

Weyman Stanley John

Starvecrow Farm



Stanley Weyman
Starvecrow Farm

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23160819

Starvecrow Farm:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	17
CHAPTER III	32
CHAPTER IV	41
CHAPTER V	56
CHAPTER VI	67
CHAPTER VII	81
CHAPTER VIII	94
CHAPTER IX	107
CHAPTER X	118
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	120

Weyman Stanley John

Starvecrow Farm

CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE QUICKSANDS

A head appeared at either window of the postchaise. Henrietta looked forward. Her lover looked back.

The postchaise had nearly cleared the sands. Behind it the low line of Lancashire coast was fading from sight. Before it the long green hill of Cartmel had risen so high and drawn so near as to hide the Furness fells. On the left, seaward, a waste of sullen shallows and quaking sands still stretched to infinity—a thing to shudder at. But the savage head of Warton Crag, that for a full hour had guarded the travellers' right, had given place to the gentler outlines of Armside Knot. The dreaded Lancashire Channels had been passed in safety, and the mounted guide, whose task it was to lead wayfarers over these syrtes, and who enjoyed as guerdon the life-rent of a snug farm under Cark, no longer eyed the west with anxiety, but plashed in stolid silence towards his evening meal.

And all was well. But the margin of safety had not been large—the postboys' boots still dripped, and the floor of the carriage was

damp. Seaward the pale line of the tide, which would presently sweep in one foaming wave across the flat, and in an instant cover it half a foot deep, was fretting abreast the point. Ten minutes later had been too late; and the face of Henrietta's lover, whom a few hours and a Scotch minister were to make her husband, betrayed his knowledge of the fact. He looked backward and westward over the dreary flat; and fascinated, seized, possessed by the scene, he shuddered-perhaps at his own thoughts. He would fain have bidden the postboys hasten, but he was ashamed to give the order before her. Halfway across he had set down the uneasiness he could not hide to the fear of pursuit, to the fear of separation. But he could no longer do this; for it was plain to a child that neither horse nor man would cross Cartmel sands until the tide that was beginning to run had ebbed again.

And Henrietta looked forward. The dull grey line of coast, quickly passing into the invisible, on which she turned her back, stood for her past; the sun-kissed peaks and blue distances of Furness, which her fancy still mirrored, though the Cartmel shore now hid them, stood for the future. To those heights, beautified by haze and distance, her heart went out, finding in them the true image of the coming life, the true foretype of those joys, tender and mysterious, to which she was hastening. The past, which she was abandoning, she knew: a cold home in the house of an unfeeling sister-in-law and a brother who when he was not hunting was tipsy-that, and the prospect of an unlovely marriage with a man who-horror! – had had one wife already, stood for

the past. The future she did not know; but hope painted it from her brightest palette, and the girl's eyes filled, her lips quivered, her heart strained towards the sympathy and love that were henceforth to be hers-towards the happiness which she had set out to seek, and that now for certain could not escape her. As the postchaise lumbered heavily up the rough-paved groyne that led from the sands she shook from head to foot. At last her feet were set upon the land beautiful. And save for the compact which her self-respect had imposed upon her companion, she must have given way, she must have opened all her heart, thrown herself upon his breast and wept tears of tender anticipation.

She controlled herself. As it happened, they drew in their heads at the same time, and his eyes-they were handsome eyes-met hers.

"Dearest!" he said.

"We are safe now?"

"Safe from pursuit. But I am not safe."

"Not safe?"

"From your cruelty."

His voice was velvet; and he sought to take her hand.

But she withheld it.

"No, sir," she said, though her look was tender. "Remember our compact. You are quite sure that they will pursue us along the great road?"

"Yes, as far as Kendal. There they will learn that we are not before them-that we have somewhere turned aside. And they will

turn back."

"But suppose that they drive on to Carlisle-where we rejoin the north road."

"They will not," he replied confidently. He had regained the plausible air which he had lost while the terror of the sands was upon him. "And if you fear that," he continued, "there is the other plan, and I think the better one. To-morrow at noon the packet leaves Whitehaven for Scotland, The wind is fair, and by six in the afternoon we may be ashore, and an hour later you will be mine!" And again he sought to draw her into his arms.

But she repelled him.

"In either case," she said, her brow slightly puckered, "we must halt to-night at the inn of which you spoke."

"The inn on Windermere-yes. And we can decide there, sweet, whether we go by land or sea; whether we will rejoin the north road at Carlisle or cross from Whitehaven to" – he hesitated an instant-"to Dumfries."

She was romantic to the pitch of a day which valued sensibility more highly than sense, and which had begun to read the poetry of Byron without ceasing to read the *Mysteries of Udolpho*; and she was courageous to the point of folly. Even now laughter gleamed under her long lashes, and the bubblings of irresponsible youth were never very far from her lips. Still, with much folly, with vast recklessness and an infinitude of ignorance, she was yet no fool-though a hundred times a day she said foolish things. In the present circumstances respect for herself rather than distrust

of her lover taught her that she stood on slippery ways and instilled a measure of sobriety.

