The express from the west rushed through Acton with a scream, whirling clouds of dust around it; and Frank Halswell knocked out the ashes from his pipe and proceeded to gather from various quarters of the carriage his newspapers, his hat-box, his handbag, and, chief of all, a large portfolio carefully packed in brown paper. He looked at his watch, and said to himself: “6.30; we shall be at Paddington in five minutes; and only five minutes late, for a wonder.” But he congratulated himself and the railway company rather too soon: a few minutes later and the train began to slacken, the speed grew slower and slower, and at last came the grinding sound of the brakes and a dead stop. Halswell looked out of the window over the dreary expanse of Wormwood Scrubbs, and heard someone in the next carriage explaining the cause of the delay with pardonable pride in his technical knowledge. “You see, them there signals is against us, and if we was to go on we should jolly well go to kingdom come, we should.” Halswell looked at his watch again and drummed his heels against the floor, wondering impatiently when they would be at Paddington, when, with a sudden whirl, a down train swept by them and the western express once more moved on. Halswell rubbed his eyes; he had looked up as the down train passed, and in one of the carriages he thought he had seen his own face. It was only for a second, and he could not be sure. “It must have been a reflection,” he kept on saying, “from the glass of one window to the other. Still, I fancied I saw a black coat, and mine is light. But of course it was a reflection.”

The express rolled into the terminus with dignity - it was only ten minutes late, after all; and Frank Halswell bundled himself and his traps into a hansom, congratulating himself on the paucity of his bags and the absence of his trunks as he watched the excited mob rushing madly at a Redan of luggage. “153, the Mall, Kensington!” he shouted to the driver above the hubbub of the platform; and they were soon threading deftly along the dingy streets that looked so much dingier than usual after the blue mist upon the sea, the purple heather and the sunny fields. Frank (he was a very popular artist in those days - a rising man, indeed) had been on a sketching tour in Devon and Cornwall: he had wandered along the deep sheltered lanes from hill to hill, by the orchards already red and gold, by moorland and lowland, by the rocky coast and combes sinking down to the wondrous sea.

On the Cornish roads he had seen those many ancient crosses, with their weird interlacing carving, which sometimes stand upon a mound and mark where two ways meet; and as he put his portfolio beside him he could not help feeling a glow of pride at its contents. “I fancy I shall make a pretty good show by next spring,” he thought, Poor fellow! he was never to paint another picture; but he did not know it. Then, as the

hansom verged westward, gliding with its ringing bells past the great mansions facing the park, Halswell's thoughts went back to the hotel at Plymouth and the acquaintance he had made there. "Yes; Kerr was an amusing fellow," he thought; "glad I gave him my card. Louie is sure to get on with him. Curious thing, too, he was wonderfully like me, if he had been only clean shaven and not 'bearded like the pard,' Dare say we shall see him before long; he said he was going to pay a short visit to London. I fancy he must be an actor; I never saw such a fellow to imitate a man's voice and gestures. I wonder what made him go off in such a hurry yesterday. Hullo! here we are; hi, cabman! there's 153."

The twin doors of the hansom banged open; the garden gate shrieked and clanged, and Halswell bounded up the steps and rapped loudly at the door. The maid opened it. Even as he said, "Thank you, Jane; your mistress quite well, I suppose?" he thought he noticed a strange look, half questioning, half surprised, in her eyes; but he ran past her, up the stairs, and burst into the pretty drawing-room. His wife was lying on the sofa; but she rose with a cry as he came in.

"Frank! Back again so soon? I am so glad! I thought you said you might have to be away a week."

"My dear Louie, what do you mean? I have been away three weeks, haven't I? I rather think I left for Devonshire in the first week of August."

"Yes, of course, my dear: but then you came back late last night."

"What! I came back last night? I slept last night at Plymouth. What are you talking about?"

"Don't be silly, Frank. You know very well you rang us all up at twelve o'clock. Just like you, to come home in the middle of the night when nobody expected you. You know you said in your last letter you were not coming until to-day."

"Louise dear, you must be dreaming. I never came here last night. Here is my bill at the hotel; you see, it is dated this morning."

Mrs. Halswell stared blankly at the bill; then she got up and rang the bell. How hot it was! The close air of the London street seemed to choke her. Halswell walked a few paces across the room then suddenly stopped and shuddered.

"Jane, I want to ask you whether your master did not come here last night at twelve o'clock; and whether you did not get him a cab early this morning?"

"Yes, mum, at least -"

“At least what? You let him in yourself.”

“Yes, mum, of course I did. But, begging your pardon, sir, I thought as how your voice didn’t sound quite natural this morning when you called out to the cabman to drive to Stepney, because you had changed your mind, and didn’t want to go to Waterloo.”

“Good God! What are you thinking about? I never came here. I was in Plymouth.”

“Frank! You are joking! Look here, you left this behind you.”

She showed him a little silver cigarette case with his initials engraved on it. It was a present from his wife, he had missed it one day when he was strolling with Kerr, and had regretted it deeply, searching in the grass in vain.

Halswell held the toy in his hand. He thought he was indeed in a dream, and through the open window came the shrieks of the newsboys, “Extry speshal! extry speshal!” The light had faded; it was getting dark. But suddenly it all flashed upon him. He remembered Kerr and the face he had caught sight of in the passing train; he remembered the strange likeness; he knew who had found the cigarette case; he knew well who it was that had come to his house.

The maid was a good girl; she had stolen away. No one knows what manner of conversation Frank and his wife had together in the darkness; but that night he went away, as it was said, to America. Mrs. Halswell was dead before the next summer.