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William Ainsworth, William Harrison Ainsworth

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"You hear that, Luke," cried he, aloud; "you hear it, Titus; this is no robbery. Mr. Coates—'Know all men by these presents'—I call you to witness, Lady Rookwood gives me these pretty things." "I do," returned she; adding, in a whisper, "on the terms which I proposed." "Must it be done at once?" "Without an instant's delay." "Before your own eyes?" "I fear not to look on. Each moment is precious. He is off his guard now. You do it, you know, in self-defence." "And you?" "For the same cause." "Yet he came here to aid you?" "What of that?" "He would have risked his life for yours?" "I cannot pay back the obligation. He must die!" "The document?" "Will be useless then." "Will not that suffice; why aim at life?" "You trifle with me. You fear to do it." "Fear!" "About it, then; you shall have more gold." "I will about it," cried Jack, throwing the casket to Wilder, and seizing Lady Rookwood's hands. "I am no Italian bravo, madam—no assassin—no remorseless cut-throat. What are you—devil or woman—who ask me to do this? Luke Bradley, I say." "Would you betray me?" cried Lady Rookwood. "You have betrayed yourself, madam. Nay, nay, Luke, hands off. See, Lady Rookwood, how you would treat a friend. This strange fellow would blow out my brains for laying a finger upon your ladyship." "I will suffer no injury to be done to her," said Luke; "release her." "Your ladyship hears him," said Jack. "And you, Luke, shall learn the value set upon your generosity. You will not have her injured. This instant she has proposed, nay, paid for your assassination." "How?" exclaimed Luke, recoiling. "A lie, as black as hell," cried Lady Rookwood. "A truth, as clear as heaven," retained Jack. "I will speedily convince you of the fact." Then, turning to Lady Rookwood, he whispered, "Shall I give him the marriage document?" "Beware!" said Lady Rookwood. "Do I avouch the truth, then?" She was silent. "I am answered," said Luke. "Then leave her to her fate," cried Jack. "No," replied Luke; "she is still a woman, and I will not abandon her to ruffianly violence. Set her free." "You are a fool," said Jack. "Hurrah, hurrah!" vociferated Coates, who had rushed to the window. "Rescue, rescue! they are returning from the church; I see the torchlight in the avenue; we are saved!" "Hell and the devil!" cried Jack; "not an instant is to be lost. Alive, lads; bring off all the plunder you can; be handy!" "Lady Rookwood, I bid you farewell," said Luke, in a tone in which scorn and sorrow were blended. "We shall meet again." "We have not parted yet," returned she; "will you let this man pass? A thousand pounds for his life." "Upon the nail?" asked Rust. "By the living God, if any of you attempt to touch him, I will blow his brains out upon the spot, be he friend or foe," cried Jack. "Luke Bradley, we shall meet again. You shall hear from me." "Lady Rookwood," said Luke, as he departed, "I shall not forget this night." "Is all ready?" asked Palmer of his comrades. "All." "Then budge." "Stay!" cried Lady Rookwood, in a whisper to him. "What will purchase that document?" "Hem!" "A thousand pounds?" "Double it." "It shall be doubled." "I will turn it over." "Resolve me now." "You shall hear from me." "In what manner?" "I will find speedy means." "Your name is Palmer?" "Palmer is the name he goes by, your ladyship," replied Coates, "but it is the fashion with these rascals to have an alias." "Ha! ha!" said Jack, thrusting the ramrod into his pistol-barrel, "are you there, Mr. Coates? Pay your wager, sir." "What wager?" "The hundred we bet that you would take me if ever you had the chance." "Take you!—it was Dick Turpin I betted to take." "I am Dick Turpin—that's my alias!" replied Jack. "Dick Turpin! then I'll have a snap at you at all hazards," cried Coates, springing suddenly towards him. "And I at you," said Turpin, discharging his pistol right in the face of the rash attorney; "there's a quittance in full."

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