"At the inn," she said, "you will put me in charge of the landlady." And looking through the window, she carolled a verse of a song as irrelevant as snow in summer.

"But-" he paused.

"There is a landlady, I suppose?"

"Yes, but-"

"You will do what I say to-day," she replied firmly-and now the fine curves of her lips were pressed together, and she hummed no more-"if you wish me to obey you to-morrow."

"Dearest, you know-"

But she cut him short. "Please to say that it shall be so," she said.

He swore that he would obey her then and always. And bursting again into song as the carriage climbed the hill, she flung from her the mood that had for a moment possessed her, and was a child again. She made gay faces at him, each more tantalising than the other; gave him look for look, each more tender than the other; and with the tips of her dainty fingers blew him kisses in exchange for his. Her helmet-shaped bonnet, with its huge plume of feathers, lay in her lap. The heavy coils of her fair, almost flaxen, hair were given to view, and under the fire of his flatteries the delicacy of colouring-for pallor it could scarcely be called-which so often accompanies very light hair, and was the sole defect of her beauty, gave place to blushes that fired his blood.

But he knew something of her spirit. He knew that she had it in her to turn back even now. He knew that he might cajole, but could never browbeat her. And he restrained himself the more easily, as, in spite of the passion and eloquence-some called it vapouring-which made him a hero where thousands listened, he gave her credit for the stronger nature. He held her childishness, her frivolity, her *naïveté*, in contempt. Yet he could not shake off his fear of what she might do-when she knew.

They paid off the guide under the walls of the old priory church at Cartmel, with the children of the village crowding about the doors of the chaise; then with a fresh team they started up the valley that leads to the foot of Windermere lake. But now the November day was beginning to draw in. The fell on their right took gloomier shape; on their left a brook sopped its way through low marsh-covered fields; and here and there the leafless limbs of trees pointed to the grey. And first one and then the other, with the shrill cries of moor-birds in their ears, and the fading landscape before their eyes, fell silent. Then, had they been as other lovers, had she stood more safely, or he been single-hearted, he had taken her in his arms and held her close, and comforted her, and the dusk within had been but the frame and set-off to their love.

But as it was he feared to make overtures, and they sat each in a corner until, in sheer dread of the effect which reflection might have on her, he asked her if she feared pursuit; adding, "Depend upon it, darling, you need not; Sir Charles will not give a thought

to this road."

She drummed thoughtfully with her fingers on the pane.

"I am not afraid of my brother," she said.

"Then of whom?"

"Of Anthony," she answered, and corrected herself hurriedly-"of Captain Clyne, I mean. He will think of this road."

"But he will not have had the news before noon," Stewart answered. "It is eighteen miles from your brother's to the Old Hall. And besides, I thought that he did not love you."

"He does not," she rejoined, "but he loves himself. He loves his pride. And this will hit both-hard! I am not quite sure," she continued very slowly and thoughtfully, "that I am not a little sorry for him. He made so certain, you see. He thought all arranged. A week to-day was the day fixed, and-yes," impetuously, "I am sorry for him, though I hated him yesterday."

Stewart was silent a moment.

"I hate him to-day," he said.

"Why?"

His eyes sparkled.

"I hate all his kind," he said. "They are hard as stones, stiff as oaks, cruel as-as their own laws! A man is no man to them, unless he is of" – he paused almost imperceptibly-"our class! A law is no law to them unless they administer it! They see men die of starvation at their gates, but all is right, all is just, all is for the best, as long as they govern!"

"I don't think you know him," she said, somewhat stiffly.

"Oh, I know him!"

"But-"

"Oh, I know him!" he repeated, the faint note of protest in her voice serving to excite him. "He was at Manchester. There were a hundred thousand men out of work-starving, seeing their wives starve, seeing their children starve. And they came to Manchester and met. And he was there, and he was one of those who signed the order for the soldiers to ride them down-men, women, and children, without arms, and packed so closely that they could not flee!"

"Well," she said pertly, "you would not have us all murdered in our beds?"

He opened his mouth, and he shut it again. He knew that he had been a fool. He knew that he had gone near to betraying himself. She was nineteen, and thoughtless; she had been bred in the class he hated; she had never heard any political doctrines save those which that class, the governing class, held; and though twice or thrice he had essayed faintly to imbue her with his notions of liberty and equality and fraternity, and had pictured her with the red cap of freedom perched on her flaxen head, the only liberty in which he had been able to interest her had been her own!

By-and-by, in different conditions, she might be more amenable, should he then think it worth while to convert her. For the present his eloquence was stayed in midstream. Yet he could not be altogether silent, for he was a man to whom words were

very dear.

"Well," he said in a lower tone, "there is something in that, sweet. But I know worse of him than that. You may think it right to transport a man for seven years for poaching a hare-"

"They should not poach," she said lightly, "and they would not be transported!"

"But you will think differently of flogging a man to death!"

Her face flushed.

"I don't believe it!" she cried.

"On his ship in Plymouth Harbour they will tell you differently."

"I don't believe it!" she replied, with passion. And then, "How horrid you are!" she continued. "And it is nearly dark! Why do you talk of such things? You are jealous of him-that is what you are!"

