

~~Fred.: Upon my word, this is most curious—most absurdly whimsical. Five and a quarter! No one would think it to look at me!~~

~~Ruth: You are glad now, I'll be bound, that you spared us. You would never have forgiven yourself when you discovered that you had killed two of your comrades.~~

~~Fred.: My comrades?~~

King: (*rises*) I'm afraid you don't appreciate the delicacy of your position. You were apprenticed to us—

Fred.: Until I reached my twenty-first year.

King: No, until you reached your twenty-first birthday (*producing document*), and, going by birthdays, you are as yet only five and a quarter.

Fred.: You don't mean to say you are going to hold me to that?

King: No, we merely remind you of the fact, and leave the rest to your sense of duty.

~~Ruth: (*rises*) Your sense of duty!~~

~~Fred.: (*witely*) Don't put it on that footing! As I was merciful to you just now, be merciful to me! I implore you not to insist on the letter of your bond just as the cup of happiness is at my lips!~~

~~Ruth: We insist on nothing, we content ourselves with pointing out to you your duty.~~

~~King: Your duty!~~

~~Fred.: (*after a pause*) Well, you have appealed to my sense of duty, and my duty is only too clear. I abhor your infamous calling, I shudder at the thought that I have ever been mixed up with it; but duty is before all—at any price I will do my duty.~~

~~King: Bravely spoken! Come, you are one of us once more.~~

~~Fred.: Lead on, I follow! (*Suddenly*) Oh, horror!~~

~~King: } What is the matter?~~

~~Ruth: }~~

~~Fred.: Ought I to tell you? No, no, I cannot do it; and yet, as one of your band—~~

~~King: Speak out, I charge you by that sense of conscientiousness to which we have never yet appealed in vain.~~

~~Fred.: General Stanley, the father of my Mabel—~~

~~King: } Yes, yes!~~

~~Ruth: }~~

~~Fred.: He escaped from you on the plea that he was an orphan?~~

~~King: He did.~~

~~Fred.: It breaks my heart to betray the honoured father of the girl I adore, but as your apprentice I have no alternative. It is my duty to tell you that General Stanley is no orphan.~~

~~King: } What!~~

~~Ruth: }~~

~~Fred.: More than that, he never was one!~~

King: Am I to understand that, to save his contemptible life, he dared to practise on our credulous simplicity? (*Frederic nods as he weeps.*) Our revenge shall be swift and terrible. We will go and collect our band and attack Tremorden Castle this very night.

Fred.: But—stay—

King: Not a word! He is doomed!