SIOR of the CONSCIENCE MONEY Barton

(Copyrighted, 1906, by George Barton.) E entered the collector's room in the custom house with a cautious tread. His shrewd, kindly ace gave evidence of a mental struggie. He was an elderly man and collar, and ready made tie, and the in-conspicuous braided cord that served as

conspicuous braided cord that served as a watch chain, all suggested the sub-stantial merchant of the past genera-tion. He inquired for the collector first, but finding that official absent, turned to the chief inspector of customs. "Mr Barnes," he said, speaking in a half whisper. "do I understand that you are the direct representative of the secretary of the treasury at this port?" "Hardly," smiled the chief. "Although t back been honored with special miss-"Hardly," smiled the chief. "Although I have been honored with special miss-sions by that member of the cabinet."

sions by that member of the cabinet." "Your exact designation is not ma-terial." hastily remarked the visitor. "You will probably serve my purpose better than if I were to see the collector. I came on grave business, and I wish, so far as it is possible, that my person-ality shall remain in the background." Barnes nodded. "You have," said the elderly gentle-man, now speaking very slowly and

nan, now speaking very slowly and with great deliberation, "a special de-besitory in the United States treasury popularly known as 'the conscience

'Yes," assented the chief, "there is such a thing in the department at Washington."

"Now," continued the other, "if a sum of money were left here for the conscience fund it would be sent to Washington, but would be credited to this port. Do I state the case cor-rectly?"

'You do." said Barnes, politely.

The visitor, apparently satisfied, un-buttoned his sack coat with great care, nd thrusting his right hand in the in-de pocket of the garment, drew forth long, red wallet. He opened this cauand pulled out a little pile notes. Barnes noted that t notes. the one was for a thousand dollars, the discovery intensified his interst in the curious looking man before ilm. What was the meaning of it all? What was the fellow driving at. While vas revolving these questions in his d he was aroused by the voice of

his visitor as he counted out the worke of "One, two, three, four, five, six—that's six thousand dollars, I believe." The official examined the money and nodded his head in assent.

"One, two, three, four; four hundred-that makes sixty-four hundred dollars." "Yes," said Barnes, arousing himself; "that is the amount of money you have

"Now," said the elderly man with a "Now," said the elderly man with a relieved sigh, "if you will kindly give me a receipt for that money I'll not trauble you an" further." "What's it for?" came the astonished

said it was for the conscience

"I said it was for the conscience ind," snapped the stranger with a now of impatience. "So you did," agreed the chief in the me one uses in speaking to a spoiled hild. "To whose name shall I make in this receipt?" "Not to any name!" having evolutioned child. Not to any name!" hastily exclaimed

the visitor. "I-I wish it to be anony-meus. I came in person because a meus. I came in person because a check was impossible and I did not care to trust the money to the mails." "Quite so, quite so," said Barnes. "If it's agreeable I shall make out a paper saying simply that this sum of money

been received from the beaver, to redited to the conscience fund." That's entirely satisfactory," was the brisk response.

continued the chief. "if After that. we watch the Associated Press dis-atches from Washington you will see t publicly acknowledged. The secretary if the treasury makes it a point to give here to the newspapers. It serves a ouble purpose; it's a public receipt for he money and the publication from the secret is a public receipt for e money and the publication frequent-has the effect of pricking some other the money tender consciences and bringing in more money. Nothing could be more businesslike,' said the stranger, putting the receipt in his pocket and bowing very low. "I have he honor to wish you a very good day." Barnes sat at the desk and gazed afthe ter the densiting visitor in stunned si-lence, "Whew!" he presently solilo-quized, "that's the biggest haul the onscience net has made in many a ing day collector of customs came in later. and when he learned of the mysterious visit and its rich result he was as much amazed as the chief inspector. The first of the two officials was to relieve emselves of the responsibility of \$6,400. The money was promptly deosited in the sub-treasury and the receipt for the amount immediately mailed to the secretary of the treasury, with a self-explanatory letter. After that Barnes had time to dwell on the incident. Indeed, he found himunable to throw it off his mind. occurred to him that his visitor, bile outwardly calm, was really very such agitated. There was a familiarity out his face that haunted the chief He knew petoz. his own, and yet for the life of he could not place the man. As to the wharf he almost ran into the arms of Officer Clancy. "Well." said the irrepressible one, "what did the old fellow want?" "The old fellow?" he echoed unmean-



ing I hope you'll pay some attention to me, "Why, what is it you want?"