He saw the wisdom of sliding back into their old relations, and he seized the opportunity her words offered.

"Yes," he murmured, "I am jealous of him. And why not? I am jealous of the wind that caresses your cheek, of the carpet that feels your tread, of the star that peeps in at your window! I am jealous of all who come near you, or speak to you, or look at you!"

"Are you really?" – in a tone of childish delight. "As jealous as that?"

He swore it with many phrases.

"And you will be so always?" she sighed softly, leaning

towards him. "Always-Alan?"

"To eternity!" he answered. And emboldened by her melting mood, he would have taken her hand, and perhaps more than her hand, but at that moment the lights of the inn at Newby Bridge flashed on them suddenly, the roar of the water as it rushed over the weirs surprised their ears, the postboys cracked their whips, and the carriage bounded and rattled over the steep pitch of the narrow bridge. A second or two later it came to a stand before the inn amid a crowd of helpers and stable lads, whose lanthorns dazzled the travellers' eyes.

They stayed only to change horses, then were away again. But the halt sufficed to cool his courage; and as they pounded on monotonously through the night, the darkness and the dim distances of river and lake-for they were approaching the shores of Windermere-produced their natural effect on Henrietta's feelings. She had been travelling since early morning cooped and cramped within the narrow chaise; she had spent the previous night in a fever of suspense and restlessness. Now, though slowly, the gloom, the dark outlines of the woods, and that sense of loneliness which seizes upon all who are flung for the first time among strange surroundings, began to tell upon the spirits even of nineteen. She did not admit the fact to herself-she would have died before she confessed it to another; but disillusion had begun its subtle task.

Here were all the things for which she had panted-the dear, delightful things of which she had dreamed: the whirl of the

postchaise through the night, the crack of the whips, the cries of the postboys, the lighted inns, the dripping woods, the fear of pursuit, the presence of her lover! And already they were growing flat. Already the savour was escaping from them. There were tears in her heart, tears very near her eyes.

He could have taken her hand then, and more than her hand. For suddenly she recognised, with a feeling nearer terror than her flighty nature had ever experienced before, her complete dependence on him. Henceforth love, comfort, kindness, companionship-all must come from him. She had flung from her every stay but his, every hand but his. He was become her all, her world. And could she trust him? Not only with her honour-she never dreamed of doubting that-but could she trust him afterwards? To be kind to her, to be good to her, to be generous to her? Thoughtless, inexperienced, giddy as she was, Henrietta trembled. A pitiful sob rose in her throat. It needed but little, very little, and she had cast herself in abandonment on her lover's breast and there wept out her fears and her doubts.

But he had also his anxieties, and he let the moment pass by him unmarked. He had reasons, other and more urgent than those he had given her, for taking this road and for staying the night in a place whence Whitehaven and Carlisle were equally accessible; and those reasons had seemed good enough in the day when the fear of pursuit had swayed him. They seemed less pertinent now. He began to wish that he had taken another road, pursued another course. And he was deep in a brown study, in which love had no

part, when an exclamation, at once of surprise and admiration, recalled him to the present.

They had topped a bare shoulder and come suddenly in sight of Lake Windermere. The moon had not long risen above the hills on their right, the water lay on their left; below them stretched a long pale mirror, whose borrowed light, passing over the dark woods which framed it, faintly lit and explored the stupendous fells and mountains that rose beyond. To Stewart it was no unfamiliar or noteworthy sight; and his eyes, after a passing glance of approval, turned to the road below them and marked with secret anxiety the spot where two or three lights indicated their halting-place.

But to Henrietta the sight, as unexpected as it was beautiful, appealed in a manner never to be forgotten. She held her breath, and slowly her eyes filled. Half subdued by fatigue and darkness, half awake to the dangers and possibilities of her situation, she was in the mood most fit to be moved by the tender melancholy of the scene. She was feeling a craving for something-for something to comfort her, for something to reassure her, for something on which to lean in the absence of all the common things of life: and there broke on her the mystic beauty of this moonlit lake, and it melted her. Her heart, hitherto untouched, awoke. The compact which she had made with her lover stood for naught. The tears running down her face, she turned to him, she held out her hands to him.

"Kiss me!" she murmured. "And say-say you will be good to

me! I have only you now! – only you! – only you!"

He caught her in his arms and kissed her rapturously; and the embrace was ardent enough to send the scarlet surging to her temples, to set her heart throbbing. But the chaise was in the very act of drawing up at the door of the inn; and it may be doubted if he tasted the full sweetness of the occasion. A face looked in at the carriage window, on the side farther from the lake appeared a bowing landlord, a voice inquired, "Horses on?" The postchaise stopped.

