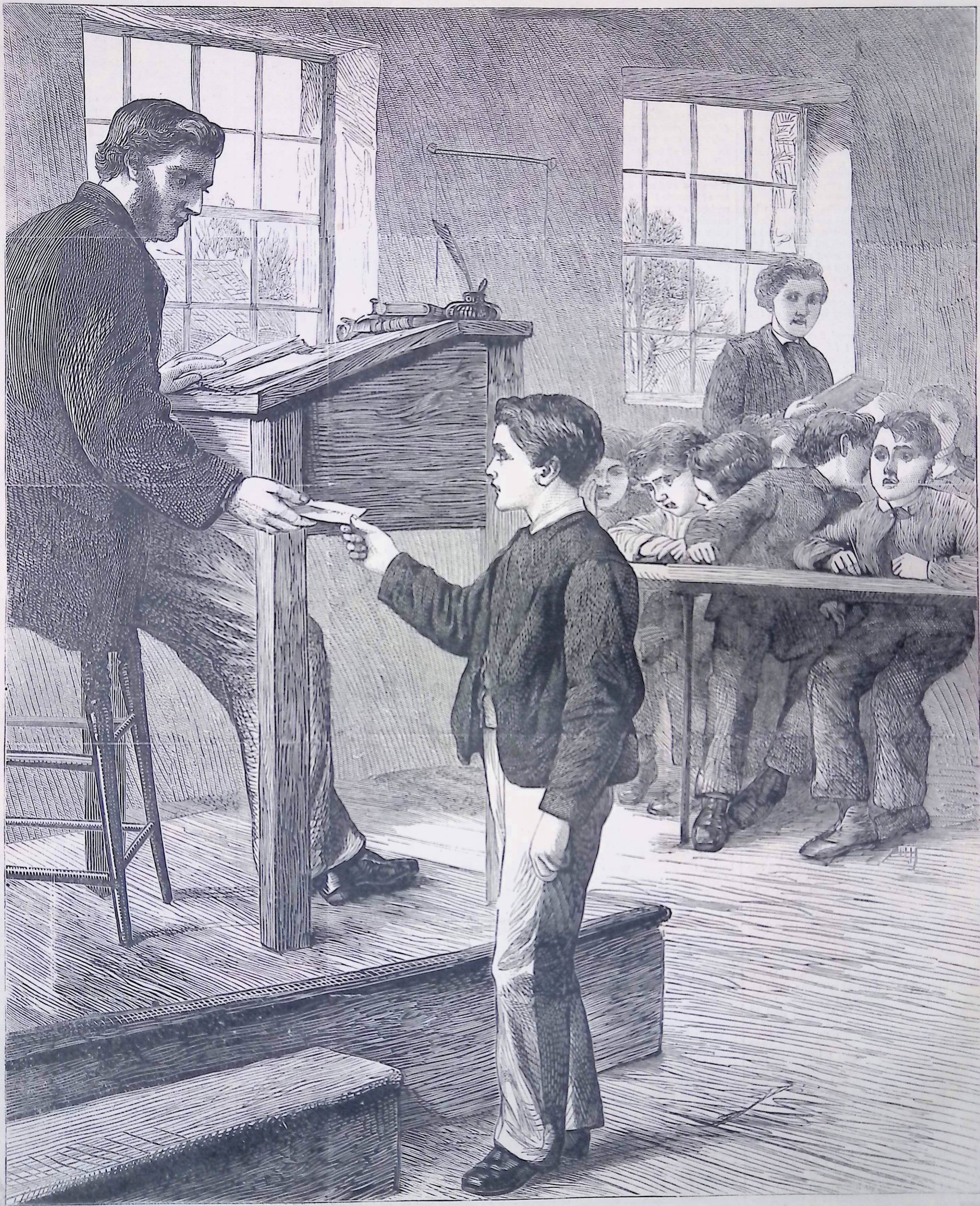




THE TELL-TALE—"He went up, with a firm step, to the teacher's stand, and handed him a note."

"Her hands trembled, and her whole appearance denoted guilty trepidation. At length, however, the lid was raised, but just as she was about to replace the parchment in the chest, a figure glided silently from a dark corner of the window-seat and confronted her. It was the fair girl, pale, resolute, and extending her hand to claim the will.

"After the first guilty start, which caused her to drop the parchment into the chest, the wicked woman hurriedly tried to close the lid. Her efforts were frustrated, however, by the girl, who leaned with all her force upon it, keeping it back, and still held out her hand as before.