"Want? I don't want' anything. I asked you what old Wolcott wanted." "Oh!" said the chief, suddenly remembering, "That was a private matter." "H'm," sniffed the assistant, in an un-dertone, "You're getting very myster-

and said once or twice, "'Oh, that after all these years the honor of our house should be affected!" "Did he explain this?" "Only to tell me that it referred to herefore affected upon his mind. Ten minutes elapsed. He fumped up with a cry of triumph.

"Only to tell me that it referred to business. He was very affectionate; promised that he would never again press me to marry against my will, and said laughingly that if I wished I his nurse and companion." Another outburst of tears made it im-base the solution of your father's doubt."

the leather covered chairs and studied For some time he wandered about the house like a restless spirit. Presently

vigorously, but after some argument on his part, relented and consented.

tin Gates was still engaged in feverishly poring over the books of the late

'Mr. Gates, will you do me a favor?'

she asked timidly, with averted face

What is it?

quivering lips.

father was at stake.

"Certainly," replied the young man, with an uplifting of the shoulders and

a spreading out of the hands; "it is my constant wish to be of service to

I want you to write it for me." "Ah!" and Gates smiled in a depre-

es me to act as her amanuensis.

Why, I want to send a telegram and

Only because I am temporarily dis-

"How ?" queried the young man, with

the ready sympathy that always dis-tinguished him when she was con-

She despised herself for the part she

was playing, but excused it when she remembered that the memory of her

"A nasty rheumatic attack in the rm," she explained, putting out her

Important?" cried the chief, "It's

The chief called Clancy at once.

the two men started away to beard the

"Come in," called a querulous voice.

what you know of the taking

sullen tones.

of Mr. Wolcott.

that?

right arm with painful slowness and

she hastened to assure him.

"Then Miss Wolcott wish-

brary where Wolcott's body was found was the but end of a Turkish eigarette. That's all.' The pink spots disappeared from Gates' cheeks, leaving his face perfect-

spector, solemnly, "I arrest you for the murder of John Wolcott!"

The man gave a gasp of terror and put his hands before his eyes, "The proof!" he cried. "Have you the proof?"

more!" thundered 'Yes-and Barnes. "The conscience money that John Wolcott was herest enough to return to the United States govern-ment has been the means of convict-ing his murderer. Gates, you were the man who made the lying entry by which the customs swindle was made pussible. possible. You were the man who wore to the false valuations. Don't deny it. You can't. As soon as Wol-cott discovered it he made restitution, little thinking the money that was

kept from the government went, not to the firm, but into your pocket, I"-"No more: no more!" shricked the wretch in his seat, "I did it, but it was not promedidated. I swear it before

"How did you come to visit the

"How did you come to visit the house the night this—this thing hap-pened?" asked Barnes. Gates lifted up a white face and looked at his questioner pitifully. "I had become heavily involved in stock gambling," he wailed; "and was at the end of my rope. That afternoon I asked Wolcott for a small amount to tide me over. I told him I must have it before the banks opened next day. I confessed that if I did not get it I would be ruined. His unsatis-factory reply was, "See me in the factory reply was, 'See me in morning,' That night some the devil tempted me to go to his house to make a final appeal. I had to have money."

From that point the murderer picwith a tured the story of his crime with a vividness that fascinated his hearers Once or twice he arose to illustrate ome point in his narrative. During

the recital he appeared to forget his own personality in the absorbing in-tcrest of his story. It was as if he were relating an incident in the life of anr man

Gates began by telling how he had discovered the front door of Wolcott's house open. Walking in, he found himself in the darkened recessed hail-way. He called softly, but received no ply. Glancing upward, he noticed thin streak of light radiating from reply. a thin streak of light radiating from the closed curtains of the door leading to the library. Once again he called, but the only response was the echo of his voice as it came along the high ceiling stairway. For a few seconds he stood there indeterminate. then. turning sharply, walked up the heav-

ily carpeted steps. He paused at the landing for a mo-ment, then, stepping forward, parted the curtains slightly. The shadowy room was plainly but substantially furnished. A telephone occupied a niche in the far side of the apartment. A few feet away the old man sat at a small table, engrossed in writing. A student lamp with a green shade threw an uncanny reflection upon his bowed head and wizened face. Gates was about to make his presily carpeted steps,