CHAPTER II

A RED WAISTCOAT

Cheerful lights shining from the open doorway and the red-curtained windows of the inn, illumined the road immediately before it; and if these and the change in all the surroundings did not at once dispel the loneliness at Henrietta's heart, at least they drove the tears from her eyes and the blushes from her cheeks. The cold moonlight, the unchanging face of nature, had sobered and frightened her; the warmth of fire and candle, the sound of voices, and the low, homely front of the house, with its two projecting gables, reassured her. The forlorn child who had flung herself into her lover's arms not forty seconds before was not to be recognised in the girl who alighted slowly and with gay self-possession, took in the scene at a glance, and won the hearts of ostler and stableboy by her ease and her fresh young beauty. She was bare-headed, and her high-dressed hair, a little disordered by the journey, gleamed in the lanthorn-light. Her eyes were like stars. The landlord of the inn-known for twenty miles round as "Long Tom Gilson" – saw at a glance that the missus's tongue would run on her. He wished that he might not be credited with his hundred-and-thirty-first conquest!

The thought, however, did not stand between him and his duty. "Sharp, Sam," he cried briskly. "Fire in Mr. Rogers's room."

Then to his guests: "Late? No, sir, not at all. This way, ma'am. All will be ready in a twinkling."

But Henrietta stood smiling.

"Thank you," she answered pleasantly, her clear young voice slightly raised. "But I wished to be placed in the landlady's charge. Is she here?"

Gilson turned toward the doorway, which his wife's portly form fitted pretty tightly.

"Here, missus," he cried, "the young lady wants you."

But Mrs. Gilson was a woman who was not wont to be hurried and before she reached the side of the carriage Stewart interposed; more roughly and more hurriedly than seemed discreet in the circumstances.

"Let us go in, and settle that afterwards," he said.

"No."

"Yes," he retorted. And he grasped the girl's arm tightly. His voice was low, but insistent. "Let us go in."

But the girl only vouchsafed him a look, half wondering, half indignant. She turned to the landlady.

"I am tired, and need no supper," she said. "Will you take me into a room, if you please, where I can rest at once, as we go on early to-morrow."

"Certainly," the landlady answered. She was a burly, red-faced, heavy-browed woman. "But you have come some way, ma'am. Will you not take supper with the gentleman?"

"No."

He interposed.

"At least let us go in!" he repeated pettishly. And there was an agitation in his tone and manner not easy to explain, except on the supposition that in some way she had thwarted him. "We do not want to spend the night on the road, I suppose?"

She did not reply. But none the less, as she followed Mrs. Gilson to the door, was she wondering what ailed him. She was unsuspicious by nature, and she would not entertain the thought that he wished her to act otherwise than she was acting. What was it then? Save for a burly man in a red waistcoat who stood in a lighted doorway farther along the front of the inn, and seemed to be watching their movements with lazy interest, there were only the people of the inn present. And the red-waistcoated man could hardly be in pursuit of them, for, for certain, he was a stranger. Then what was it?

She might have turned and asked her lover; but she was offended and she would not stoop. And before she thought better of it-or worse-she had crossed the threshold. A warmer air, an odour of spices and lemons and old rum, met her. On the left of the low-browed passage a half-open door offered a glimpse of shining glass and ruddy firelight; there was Mrs. Gilson's snugger, sometimes called the coach office. On the right a room with a long table spoke of coaching meals and a groaning board. From beyond these, from the penetralia of kitchen and pantry, came faint indications of plenty and the spit.

A chambermaid was waiting at the foot of the narrow staircase

to go before them with lights; but the landlady took the candles herself, and dismissed the woman with a single turn of the eye. A habit of obedience to Mrs. Gilson was the one habit of the inn, the one common ground on which all, from Tom Gilson to the smallest strapper in the stable, came together.

The landlady went ponderously up before her guest and opened the door of a dimity-hung chamber. It was small and simple, but of the cleanest. Hid in it were rosemary and lavender; and the leafless branches of a rose-tree whipped the diamond panes of the low, broad window. Mrs. Gilson lighted the two wax candles—"waxes" in those days formed part of every bill but the bagman's. Then she turned and looked at the girl with deliberate disapproval.

"You will take nothing, ma'am, to eat?" she said.

"No, thank you," Henrietta answered. And then, resenting the woman's look, "I may as well tell you," she continued, holding her head high, "that we have eloped, and are going to be married to-morrow. That is why I wished to be put in your charge."

The landlady, with her great face frowning, continued to look at the girl, and for a moment did not answer.

At length, "You've run away," she said, "from your friends?" Henrietta nodded loftily.

"From a distance, I take it?"

"Yes."

"Well," Mrs. Gilson rejoined, her face continuing to express growing disapproval, "there's a stock of fools near and far. And

if I did my duty, young lady, there'd be one who would likely be thankful all her life." She took the snuffers and slowly and carefully snuffed the two candles. "If I did my duty, I'd lock you up and keep you safe till your friends came for you."

"You are insolent," the girl cried, flaming up.

"That depends," Mrs. Gilson retorted, with the utmost coolness. "Fine feathers make fine birds. You may be my lady, or my lady's maid. Men are such fools-all's of the best that's red and white. But I'm not so easy."

Henrietta raised her chin a little higher.

"Be good enough to leave the room!" she said.

But the stout woman held her ground.

