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ternoon, and the trees and hedgerows by which I walked were dank and wet with the clinging vapors that rose from the sodden fields beyond. A slight rain had begun to fall, and my clothes-unprotected by umbrella or mackintosh-already felt not little damp. It would have suited my mood to go walking on, no matter in what direction; but I reflected that to get wet through might produce serious results in the way of illness, and in my then position sickness of any sort was a luxury that I we have made extensive prepara- could not possibly afford. So I turntions for the needs at house- ed and went back to my lodgings, at cleaning, and have a full stock of the same time dreading to go there Wall Papers, Mixed Paints, lest my landlady should again ask

It was a bad case: I had gone to Hilford in order to join a !heatrical Dry Colors, Varnishes, Furniture company then performing there, and first week by the failure of the man- other table, repeating my question. Hillford with the proceeds of the Polish, Gold Paint, Paint Brushes had been stranded at the end of the all the week, and the manager look- round, and, addressing me, said that self master of five hundred pounds ed obviously worried; and I think he had seen Jones that morning on a year. none of us were surprised when there his way to Manchester for two or I had many things to do and much was no "treasury" on the Saturday three days. tresses melted away somewhere and down, feeling inexpressibly disap- ford, intent on personally dischargsomehow; as for me, I stayed on, pointed. It had been my last re- ing the debt I had contracted with

extra value and large varieties and I saw no way of escape. But, lutely necessary, if I meant travell- "a bad job," she candidly remarked, to select from in 5 cent papers being stranded, I tried to make the ing to Southchester that evening. but she was delighted to receive her with borders to match, 10 cent best of things by endeavoring to And yet, what could I do? I knew money, and showered blessings and papers with 9 or 18 inch borders find employment. I wanted to pay no one; I had nothing whereon good wishes on my head as I left her and ceilings to match, are specialthe town until I had done so. But not of assistance seemed alored as I left her money could be raised; every chanthe town until I had done so. But not of assistance seemed alored as I left her money could be raised; every chanthe town until I had done so. But not of assistance seemed alored as I left her ly good value and newest designs try as I would, I had no success; me. Visions of travelling without know anything of him. The marker and now it was the Friday of the ticket, hiding myself under the seat at the "White Hart" was certain partments still busy. You will ing along the country road, with just mercies of the railway company, of the town, but simply a traveller find the newest materials in stock sixpence and some coppers in my flashed across me, and were rejected. or passer-by. I tried hard to come pocket, a blank helplessness before I sat there, miserable, helpless, a across some trace of him, and failed.

hand. Prices very low by barrel, to see Mrs. Smith in the passage, He himself laughed, too, and called locked it up, intending to keep it, in ger and thumb. "Please, sir," said she, "this 'ere only-

penny that she paid for it?"

passion for the stage. Now, they my foot over it. were the only relations I had in the | The players went on with their

Maria's letter in my hand.

stand with a new and up- the envelope which had been read- sorbed in the play of one of them; dressed to me teice. Alas! the let- nobody was looking in my direction. ter was written on Monday, and it I stooped and picked up the coin. was then Friday But I would go Within the moment I was in the poor old Uncle Robert! He had street walking quickly in the direcalways been good to me, even tion of the railway station. I breathough he had never understood me. thed hard; I was a thief, just as It might be too late but even then black a thief as plenty of those lock-I might be of use to Aunt Maria. ed up in the county jail. I half ex-Yes, I would go, and at once !

As I started to my feet, I suddenly remembered that Southchester, where charging me with my crime. But Uncle Robert and Aunt Maria lived, was just a hundred miles away and world. What was I to do? I had pawned my watch and all the clothing I could spare a week earlier ; there was literally nothing left to me on which I could raise money. Would Mrs. Smith lend me ten shillings? I put the thought aside at shillings. How could it be done?

billiard room of the "White Hart." confronted the man behind the coun I would go round to the billiard- ter room at once; he was usually there "Look here," said I, laying the about six o'clock, enjoying a game marked half-sovereign before him, before going home for the evening. "will you lend me ten shillings on Comparative strangers that we were, that ?" I felt sure he would lend me half-asovereign when I explained my posi- at it and me suspiciously.