Gates was about to make his pres-Gates was about to make his pres-ence known when his quick eye detect-ed an open safe, with a pigeon hole filled with bank notes. Even at that distance it was plain that they repre-sented a small fortune. The sight choked the words of greeting ere they reached the intruder's lips. He stood silent, and a peculiar sensation passing through his frame caused him to trem-ble violently. He tried to speak again ble violently. He tried to speak again, but his heavy tongue refused to do his bidding. bidding. "Put money in thy purse," quoted a demon within him. Quick on the heels of this thought came a sudden feeling of resentment against Wol-cott. Here was a man almost on the edge of the grave, hoarding up needless wealth. Bitterly he contrasted this with he one measure wealth. Bitterly he contrasted this with his own pressing necessities and

barren hopes. In those few seconds of thought he not only yielded to the temptation, but planned every detail of the theft. Out-

After that as he paced the floor with his brain in a tumult he noticed that the green shaded lamp threw a halo of the green shaded lamp threw a halo of light on the dead man's face. With shaking hands he turned the light down low and then shuddered to find himself in the dark with a corpse. With a cry of fear he turned on the light again. Presently a rumbling noise fell on his ears. He listened intently and discovered some one pounding on the front door. Quickly he thrust the money into his coat pocket and righted the overturned table. The knocking on the door became louder and more insistent. He rushed to the back vin-Insistent. He rushed to the back win-dows and found them locked. He tried to open the bolt, but in his terror failed

Tailed. "Caught like a rat in a trap," he groaned. The futility of it all seemed to dawn on his stricken mind. An impulse urged him to confess and sur-render. The resolution stilled his trou-bled brain, and he walked down the states called with a modeling smile on bled brain, and he walked down the stairs calmly with a mocking smile on his face. The dead latch had slipped and fastened the door. He opened it with a steady hand, and a woman rushed in, wildly agitated. She did not see him, and as she rushed up stairs the thought of surrender died and the murdness slimad out the front and the murderer slipped out the front door and away to his own lodgings.

As Gates finished his tragic confes-sion he was trembling like a leaf, and he fell back exhausted. Some one knocked at the door. It was opened. McQueen, the old bookkeeper of the house of Welcott & Co., entered. Ha looked around nervously. "I wanted to speak to Mr. Gates," he said, hesitatingly. "Go abead." commanded Barnes.

"Go ahead," commanded Barnes, "Don't mind us."

He looked appealingly at the junior member of the firm. Gates nodded his head for him to proceed.

head for him to proceed. "I've been trying to see you ever since -this terrible thing occurred," he said, with quivering lips and shaking limbs, "Mr, Wolcott left the office late the night before, and he gave me strict orders to call at his house at 7 o'clock the next morning. He said he wanted to send you \$1,200 before the markets opened. I went," and the old clerk shivered, "but Mr. Wolcott was dead. Ob. Mr. Austin," turning pathetically

shivered, "but Mr. Wolcott was dead. Oh, Mr. Austin," turning pathetically in the direction of Gates, "but the se-nior did think an awful lot of you." The junior never answered. His, white face gradually turned to an ashen hue and he suddenly fell on the floor all in a heap. Barnes leaned over and fell the man's pulse; his voice quiv-ored a tride as he turned to Clancy: ered a triffe as he turned to Clancy: "I thought it meant the penitentiary, but now it's a case for the coroner.

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19

Yes; old Wolcott?"

"he name durted across Barnes' mind a flash of lightning. His visitor s John Wolcott, of Wolcott & Co., the wool firm. The house was one of voldest in the city; in fact, it boast-that it was founded by the grand-ther of the present head of the firm. company consisted of Austin Gates, a clever young fellow, a protege of old Wolcott, who had been taken inartnership the year previous. Next integrity. The chief knew this he was puzzled to reconcile the station of the house with the action the senior partner in paying con money to the government. He turning this thought over in his was aroused by the voice

Well, when you get through dream-



let the implication go unanswered. His mind was so pre cupied with the peculiar incident that had little time to think of anything He carried the thought of the hing home with him and even after he id gone to bed his usual sound slumber was disturbed by visions of per-sistent strangers and elusive thousand