"Not before I've said what I have to say," she answered. "It is one thing, and one thing only, hinders me doing what I ought to do, and what if you were my girl I'd wish another to do. And that is-your friends may not want you back. And then, to be married tomorrow is like enough the best you can do for yourself! And the sooner the better!"

Henrietta's face turned scarlet, and she stamped on the floor.

"You are a wicked, insolent woman!" she said. "You do not know your place, nor mine. How dare you say such things to me? How dare you? Did you hear me bid you leave the room?"

"Hoity-toity!"

"Yes, at once!"

"Very good," Mrs. Gilson replied ponderously-"very good! But you may find worse friends than me. And maybe one of them

is downstairs now."

"You hateful woman!" the girl cried; and had a glimpse of the landlady's red, frowning face as the woman turned for a last look in the doorway. Then the door closed, and she was left alone-alone with her thoughts.

Her face burned, her neck tingled. She was very, very angry, and a little frightened. This was a scene in her elopement which anticipation had not pictured. It humiliated her-and scared her. To-morrow, no doubt, all would be well; all would be cheerfulness, tenderness, sunshine; all would be on the right basis. But in the meantime the sense of forlornness which had attacked her in the chaise returned on her as her anger cooled, and with renewed strength. Her world, the world of her whole life up to daybreak of this day, was gone forever. In its place she had only this bare room with its small-paned casement and its dimity hangings and its clean scent. Of course *he* was below, and he was the world to her, and would make up a hundredfold what she had resigned for him. But he was below, he was absent; and meantime her ear and her heart ached for a tender word, a kind voice, a look of love. At least, she thought, he might have come under her window, and whistled the air that had been the dear signal for their meetings. Or he might have stood a while and chatted with her, and shown her that he was not offended. The severest prude, even that dreadful woman who had insulted her, could not object to that!

But he did not come. Of course he was supping-what things

men were! And then, out of sheer loneliness, her eyes filled, and her thoughts of him grew tender and more humble. She dwelt on him no longer as her conquest, her admirer, the prize of her bow and spear, subject to her lightest whim and her most foolish caprice; but as her all, the one to whom she must cling and on whom she must depend. She thought of him as for a brief while she had thought of him in the chaise. And she wondered with a chill of fear if she would be left after marriage as she was left now. She had heard of such things, but in the pride of her beauty, and his subjection, she had not thought that they could happen to her. Now- But instead of dwelling on a possibility which frightened her, she vowed to be very good to him-good and tender and loyal, and a true wife. They were resolutions that a trifling temptation, an hour's neglect or a cross word, might have overcome. But they were honest, they were sincere, they were made in the soberest moment that her young life had ever known; and they marked a step in development, a point in that progress from girlhood to womanhood which so few hours might see complete.

Meanwhile Mrs. Gilson had returned to her snugery, wearing a face that, had the lemons and other comforts about her included cream, must have turned it sour. That snugery, it may be, still exists in the older part of the Low Wood Inn. In that event it should have a value. For to it Mr. Samuel Rogers, the rich London banker, would sometimes condescend from his apartments in the south gable; and with him Mr. Kirkpatrick

Sharp, a particular gentleman who sniffed a little at the rum; or Sir James Mackintosh, who, rumour had it, enjoyed some reputation in London as a writer. At times, too, Mr. Southey, Poet Laureate elsewhere, but here Squire of Greta Hall, would stop on his way to visit his neighbour at Storrs-no such shorthorns in the world as Mr. Bolton's at Storrs; and not seldom he brought with him a London gentleman, Mr. Brougham, whose vanity in opposing the Lowther interest at the late election had almost petrified Mrs. Gilson. Mr. Brougham called himself a Whig, but Mrs. Gilson held him little better than a Radical-a kind of cattle seldom seen in those days outside the dock of an assize court. Or sometimes the visitor was that queer, half-moithered Mr. Wordsworth at Rydal; or Mr. Wilson of Elleray with his great voice and his homespun jacket. He had a sort of name too; but if he did anything better than he fished, the head ostler was a Dutchman!

The visits of these great people, however-not that Mrs. Gilson blenched before them, she blenched before nobody short of Lord Lonsdale-had place in the summer. To-night the landlady's sanctum, instead of its complement of favourite guests gathered to stare at Mr. Southey's last order for "Horses on!" boasted but a single tenant. Even he sat where the landlady did not at once see him; and it was not until she had cast a log on the dogs with a violence which betrayed her feelings that he announced his presence by a cough.

"There's the sign of a good house," he said with approval.

"Never unprepared! – never unprepared! Come late, come early-coach, chaise, or gig-it is all one to a good house."

"Umph!"

"It is a pleasure to sit by" – he waved his pipe with unction-"and to see a thing done properly!"

"Ay, it's a pleasure to many to sit by," the landlady answered with withering sarcasm. "It's an easy way of making a living-especially if you are waiting for what doesn't come. Put a red waistcoat on old Sam the postboy, and he'd sit by and see as well as another!"

The man in the red waistcoat chuckled.

"I'm glad they don't take you into council at Bow Street, ma'am!" he said.

"They might do worse."

