

Purged in the Fire.

"Uncle Herbert will you tell us a Christmas story please, do?" The speaker was a little maid of six years old, but a dozen voices echoed the request.

He could see the witness come forward to bear testimony to his crime; he could hear the voice of the judge pronounce sentence on the thief. He dared not meet the consequence of his sin; and in his mad despair, fearing to face the offended man, he had resolved to rush, by suicide, into the presence of an offended God.

Whether it was because he did not thoroughly know what was coming, and so declined to commit himself, or whether he had a delicate consciousness that to reply to such a question would imply a misconception of its purpose, Jim maintained a grave silence, merely shifting his great hands alternately, the one above the other, upon the vertical handle of his pick.

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