"There followed a pause which seemed to me very long, but which could in reality have only lasted a minute.

"It was broken by the wicked woman, who, hastily casting a glance behind her into the gloom of the darkened chamber, then seized the girl by the arm and dragged her with all her force into the chest. It was but the work of a moment, for the woman was much the more powerful of the two, and the poor victim was too much taken by surprise to make much resistance. I saw one despairing look in her face as her murderess flashed the lantern before it with a hideous gleam of triumph.

"Then the lid was pressed down upon her, and I saw no more, only I felt an unutterable terror, and tried in vain to scream.

"This was not all the vision, however, for before I had mastered my terror the scene was superseded by another.

"This time it was twilight, and the wicked woman and her son were together. The son seemed to be talking eagerly, and grew more and more excited, while the mother stood still and erect, with a malicious smile upon her lips. Presently she moved toward the chest with a fell purpose in her eyes, unlocked it with a key which hung from her girdle, raised the lid, and disclosed the contents.

"I understood it all now: the son was asking for the girl whom he had loved, and whom on his return home he missed, and the wicked woman, enraged at hearing for the first time that he had loved her, was determined to have her revenge.

"He should see her again.

"On beholding the dread contents of the chest the man staggered back horrified; then, doubtless comprehending the case, he turned suddenly upon the murderess, and threw his arm around her, and there ensued a struggle terrible to witness.

"Her proud triumphant glance of malice was now succeeded by one of abject fear, and, as his strength began to gain the mastery, of despair.

"His iron frame heaved for a moment with the violence of his efforts, the next he had forced her down into the chest upon the mouldering body of her victim. I saw her eyes light up with the terror of death for one second, and then her screams were stifled forever beneath the massive lid.

"The horror of this scene was too much for me; I found voice to scream at last, and I suppose it was my cry which alarmed you all."

When Catherine ceased speaking there was a profound silence for a minute, which Mr. Fanshawe was the first to break as he said, with a peculiar intonation in his voice, "It is very strange, very unaccountable," re-echoing all our thoughts.

Now it happened that Mr. Fleet, our family lawyer, was among our guests that Christmas-time, and since the discovery of the chest and bones had taken a great interest in the whole affair. He now questioned and cross-questioned Catherine, and seemed quite satisfied with the result.

"This would have made a fine case," said he, "if only it had been a question of the right of succession, for any lawyer to make out; but unfortunately the events are too long past to have any bearing upon the present." (There Mr. Fleet was wrong, though we none of us knew it at the time.)

We now all launched forth into conjectures and opinions, during which Catherine lay still and weary upon the sofa. I saw this, and thought it quite time to put an end to the day's adventures by suggesting a retirement for the night, and we were soon all dispersed to dream of the mysterious vision and discovery.

I think we were none of us sorry when morning dawned without any further tragedy (by us, I mean the female part of the establishment).

When I came down to breakfast I found Mr. Fleet very active on the subject of the night before.

"A surgeon ought to be immediately sent for

It purported to be the will of Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, in which he bequeathed all his inheritance to his lawful son Francis St. Aubyn—commonly known by the name of Francis L'Estrange—and to his heirs forever. It was signed Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, and the witnesses were John Murray and Phoebe Brett, who in the old copy had each affixed their mark.

Mr. Fleet affirmed that it was a perfectly legal document, but this was not all it contained.

There was an appendix which our lawyer translated as follows:

"In order to avoid all disputes and doubts which might otherwise arise, I do hereby declare that my lawful wife was Editha, youngest daughter of Francis L'Estrange, Baronet, and that the register of our marriage may be seen in the church of St. Andrew, Haslet. By this marriage we had two children, a son Francis, and a daughter Catherine, commonly called Francis and Catherine L'Estrange. And I hereby declare that Agatha Thornhaugh was not legally married to me as she imagined, my lawful wife being alive at the time; neither do I leave to her son by her first husband, Ralph Thornhaugh, any part or share in my inheritance."

Both the will and the writing at the foot of it were dated the 14th of May, 1668.

This accumulation of mysteries caused me for a time to feel quite bewildered and unable to think, but Mr. Fleet was in his element.

"Here is a case worth entering into," said he, and he further went on to state that he had no doubt that the L'Estranges mentioned in the will were our Catherine's ancestors, the Christian names being similar rendering it more than probable. She was most likely a direct descendant of Francis L'Estrange, the heir mentioned in the will, who was no doubt also the fair-haired boy Catherine had seen in her vision.