"They might do better," he rejoined. "They might take you into the force! I warrant" – with a look of respectful admiration-"if they did there's little would escape you. Now that young lady?" He indicated the upper regions with his pipe. "Postboys say she came from Lancaster. But from where before that?"

"Wherever she's from, she did not tell me!" Mrs. Gilson snapped.

"Ah!"

"And what is more, if she had, I shouldn't tell you."

"Oh, come, come, ma'am!" Mr. Bishop was mildly shocked. "Oh, come, ma'am! That is not like you. Think of the King and his royal prerogative!"

"Fiddlesticks!"

Mr. Bishop looked quite staggered.

"You don't mean it," he said-"you don't indeed. You would not have the Radicals and Jacobins ramping over the country, shooting honest men in their shops and burning and ravaging, and-and generally playing the devil?"

"I suppose you think it is you that stops them?"

"No, ma'am, no," with a modest smile. "I don't stop them. I leave that to the yeomanry-old England's bulwark and their country's pride! But when the yeomanry 've done their part, I take them, and the law passes upon them. And when they have been hung or transported and an example made, then you sleep comfortably in your beds. That is what I do. And I think I may say that next to Mr. Nadin of Manchester, who is the greatest man in our line out of London, I have done as much in that way as another."

Mrs. Gilson sniffed contemptuously.

"Well," she said, "if you have never done more than you've done since you've been here, it's a wonder the roof's on! Though what you expected to do, except keep a whole skin, passes me! There's the *Chronicle* in today, and such talks of riots at Glasgow and Paisley, and such meetings here and alarms there, it is a wonder to me" – with sarcasm-"they can do without you! To judge by what I hear, Lancashire way is just a kettle of troubles and boiling over, and bread that price everybody is wanting to take the old King's crown off his head."

"And his head off his body, ma'am!" Mr. Bishop added solemnly.

"So that it's little good you and your yeomanry seem to have done at Manchester, except get yourselves abused!"

"Ma'am, the King's crown is on his head," Mr. Bishop retorted, "and his head is on his body!"

"Well? Not that his head is much good to him, poor mad gentleman!"

"And King Louis, ma'am, years ago-what of him? The King of France, ma'am? Crown gone, head gone-all gone! And why? Because there was not a good blow struck in time, ma'am! Because, poor, foolish foreigner, he had no yeomanry and no Bow Street, ma'am! But the Government, the British Government, is wiser. They are brave men-brave noblemen, I should say," Mr. Bishop amended with respect, – "but with treason and misprision of treason stalking the land, with the lower orders, that should behave themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters, turned to ramping, roaring Jacobins seeking whom they may devour, and whose machine they may break, my lords would not sleep in their beds-no, not they, brave men as they are-if it were not for the yeomanry and the runners." He had to pause for breath.

Mrs. Gilson coughed dryly.

"Leather's a fine thing," she said, "if you believe the cobbler."

"Well," Mr. Bishop answered, nodding his head confidently, "it's so far true you'd do ill without it."

But Mrs. Gilson was equal to the situation.

"Ay, underfoot," she said. "But everything in its place. My man, he be mad upon tod-hunting; but I never knew him go to Manchester 'Change to seek one."

"No?" Mr. Bishop held his pipe at arm's length, and smiled at it mysteriously. "Yet I've seen one there," he continued, "or in such another place."

"Where?"

"Common Garden, London."

"It was in a box, then."

"It was, ma'am," Mr. Bishop replied, with smiling emphasis. "It was in a box-'safe bind, safe find,' ma'am. That's the motto of my line, and that was it precisely! More by token it's not outside the bounds of possibility you may see" – he glanced towards the door as he knocked his pipe against his top-boot-"one of my tods in a box before morning."

Mrs. Gilson shot out her underlip and looked at him darkly. She never stooped to express surprise; but she was surprised. There was no mistaking the ring of triumph in the runner's tone; yet of all the unlikely things within the landlady's range none seemed more unlikely than that he should flush his game there. She had asked herself more than once why he was there; and why no coach stopped, no chaise changed horses, no rider passed or bagman halted, without running the gauntlet of his eye. For in that country of lake and mountain were neither riots nor meetings; and though Lancashire lay near, the echoes of

strife sounded but weakly and fitfully across Cartmel Sands. Mills might be burning in Cheadle and Preston, men might be drilling in Bolland and Whitewell, sedition might be preaching in Manchester, all England might be in a flame with dear bread and no work, Corbett's Twopenny Register and Orator Hunt's declamations-but neither the glare nor the noise had much effect on Windermere. Mr. Bishop's presence there seemed superfluous therefore; seemed- But before she could come to the end of her logic, her staid waiting-maid appeared, demanding four pennyworth of old Geneva for the gentleman in Mr. Rogers's room; and when she was serving, Mrs. Gilson took refuge in incredulity.

"A man must talk if he can't do," she said-"if he's to live."

Mr. Bishop smiled, and patted his buckskin breeches with confidence.

"You'll believe ma'am," he said, "when you see him walk into the coach with the handcuffs on his wrists."

"Ay, I shall!"