Smith confronted me." "Goodsevening, Mrs. Smith !" I "I mean what I say," I retorted. cried, protesting to be in a desper- "That's a coin which I don't want ate hurry. "I can't stop to talk to lose, and it's the last I have. just now; I've just received a most Give me ten shillings for it, and let important letter."

me doubtfully. Mr. Howard," said she. "'Cause"- gas jet to examine it more closely. | "And now," I said, "I'm at your

stop me now : there's a good soul : I reflected. The fare to Southches- me, I'll pay your fine and costs, and my only exploit as a thief. your bill shall be discharged, I pro- ter was eight-and-fourpence; I had you shall have lunch with me and mise you," I answered, as I fled tenpence of my own. down the steps into the street. I "Ali right," I said. "And mind What do you say?" smiled grimly to myself as I walked you take care of the coin; I shall "Agreed!" said he laughing. "Cer- dishonesty of others.

away, for I felt that it was highly know it again from any other; it's problematical as to when my liabil- got a secret mark on it." ity to my landlady would be dis- He made out a ticket, and handed charged. But a ray of hope came it and the nine shillings over. He with the thought of Aunt Maria, and still stared suspiciously at me, but I ran on to the "White Hart," hop- I ran off into the street and on to ing to find young Jones, and borrow the station. Within five minutes I from him the wherewithal to take me was rattling away in the express to-

I nodded to my informant and sat liest possible day I travelled to Hill-

I turned into my lodgings with a The midshipman made a wild shot, deemed the half-sovereign; and, sort of callous despair. I expected and scored, amidst general laughter. when I got back to Southchester I with her bill extended to me. But to the marker to order a drink for case chance ever brought the midinstead of Mrs. Smith, I met her himself and his opponent. He pulled shipman and me together again. maid-of-all-work, who at sight of me out a handful of loose coins, and I was now provided for, and I gave immediately disappeared into the kit- threw a half-crown on the table. up all thought of the dramatic prochen regions to return presently with How greedily my eyes watched his fession as a career. Instead, I turna letter held gingerly between her fin- hand! I saw the gleam of gold and ed my attention to the cultivation silver, and coveted his wealth. If of roses, a hobby which had formerly

ket. His opponent was chaffing him I had my books, my rose-garden, and I took the letter from the girl's about his last stroke, and he was my pipe, and, if I spent my life hand and looked at the address. A laughing gayly all unaware of any- somewhat lazily, at least I did no sudden thrill of surprise and hope thing but his amusement. But I, harm. But some of my townsmen shot through me; the letter was watching his hand and the money it felt that I ought to devote a little from my Aunt Maria, with whom grasped, saw half-a-sovereign slip leisure to the affairs of the town, and her husband, Uncle Robert, I from his fingers, and drop to the and so they made me councillor and Lindsay and surrounding country had been at variance for some time. floor. The rug was thick; the little procured my appointment as a borwith monuments and headstones, both They-good, honest folk-had wanted coin made no noise as it fell. It ough magistrate. After that I beme to go in for commerce, in which rolled a foot or two, and then set- gan to be busy in a new way. Estimates promptly given on all Uncle Robert had made a fortune. I tled close to my chair; and before I It was, I think, just ten years after had wished to satisfy my absorbing thought what I was doing, I had put my uncle's death, that I went down

world, and they had not only brought game; it was evident that the midme up, but also educated me at their shipman knew nothing of the coin own expense; and it was a matter that he had lost. He continued to of deep surprise to them, as of great laugh and jest; his light-heartedness pain to me, that we huld not agree jarred upon me. As for my mind, ROBT. CHAMBERS as to my future. But I was bound, it was in a whirl of conflicting emobeing young and headstrong, to have tions. There, beneath my feet, lay my own way; and so there I was, the means that I wanted. With that practically penniless, with Aunt half-sovereign I could travel to Southchester, and perhaps arrive I tore open the envelope, and rap- there in time to see my uncle alive. idly read the enclosure. My Uncle But-it was not mine! It was my Robert was ill, so ill that there was duty to pick it up, and give it back next to no chance of his recovery. to its owner there and then. And As soon as he had learned that his yet-would he miss it? I thought disease was imminent, he had ex- of all the other coins that I had pressed a strong wish to see me. seen in his hand-what did a laltry

> The players were at the other end I glanced at the date, and then at of the table; their attention was abpected to feel a hand on my shoulder at every step, and a stern voice went on, knowing that all was safe, and that detection was impossible. that I had only tenpence in all the Under a gaslamp I stopped and looked at the coin. It was a half-sovereign-yes-and on the face there was a triangular mark, evidently stamped there by a chisel. rather frightened me; supposing the midshipman missed his money and

> remembered the mark upon it, might once; why, I owed the poor woman I not be traced by it? I hurried three times as much already! Then on, wanting to get out of town what was I to do? Was there no Turning down a dismal street that one to whom I could apply for help? led towards the station, the sight of The express left Hillford for South- a pawnbroker's shop gave me ancheste at seven o'clock, and it was other idea. Of course I must pay now within a few minutes of six; I the midshipman back. Aunt Maria had an hour wherein to raise ten would find me in ready money-I knew that-and I must return to Hil-I suddenly bethought myself of a ford and find the boy out, and give young gentleman with whom I had him the ten shillings that I had stostruck up a sort of random acquain- len from him. I felt that I should tance during the week of our per- like to give him his own half-soverformance at the theatre-a right, eign too. The three brass balls sugcompanionable fellow, who seemed to gested something to me. I hurried like me. We had met casually in the inside the frowsy pledge office, and

