

§ 1. The facts of the burglary at the vicarage came to us chiefly through the medium of the vicar and his wife. It occurred in the small hours of Whit Monday. Mrs Bunting, it seems, woke up suddenly in the stillness that comes before the dawn, with the strong impression that the door of their bedroom had opened and closed. She did not arouse her husband at first, but sat up in bed listening. She then distinctly heard the pad of bare feet coming out of the dressing-room and walking along the passage towards the staircase. As soon as she felt assured of this, she aroused the Rev Mr Bunting as quietly as possible. He did not strike a light, but putting on his spectacles, his dressing-gown, and his bath slippers, he went out on the landing to listen. He heard quite distinctly a fumbling going on at his study desk downstairs, and then a violent sneeze.

§ 2. At that he returned to his bedroom, armed himself with the most obvious weapon, the poker, and descended the staircase as noiselessly as possible. Mrs Bunting came out on the landing. .

§ 3. The hour was about four, and the ultimate darkness of the night was past. There was a faint shimmer of light in the hall, but the study doorway yawned impenetrably black. Everything was still except the faint creaking of the stairs under Mr Bunting's tread, and the slight movements in the study. Then something snapped, the drawer was opened, and there was a rustle of papers. Then came a curse, and a match was struck and the study was flooded with yellow light. Through the crack of the door Mr Bunting could see the desk and the open drawer and a candle burning on the desk. But the robber he could not see. He stood there in the hall undecided what to do, and Mrs Bunting, her face white and intent, crept slowly downstairs after him. One thing kept up Mr Bunting's courage: the persuasion that this burglar was a resident in the village.

§ 4. They heard the chink of money, and realised that the robber had found the housekeeping reserve of gold. At that sound Mr Bunting was nerved to abrupt action. Gripping the poker firmly, he rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs Bunting. "Surrender!" cried Mr Bunting fiercely and then stopped, amazed. Apparently the room was perfectly empty.

Определите значение указанного слова в тексте.

small (§1)

- 1) little      2) unimportant      3) predawn