The innuendo in the landlady's tone was so plain that her husband, who had entered while she was rinsing the noggin in which she had measured the gin, chuckled audibly. She turned an awful stare on him, and he collapsed. The Bow Street runner was less amenable to discipline.

"You sent the lad, Tom?" he asked.

The landlord nodded, with an apprehensive eye on his wife.

"He should be back" – Mr. Bishop consulted a huge silver

watch-"by eleven."

"Ay, sure."

"Where has he gone?" Mrs. Gilson asked, with an ominous face.

She seldom interfered in stable matters; but if she chose, it was understood that no department was outside her survey.

"Only to Kendal with a message for me," Bishop answered.

"At this time of the night?"

"Ma'am" – Mr. Bishop rose and tapped his red waistcoat with meaning, almost with dignity-"the King has need of him. The King-God bless and restore him to health-will pay, and handsomely. For the why and the wherefore he has gone, his majesty's gracious prerogative is to say nothing" – with a smile. "That is the rule in Bow Street, and for this time we'll make it the rule under Bow Fell, if you please. Moreover, what he took I wrote, ma'am, and as he cannot read and I sent it to one who will give it to another, his majesty will enjoy his prerogative as he should!"

There was a spark in Mrs. Gilson's eye. Fortunately the runner saw it, and before she could retort he slipped out, leaving the storm to break about her husband's head. Some who had known Mr. Gilson in old days wondered how he bore his life, and why he did not hang himself-Mrs. Gilson's tongue was so famous. And more said he had reason to hang himself. Only a few, and they the wisest, noted that he who had once been Long Tom Gilson grew fat and rosy; and these quoted a proverb about the wind and

the shorn lamb. One-it was Bishop himself, but he had known them no more than three weeks-said nothing when the question was raised, but tapped his nose and winked, and looked at Long Tom as if he did not pity him overmuch.

CHAPTER III

A WEDDING MORNING

In one particular at least the Bow Street runner was right. The Government which ruled England in that year, 1819, was made up of brave men; whether they were wise men or great men, or far-seeing men, is another question. The peace which followed Waterloo had been welcomed with enthusiasm. Men supposed that it would put an end to the enormous taxation and the strain which the nation had borne so gallantly during twenty years of war. The goddess of prosperity, with her wings of silver and her feathers of gold, was to bless a people which had long known only paper money. In a twinkling every trade was to flourish, every class to be more comfortable, every man to have work and wage, plenty and no taxes.

Instead, there ensued a period of want and misery almost without a parallel. During the war the country had been self-supporting, wheat had risen, land suitable and unsuitable had been enclosed and tilled. Bread had been dear but work had been plentiful. Now, at the prospect of open ports, wheat fell, land was left derelict, farmers were ruined, labourers in thousands went on the rates. Nor among the whirling looms of Lancashire or the furnaces of Staffordshire were things better. Government orders ceased with the war, while the exhausted Continent was too poor

to buy. Here also thousands were cast out of work.

The cause of the country's misfortunes might be this or that. Whatever it was, the working classes suffered greater hardships than at any time during the war; and finding no anxiety to sympathise in a Parliament which represented their betters, began to form-ominous sign-clubs, and clubs within clubs, and to seek redress by unlawful means. An open rising broke out in the Fen country, and there was fighting at Littleport and Ely. There were riots at Spa Fields in London, where murder was committed; and there were riots again, which almost amounted to a rebellion, in Derbyshire. At Stock-port and in Birmingham immense mob meetings took place. In the northern counties the sky was reddened night after night by incendiary fires. In the Midlands looms were broken and furnaces extinguished. In Lancashire and Yorkshire the air was sullen with strikes and secret plottings, and spies, and cold and famine.

In the year 1819 things came to a kind of head. There was a meeting at Manchester in August. It was such a meeting as had never been seen in England. There were sixty thousand at it, there were eighty thousand, there were ninety thousand-some said one, some said the other. It was so large, at any rate, that it was difficult to say that it was not dangerous; and beyond doubt many there would have snatched at the least chance of rapine. Be that as it may, the magistrates, in the face of so great a concourse, lost their heads. They ordered a small force of yeomanry to disperse the gathering. The yeomanry became entangled-a second charge

was needful: the multitude fled every way. In ten minutes the ground was clear; but six lives were lost and seventy persons were injured.

At once all England was cleft into parties-that which upheld the charge, and that which condemned it. Feelings which had been confined to the lower orders spread to the upper; and while from this date the section which was to pass the Reform Bill took new shape, underground more desperate enterprises were breeding. Undismayed the people met at Paisley and at Glasgow, and at each place there were collisions with, the soldiery.