He picked up the coin and looked tion to him. So I seized my hat "Why," he said, "this 'ere is ten White Hart' while waiting for and departed. In the passage Mrs. shillings, isn't it?

me redeem it later on. Come, man, me !" he said. "I don't know what tainly agreed !" Mr. Smith sighed and looked at it's always worth ten shillings isn't you mean." it?" The fellow looked at me "I hope it contained them remit- wonderingly. He bit the coin with it down here. When I recalled the keep the marked half sovereign." tances that you was a-speaking of, his big teeth and held it up to the mark on the coin, he remembered it.

wards Southchester.

There were several people in the It was an eventful week that folbi Miard-room when I entered and lowed. I was in time to see my looked eagerly rou.od for young uncle before he died, and to find that Jones. At one table two townsmen the dear old fellow had cherished no were playing a friendly game before ill thought of me for taking my own going home for the evening; at the way. He told me, almost with his other a young midshipman, evidently last breath, that he had left me "a having a holiday ashore, was hugely little matter," and that I was to be enjoying himself, and delighting the good to Aunt Maria. But I had onlookers by the happy-go-lucky little chance, glad as I should have character of his play. Three or four been to take it, to fulfil my promise men sat about, smoking and watch- to him in this respect; for my poor ing, but I saw no sign of the man I aunt, who had been deeply attached wanted. I went up to the head to her husband, never got over his marker, and asked if Mr. Jones had death, and she cied and was buried been in. The man answered in the within the week. They had no chilnegative; he had not seen Mr. Jones dren of their own, and so I came in at all that day. He called across for the whole of their little fortune. the room to his assistant at the Thus, just seven days after I left ager. We had played to poor houses A man seated near the fire turned stolen half-sovereign, I found my-

hoping that something would turn source; my plans had failed. Al- Mrs. Smith, and restoring to the ready it was drawing near half-past midshipman the money I had robbed The truth was, I was on my beam- six; I had only half an hour in which him of. Mrs. Smith was surprised ends so far as money was concerned, !o raise the money that was abso- to see me; she had given me up as second week; and there I was, walk- of a carriage, throwing myself on the that he was not a resident or native feeling of dull despair at my heart. But I went to the pawn-shop and re-

had much attraction for my Uncle come by the afternoon post and mis- He was putting his handful of Robert. In time I married. My sus says will you please give me the money carelessly back into his poc- life was quiet, uneventful and happy.

ing to take my seat on the bench. It was the holiday season, and I was the only magistrate present. The clerk leaned over to me and whispered that there were only two or three cases to dispose of, and that only was was of any consequence. it first; and therewith the constables put into the dock a young man in naval uniform;

who looked very much ashamed of

himself. I glanced carelessly at him at first, then more closely, and suddenly I recognized him as the midshipman! My brain was all in a whirl at that, but I knew that he did not recognize me, so I composed myself and listened to the evidence. late of Cameron, has open- Would I go to him at once? He half-sovereign matter to him? Now It appeared that he was now second holiday at a neighboring town. He had come over to Southchester, had taken too much to drink, and got into a brawl with the police, who had promptly locked him up. denied nothing of this, but, on the contrary, apologized for his misbehavior, and expressed his deep regret. He was, he said, very foolish at times, and lost his head. I ordered him to pay a fine of ten shillings and the costs; at which a somewhat curious expression came over his face. I sent word round to the charge office to detain him awhile, and then I settled the other cases, | and went to the magistrate's room. The officer who took the fines was

> waiting me there. "That young man has no money on him, sir," said he. "He thinks he must have spent or lost it all last night; but he says that if you'll let him walk over to Peterborough where his friends are, he'll send the money

Bring him here," I said, "I'l speak to him myself." When he came. I shut the door and bade him take a chair.

uncomfortable. "You see rather excited last night, and-"Do you remember me?" I asked, interrupting him. "Look well

He stared at me in blank surprise. "No, sir!" he said. "Indeed don't; I never saw you before that !

Do you remember playing billiards at the 'White Hart' at Hillford, ten years ago-one December evening ?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "Of course I do. I had gone over there to see an old school friend and I dropped into the train. Were you--" "I was there," I answered. "An

I stole half a sovereign from you." He stared at me in still greater "You-stole-half a sovereign from

"All right. Mrs. Smith. Don't "Give yer nine bob on it," he said. mercy. But, if you won't prosecute I'll show you the half sovereign.

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"But there's one more condition," Then I told him all, as I have set said I, "and that is that you let me So I still have it, reposing on my study mantlepiece, a reminiscence of

-A thief's talk is always about the

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it, Naggus, I kill him of in the chapter.

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