The bones were those of his sister, the murdered Catherine L'Estrange, and of her murderess, Agatha Thornhaugh, herself immured by her own son; but the matter ought not to rest on mere surmise, and the first place to go to for corroborating evidence was Craymoor church.

The rapidity with which Mr. Fleet came to his conclusions increased my bewilderment, and I was at a loss to know what evidence he expected to gain from Craymoor church. He reminded me, however, of Catherine's statement that "the wicked woman" of her vision resembled the effigy on the monument there.

Thither, then, the lawyer repaired, accompanied by Mr. Fanshawe and George. It was thought best to keep the sequel of the story from Catherine and the others until it was explained more fully, as Mr. Fleet boldly affirmed it should be. I awaited anxiously the result of their researches, and they exceeded I think even our good investigator's hopes.

Not only had they deciphered the inscription round the old monument, but with leave from the clergyman and the assistance of the sexton they had disinterred the coffin and found it to be filled with stones.

I am aware that this was rather an illegal proceeding, but as Mr. Fleet was only acting *en amateur* and not professionally, he did not stick at trifles.

The inscription was in Latin, and stated that the tomb was erected in memory of Agatha, wife of Reginald, Viscount St. Aubyn, who was buried beneath, and who died on the 31st day of December, 1649—exactly two hundred years before the day on which Catherine had seen the vision.

I could not help thinking it shocking that the villagers had for two centuries been worshipping in the presence of a perpetual lie, but Mr. Fleet thought only of the grand corroboration of his "case." He applied to Mr. Fanshawe to take the next step, namely, to write to Catherine's aunt and only living relative, to tell her the whole story, and beg her to assist in elucidating matters by giving all the information she could respecting the L'Estrange family.

This was done, and we anxiously awaited the answer. Meantime, all my guests were clamorous to hear the contents of the will, and I had to appease them as best I could by promising that they should know all soon.

In a few days old Miss L'Estrange's answer came. She said her brother, father, and grandfather had all served in India, and that she believed her great-grandfather, who was a Francis L'Estrange, to have passed most of his life abroad, there having been a cloud over his early youth. What this was, however, she could not say. She affirmed that the L'Estranges had in old times resided in—shire; and she further stated that her father's family had consisted of herself and her brother, whose only child Catherine was.

As for Catherine, on being told that the figures she had beheld in the vision were thought

them as George unpacked them, and she presently came to a miniature of a young and beautiful girl with fair hair and blue eyes, and a wistful expression, and with it a necklace of pearls strung in a diamond pattern. On seeing these she became suddenly grave, and, handing them to me, said: "They are the same; the young girl and the pearl necklace I told you of."

If you were to visit Craymoor Grange now, you would find no old laundry. The part of the house containing it has been pulled down, and children play and chickens peck on the ground where it once stood.

The oaken chest has also long since been destroyed.

THE TELL-TALE.

"Who made that noise?" asked a teacher in one of our public schools, coming into the classroom.

A profound silence followed his question. There were thirty boys all looking at him, some three or four of whom had been guilty of a flagrant breach of order; yet every face was alike innocent in expression, and no one replied to his question.

"Boys," he asked, in a calmer tone, "who made that disturbance? Many of you know; and I depend upon the lovers of good order here to make common cause against the breach of it."

But still no one responded to the appeal.

"I know," whispered one to another; "but he's not going to make a tell-tale of me."

"And so do I," replied his companion; "but he will not get it out of me, I can tell him."

And thus the low whispers ran through the room. For more than a minute the teacher stood before them awaiting some reply, and then retired to attend to what he had been doing in the adjoining room. But no sooner was his back turned than the same noise that had disturbed him was renewed, even louder than before.

He of course immediately returned, and again stood before them.

"Let the boys who have violated the good order of the school hold up their hands," he said.

No hand was lifted.

"Now let all who are innocent hold up their hands."

Every hand was promptly raised.

For a few moments the teacher looked his scholars in the face, his own countenance expressing pain and mortification. At length he said:

"From a boy I have ever looked upon falsehood as the most debasing crime, indicating a disposition to commit any of the whole catalogue of crimes, if the individual had the courage to do so. I am, therefore, deeply pained to find that I have scholars in my class who are not above this meanest of all vices. It was bad enough to break the rules of the school, but a thousand times worse to tell a falsehood about it—a falsehood, too, that is reflected upon every innocent, high-minded boy in the room. I see here the sons of men whose standing in the community for virtue and usefulness is known and acknowledged by all. These boys, I am sorry to say, are all involved in the guilt of this violation of order, and what is worse, in the crime of a virtual denial of it; for how can I discriminate when all act alike? When I ask the guilty to hold up their hands—hand is lifted; but when I call upon the innocent to attest their innocence, all declare themselves to be innocent. I will now try you once more. Let the guilty hold up their hands."