3118.

dollar bills. He left the house early next morning. As was his custom, he next morning. As was his custom, he stopped on his way down to read the bulletins in the windows of the news paper offices. The first one brought forth an excla

mation of amazement. It announced the sudden and mysterious death of John Wolcott of the big wool firm of Wolcott & Co. Barnes, full of wonder, carded. waited with impatience for the early editions of the afternoon papers. As they came out he greedily devoured the columns of matter they printed concerning the dead merchant and his affairs. was related that he had been restless and ill at east for days past. His young partner, Austin Gates, reluctantly ad-mitted that much. Later came rumors that the accounts of the firm were not

in the best of shape. The particulars of the case were given with great vividness. Wolcott had been found life-less on the floor of his library. A livid mark was found around the neck of the dead man-a mark that might have been made by a tightly drawn towel or a rope. All of these significant details, said the reports, led to the one regrettable conclusion-suicide. IT.

Before an hour had gone by Barnes confided to Clancy his intention of

making a private investigation into the circumstances attending the mysterious "Mr. Barnes," he said, in his jerky nanner, "I don't know that we have In less that two hours he had found a new facto in the case in the person of Rose Wolpleasant occasion

ma way.

Welcott had led such an unobtrusive life and had avoided society so persistently that only his closest acquaint ances were aware of the fact that he had a daughter. One of these was Austin Gates, the young woman weepingly confided to the chief inspector. She said that durthe chief inspector. She said that dur-ing the few months prior to his death father had repeatedly urged upo her the desirability of a marriage with his young partner. But she had ta a great aversion to Gates and could But she had taken think of him as her future husband without a shudder. This attitude an-noyed her father very much and he had

ieath of John Wolcott

not hesitated to express his displeasure, couching his protests, however, in the kindliest of terms. Wolcott was prou-of hly business, which had been buff Wolcott was proud up with so much care by so many gen-erations of his famfly, and he wished to transmit it unbroken and undivided to another generation. It had been a sore trial that he had never been sore trial that he had hever been blessed with a son and helr and, al-though he was fond of his daughter, he could not imagine the possibility of her maintaining the prestige of the house of Wolcott. Hence a year before he had taken Austin Gates into the firm and treated him as if he were his son.

The only thing needed to complete his plans was a marriage between his plans was a marr daughter and Gates. These were the things that Barnes learned, not in a few minutes, but during the course of the afternoon;

rot in connected form, but in bits o conversation and hints that had to be carefully pieced together. One thing certain, Rose Wolcott was overwhelmed She with grief at her father's death. rejected the police verdict of suicide, and begged the inspector of customs to clear her father's memory. Barnes now had the authority he needed to proceed with, but he could not help Barnes feeling that appearances were very uch against the old merchant.

"Were you at home when your father returned yesetrday?" asked Barnes. 'Yes," sobbed the girl. "Did you notice anything unusual in bis manner?" "Yes; he was very much agitated." "Did he say anything?" "He rubbed his forehead constantly

"Til do it then," she replied, with a solute pressure of the lips. Barnes told her his wish. It proved possible to prolong the conversation. Barnes left the girl to go ahead with

his investigation. The first step was to visit the library, where the body of the dead man had been found. It was in perfect order, in accordance with the habits of John Wolcott. A table had Believing that disagreeable tasks should be performed quickly, she walked directly from the customs in-spector to the little room where Ausbeen found overturned on the night of the death, but otherwise everything square inch of the room with extrem care. He noticed a half smoked of Barnes examined every firm and

garette under the library table, and quietly picked it up and placed it in his pocket. The next discovery was a red wallet-empty and apparently dis-It was the identical pocket ok which the merchant had pulled out when he paid the conscience money the custom house. A few minutes lat-er he came upon something that gave thim great joy. It was a mass of torn typewritten paper lying scattered on the library floor. It was as if some one had torn a letter into pieces and carelessly thrown the fragments away.

