My employment is that of [illegible] stone. Many years ago, [illegible] had learned my business, [illegible] whose employ I was [illegible] erecting of a gentleman's [illegible] and I was [illegible] metal rock. The village [illegible] which the mansion was built [illegible] the shore of an estuary of the bay of Morecambe, not far from a [illegible] town whose name I need not give. As my work would keep me [illegible] home for several weeks, [illegible] ing was a most desirable [illegible] although I tried to get [illegible] tions in a private house, I failed, and was forced to lodge in the village inn, the Lord Admiral.

Among those who [illegible] it of frequenting the [illegible] ery was a man of singular habits and odd temper. His house was [illegible] a mile from the village, by the side of a lane leading to a [illegible] His house, like himself, was a [illegible] one. Originally it had been built for the storage of corn, the produce of fields at a distance from the farmstead. Somehow it had ceased to be needed for that purpose, and he had or turned it into a dwelling house, and as such it was now occupied. It was divided into three apartments on the ground floor, one of which, a very large one, was set apart and used as a kind of museum, he [illegible] being a stuffer of birds and small quadrupeds. When he had no work of this sort for other persons he worked for stock, and this large room was his warehouse.

He was a man of ill temper and loose habits, and for some time he bore a dubious character. When people were asked what he was suspected, they would not give a satisfactory reply.

"He lives," they would say, "without doing work equal to his expenditure, which looks bad."

As I got to know him, I found that he had an unenviable temper, was morose, sour, and in short [illegible]ate. He was also fond of liquor, given to betting, and, like all such, led a loose, aimless life, chiefly loitering about town at work. So I did not wonder that well meaning people did not like him.

He mostly came on his nights to the Lord Admiral. As we became acquainted, he invited me to look over his collection of birds and quadrupeds. I was pleased with what I saw. He had, indeed, a good collection, and, as well as I could judge, had done his work well. He had also a good assortment of butterflies and moths; and in a corner, close to the ceiling, had what he called a horn-fly breeding-box, which, he said, belonged to his son, a young man of his own age, also given to [illegible] amusements.

But I was taken up most with two animals which differed from the rest. One was a beautiful dog [illegible] other a lamb [illegible] the rudiments of a fifth leg, and some other abnormal characteristics which I have forgotten. The old man said he had stuffed both for their original owners, who had somehow failed to take them away. They were placed at one end of the room, one in each corner, away from the windows, and close to the wall, where, except in strong daylight, they could not be easily seen. I've chanced a little particulars with my story will be seen in the sequel.

I had been in the village about six weeks, when the neighborhood was aroused and alarmed one morning by the report of the robbery of a jeweller's shop in the market town already referred to, that had been effected during the preceding night. Many valuable property had been taken. This robbery had been effected in such a way as led to the belief that a gang of practical thieves had done it. The prevailing question was, "Do the robbers live among us, or have they come from a distance?"

This query was still going from mouth to mouth when we were startled, astounded, indeed, by a report of the second robbery of the same premises, and on the night following the breaking into and pillaging of a provision warehouse in our own village. Were I writing fiction, I would not have made the robbers pay so soon a second visit to the jeweller's, as such an act would have been deemed preposterous; but I am relating what really occurred, and so am forced to say what I have said.

The jeweller had been so taken up by efforts to find out the thieves and regain his first loss that he had not placed additional guard over what was left; besides, he was sure, he said, that thieves would not think of revisiting him for a long time. As for the provision dealer, he said to my hearing that he had no fear of his place being entered, as he believed robbers would not care to touch property so bulky and of such inferior value as his. But he had reckoned without his host; for he had lost a fine ham, a large lot of tea, a deal of spices, a few boxes of cigars, and indeed a portion of most of what he dealt in. The excitement and alarm occasioned by these robberies was great and wide-spread.

Two batches of detectives, one from Lancaster and the other from Kendal, came to our village to see what they could find out. They were not short of questions, I minded, but they took care what sort of questions they answered. It was easy to see that one of their aims was to make it appear that they believed that the robbers came from a distance, in order to put the thieves off their guard, for their own opinion was the opposite of this.

No event, however serious, can keep hold of people's minds beyond a certain time; and these robberies were beginning to give place to some other subject, when the [illegible] in the drama began to be [illegible]. It was on a Friday afternoon, about a month after the robberies. The day was wet and wild; and as my work was the out-door carving of stones which had been placed in position in the rough, I was unable to go on with it, and so had to return to my quarters. I had got my dinner, and had just called for a pint of ale with my pipe, when an elderly ill-dressed man came in, and sitting down on the bench beside me, said, in broad Lancashire accent:

"I'll sup wi' tha lad, if tha doesna care;" on which he lifted my mug to his lips, and drank freely.

I had not got over my surprise when he, wiping his mouth with his hand, gave me the history of the past day or two. The account was this. He had been a gentleman's gardener near Lancaster, over twenty years, had a capital place, but had not had sense enough to keep it, for he had gone on the loose for a fortnight, which was more than his master would put up with, so he was discharged.

"This wor day afore yesterday," he said, "and I've drank from vexation, ever sin', trampin' and drank; an' so here I am, [illegible] a day