But no hand was lifted.

"Now let the innocent lift their hands."

Every hand was again raised.

"I would not be the boy who has thus lifted his hand before the school in attestation of a falsehood for all the wealth this world could bestow," the teacher said, as he looked at his class for a moment or two, and then turned away and again left the room. Although he remained out for full ten minutes he was not again disturbed.

"You were one, James Harker," said a boy, in a low tone, looking with a half indignant expression of countenance at the boy who sat next to him.

"I don't care if I was. He couldn't find it out," was the prompt reply.

"But I don't think it right that others should be blamed for what you have done."

"You are not going to turn tell-tale, are you?" said Harker, with a sneer.

"No, not a mere tell-tale; but still I am not certain that I shall not let our teacher know that you were one of the offenders, unless you have the true spirit to do so yourself."

"Oh, tell-tale! tell-tale! tell-tale! Tom Jones is going to turn tell-tale!" said James

than a tell-tale," said James Harker, with his expressive sneer.

"Which is worse, James—he who tells what is true of another, or he who falsely accuses him?"

"I will leave you to draw all such nice distinctions," replied Harker, tossing his head contemptuously.

"It is not hard for me to draw them, James, nor, I presume, for any boy here. But it is useless for us to talk about this matter. I will tell you what I will do, and if I say so, you may be sure that I will. If you will go up to-morrow and tell our teacher that you did the wrong he complained of I will keep silent; but if you will not my mind is made up to do it. I can not and I will not rest under the imputation of having told a falsehood when I am innocent, nor do I think that I am right in suffering the whole class to rest under a false accusation while it is in my power to remove it."

"I always thought you were a mean, low creature," replied Harker; "and now I know it."

"He'll prove himself the meanest boy in the school if he does it," said another of the wrong-doers.

"He had better not tell on me," broke in a third.

"Look here, Thomas, come with me," another lad said, taking Thomas Jones by the arm, and drawing him aside, when the two walked off together.

"I wouldn't say any thing about it if I were you," continued the lad; "you will only get the ill-will of those boys, and perhaps of the whole class. You know how much an informer is despised."

"There is a great difference, John," was Thomas's reply, "as my father has often told me, between a mere informer or tell-tale, as it is called in school, and one who makes known the wrong actions of another for the good of the whole. Now if, for the mere delight of seeing others punished, I were to be constantly running to the teacher with complaints against my fellow-students, then I would be that justly-despised individual—a tell-tale. But I have no such motives in view. James Harker has not only violated the rules of the class, thus throwing it into disorder, and hindering its progress, but has by his bad conduct, and wicked denial of it, involved the whole class, you and I among the rest, in the imputation of being violators of good order, and utterers of falsehood into the bargain. Now, for one, I have been taught to love truth from my earliest recollection, and I can not and will not rest under a charge of falsehood."

"Then why not go to the teacher and declare your innocence?"

"What good would that do? Has not every boy in the class made such a declaration—the innocent with the guilty? I could not ask the teacher to believe me."

"Well, indeed, I would not do it, Thomas," urged his friend.

"You have presented no good reason yet, John, why I should not do as I have determined."

"I have said that you would gain the ill-will of the whole class."

"That is not a reason sufficient to induce me to refrain from doing a right action."

Thus the two boys conversed as they walked along, and at length parted from each other. As soon as Thomas Jones entered his own house, he sought out his father, to whom he always went in difficulties, and by whose judgment he was always guided. To him he submitted his case, and asked to be advised.

"You have made up your mind, you say," remarked his father, after he had heard all his boy had to relate, "to inform your teacher, to-morrow, that James Harker was one of the offenders?"

"That is, if you approve of my doing so."

"From the statement that you have given, Thomas, I do certainly approve of it. But you will no doubt be censured, and have your motives misinterpreted by many of your fellow-students."

"I know that, father. But you have often told me, that in every important action I should be governed by right motives, and not by the opinions of others."

"And you are conscious of having right motives in what you now propose to do?"

"I am."

"You do not feel glad at the idea of having James Harker censured for his conduct?"

"Indeed, I do not. It is that idea that causes me to hesitate more than any thing else."

"What, then, is your motive?"

"One motive is, to relieve myself from the charge of disorderly conduct, and from an imputation of falsehood; and another motive is, to relieve from similar censure all in the class who

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