After that Barnes presented himself to Mr. Austin Gates. The gentleman was not glad to see him; on the contra-The gentleman ry, he greeted the customs chief with distinct chilliness of manner. Gates was a dapper little man with curly brown hair and mustache. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and everything in his attire, from his nob-by tie down to his neat fitting patent leather shoes, was strictly correct. He punctuated his sentences with nervous

little laughs that were entirely devoid of mirth. Once he pulled out his hand-kerchief to wipe his brow, and the chief inspector noticed with repugnance hat it was scented with lavender

ny use for you on this-this very un-"Perhars." said the chief persuasive-

'You need not come to the house. It "That was easy," laughed Gates, he handed her the telegram. "G me something harder next time." y, "I might be able to help you in

you.

cating way.

abled."

with

arm.

'Not at all, not at all," with a superllious-wave of the hand. In five minutes the telegraphic blank was in Barnes' hand. As he read it he hought he added languidly, "I don't uppose Mr. Wolcott owes anything t gave a whoop of joy. "Is it important?" she asked, anx-

United States government. "Not now," replied Barnes, with heavy emphasis on the last word. iously

Am I to infer that he did owe some thing?" sneered the junior member of Invaluable!

the firm. You may take any inference you like," retorted Barnes, as he walked out

f the room. Gates remained in the little rol which John Wolcott had used as a pri which John Wolcott had used as a pri-vate office, on the ground floor of his residence. He was going feverishly through some account books and was so intent on his work that he scarcely noticed the departure of the inspector. Barnes hurried to the library and rang for a large sheet of paper and a bottle of muchage. Receiving them, he sulled the scraps of paper out of his of muchage. pulled the scraps of paper on of the pocket. Laborlously and with infinite pulles he pieced the torn letter together, When he had finished he had a type-written note, without date or address signature, which read as follows:

What you propose is altogether ixotic. It is foolish and may cause uble. Above all, it is not necces-Quixotic.

sary Afterward he leaned back in one of

MOSIEITER Poorly digested food BRATE . keeps you in rundown condition. The Bitters will ald digestion, and

thus cure Indigestion, Dyspepsia, Costiveness, Billiousness, Chills, Colds, or Female Ills.



ught so," cried Barnes, his voice rising. "Why?" asked the junior partner. "Because," said the chief, deliberate-y, "the stump I picked up in the li-IV.

chief had not recovered it almost instantly.

'Well," he cried, filled with rage and o unpalatable that she protested most fear what are you doing with that telegram? "Using it in my business," was the

suave response. "It's addressed to a Miss Clark," Gates said, chokingly. "Who is she?"

To tell you the truth. I don't know whether such a person exists or not, only created her a few minutes ago." Gates was livid.

'Don't try to play the fool with me!" he exclaimed.

I'm not," cried Barnes, "You've see that telegram. Now look at this letter,' and he showed the man the anonym letter he had patched together with much patier Gates looked at it hastily.

"I suppose you're trying to make a onnection between the letter and the Well, I can't see it; one is type

written, the other is in handwriting. They're entirely dissimilar."

"Certainly, because one is natural and the other is disguised." You'll have a hard time proving

that "Possibly; but I'm not deeply interested in the handwriting. The test is in another direction."

How? In the spelling."

telegram?"

'You don't mean it?" with a weak

making a grimace. "I don't believe could hold a pen in my right hand." "I do; how do you spell 'necessary?" "N-e-c-c-e-s-s-a-r-y," said Gates, still sneering and spelling out the word

"Certainly; certainly I'll write it for you!" exclaimed Gates, pulling out a telegraph blank. "Go ahead; I'm ready." slowly. "Precisely; now do you know you've misspelled it-and that there are also two 'c's' in this anonymous note?" She gave him a name and address and dictated:

Gates sat back in his chair like an stricken 'And that's not all." continued the

chief 'No?" mumbled the junior partner.

"No; the same mistake in spelling the same word occurs in the telegram." "And your theory is?" nervously. That the two epistles were written by the same person

Who wrote the telegram?"

You did! And you mean?"

Give

"That you put in one 'c' too many;

precisely.

junior partner in his den. 'We'll give him the third degree. Gates started back at the sudden ness with which the revelation was said Barnes, grimly, as they tapped on the door.

hurled at him. "And you believe I wrote the anony-

mous letter "I'm sure of it."

Gates looked up in angry surprise as the two men entered. Barnes did not pause to let his victim get his breath. He put his hand in his What do you want?" he asked in pocket and pulled out the red wallet, Gates was breathing heavily by this time. The chief inspector wondered in 'Mr. Gates," said Barnes persuasively, as he seated himself without an invitation. "I want you to tell me his own mind just how he could neet the man with the wallet. He He had depended upon circumstances to bring this about. So far as he could see "The taking off," cried the other with nervous jerk. "What do you mean by there was nothing about the pocket-book to indicate the identity of its pre-As he spoke, a little red flush apvious possessor. There were no marks or scratches on it, and so far as outward appearances went, it might have come direct from Wolcott's pocket. A heavy odor attracted the chief's atten tion. He paused, put the wallet to his nostrils and took a strong whiff.

The perfume-for it was perfumehad a peculiar scent. There something very familiar about it. Was racked his brain in vain. He was puz-bled. It was like seeing a well known face and being unable to re-call the name, or like hearing the famillar strains of some melody and lacking the ability to fix the com-position. Barnes was annoved at his seeming helplessness. When he was about to abandon it as hopeless the solution came surging over his mem

cry like the rush of a great wave across a placid sea. It was the perfume used by Austin Gates! IIL

"Austin Gates," said the chief in- | less form.

side the circle of the lamp the room was in semi-darkness. The safe was at Wolcott's elbow and out of his sight. He still bent over the table, and the only sound to break the deadly of the apartment was the monotonous scratching of his pen. Gates crept into the room on his tiptoes. He held his breath as he moved step by step in the direction of the safe. He was albreath as he moved step by step in the direction of the safe. He was al-most within arm's length, another move and he could reach the money and silently creep out of the house and into the night. He reached over, and the next second a large packet was olutched in his trambling grasse clutched in his trembling grasp.

At that critical moment his head came within the zone of light reflected by the green shaded lamp and threw the shadow of his profile on the wall. Simultaneously the old man, paused in his writing for a word, looked up and beheld the strange reflection. He jumped to his feet with all the nervous nergy of his quick nature, and, turning, faced the intruder.

In his haste the sheet of paper on which he had been writing fell to the floor. If the old man felt any fear he did not show it. He straightened up his bent form in an attitude of defiance. The skin about the long, thir nose seemed drawn tighter than ever, He peered at Gates with the searching look peculiar to near sighted persons Like a flash a look of horrified recogni-

tion overspread his leathery counte-nance. The thin lips pursed up into an expression of ineffable contempt. "You-you dastard!" he cried, in a

choking voice, He tried to say more, but the words would not come. He made one wild frenzied plunge at Gates, who stood there like a man in a trance. The pantherlike spring of his victim aroused the thief. Gates tried to thrust him the thief. Gates tried to thrust him aside, and, falling in this, reached out his right hand and grasped Wolcott by the throat. In that moment the thief was filled with an implacable and un-reasoning hatred. He pressed until reasoning hatred. He pressed until Wolcott's eyes looked as if they would leap from their sockets. Suddenly re-morseful, he withdrew his hand. Thus released, the merchant, staggering to one side, made a rush for the telephone.

He lifted the receiver with a palsied hand, but before he could utter a word fell on the floor unconscious.

A feeling of terror overwhelmed Gates. He dropped down on his hands and knees and raised the old man to

a sitting posture with his back propped up against the wall. Wolcott was unscious and gasping for breath. Gates tore away his collar and eravat by sheer force. He called out to him to speak, but the head of the old man, unsupported, lolled from side to side emphasizing its ghastly expression of horror and contempt. A glass of wa-etr stood on the mantle. He seized it and dashed part of it in Wolcott's face. He tried to get a few drops down the throat of the prostrate man, but clenched teeth would not open. the denly a quiver ran through the body of the merchant. The eyes, rapidly becoming film covered, opened for a second and looked straight at Gates with a gleam of inexpressible loathing. There was a dismal groan and the rich man fell back-dead.

A great tall clock in the corner of the struck the hour of seven and its first slivery peals sent a thrill of hor ror through the living man. He sa He sat there gazing on the face of his victim the leathery countenance turning rapid ly to a grayish hue, as if fascinated, An unexpected puff of wind from an open transom fluttered the curtains in the doorway. Gatse jumped up with a start. His pante stricken mind peopled the rear of the drapery with a host of accusing witnesses. Tremblingly he urried over to the curtains, and, parting them, found only darkened space. Once more the returned to the dead man. He nk down on low stool like a man stupefied with drink and gazed with vacant eyes on the motion-

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Out-

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