Mr. Bishop had grounds, therefore, for his opinion of the Government of which he shared the favour with the yeomanry-their country's bulwark and its pride. But it is a far cry to Windermere, and no offset from the storm which was convulsing Lancashire stirred the face of the lake when Henrietta opened her window next morning and looked out on the day which was to change all for her. The air was still, the water grey and smooth, no gleam of sun showed. Yet the general aspect was mild; and would have been cheerful, if the more distant prospect which for the first time broke upon Henrietta's eyes had not raised it and her thoughts to the sublime. Beyond the water, above the green slopes and wooded knobs which fringed the lake, rose, ridge behind ridge, a wall of mountains. It stretched from the Peak of Coniston on the left, by the long snow-flecked screes of Bow Fell, to the icy points of the Langdales on the right-a new world, remote, clear, beautiful, and still: so still, so remote, that it seemed to

preach a sermon-to calm the hurry of her morning thoughts, and the tumult of youth within her. She stood awhile in awe. But her hair was about her shoulders, she was only half-dressed; and by-and-by, when her first surprise waned, she bethought herself that *he* might be below, and she drew back from the window with a blush. What more likely, what more loverlike, than that he should be below? Waiting-on this morning which was to crown his hopes-for the first sight of her face, the first opening of her lattice, the gleam of her white arm on the sill? Had it been summer, and had the rose-tree which framed the window been in bloom, what joy to drop with trembling fingers a bud to him, and to know that he would treasure it all his life-her last maiden gift! And he? Surely he would have sent her an armful to await her rising, that as she dressed she might plunge her face into their perfume, and silently plighting her troth to him, renew the pure resolves which she had made in the night hours!

But when she peeped out shyly, telling herself that she was foolish to blush, and that the time for blushing was past, she failed to discover him. There was a girl-handsome after a dark fashion-seated on a low wall on the farther side of the road; and a group of four or five men were standing in front of the inn door, talking in excited tones. Conceivably he might be one of the men, for she could hear them better than she could see them-the door being a good deal to one side. But when she had cautiously opened her window and put out her head-her hair by this time being dressed-he was not among them.

She was drawing in her head, uncertain whether to pout or not, when her eyes met those of the young woman on the wall; and the latter smiled. Possibly she had noted the direction of Henrietta's glance, and drawn her inference. At any rate, her smile was so marked and so malicious that Henrietta felt her cheek grow hot, and lost no time in drawing back and closing the window.

"What a horrid girl!" she exclaimed.

Still, after the first flush of annoyance, she would have thought no more of it-would indeed have laughed at herself for her fancy-if Mrs. Gilson's strident voice had not at that moment brought the girl to her feet.

"Bess! Bess Hinkson!" the landlady cried, apparently from the doorway. "Hast come with the milk? Then come right in and let me have it? What are you gaping at there, you gaby? What has't to do with thee? I do think" - with venom-"the world is full of fools!"

The girl with a sullen air took up a milk-pail that stood beside her; she wore the short linsey petticoat of the rustic of that day, and a homespun bodice. Her hair, brilliantly black, and as thick as a horse's mane, was covered only by a handkerchief knotted under her chin.

"Bess Hinkson? What a horrid name!" Henrietta muttered as she watched her cross the road. She did not dream that she would ever see the girl again: the more as the men's voices-she was nearly ready to descend-fixed her attention next. She caught a word, then listened.

"The devil's in it if he's not gone Whitehaven way!" one said. "That's how he's gone! Through Carlisle, say you? Not he!"

"But without a horse? He'd no horse."

"And what if he'd not?" the first speaker retorted, with the impatience of superior intellect. "It's Tuesday, the day of the Man packet-boat, and he'd be away in her."

"But the packet don't leave Whitehaven till noon," a third struck in. "And they'll be there and nab him before that. S'help me, he has not gone Whitehaven way!"

"Maybe he'd take a boat?"

"He'd lack the time" – with scorn.

"He's took a boat here," another maintained. "That's what he has done. He's took a boat here and gone down in the dark to Newby Bridge."

"But there's not a boat gone!" another speaker retorted in triumph. "What do you say to that?"

So far Henrietta's ear followed the argument; but her mind lagged at the point where the matter touched her.

"The Man packet-boat?" she thought, as she tied the last ribbon at her neck and looked sideways at her appearance in the squat, filmy mirror. "That must be the boat to the Isle of Man. It leaves Whitehaven the same day as the Scotch boat, then. Perhaps there is but one, and it goes on to the Isle of Man. And I shall go by it. And then-and then-"

A knock at the door severed the thread, and drove the unwonted languor from her eyes. She cast a last look at her

reflection in the glass, and turned herself about that she might review her back-hair. Then she swept the table with her eye, and began to stuff this and that into her bandbox. The knock was repeated.

"I am coming," she cried. She cast one very last look round the room, and, certain that she had left nothing, took up her bonnet and a shawl which she had used for a wrap over her riding-dress. She crossed the room towards the door. As she raised her hand to the latch, a smile lurked in the dimples of her cheeks. There was a gleam of fun in her eyes; the lighter side of her was uppermost again.

It was not her lover, however, who stood waiting outside, but Modest Ann-she went commonly by that name-the waiting-maid of the inn, who was said to mould herself on her mistress and to be only a trifle less formidable when roused. The two were something alike, for the maid was buxom and florid; and fame told of battles between them whence no ordinary woman, no ordinary tongue, no mortal save Mrs. Gilson, could have issued victorious. Fame had it also that Modest Ann remained after her defeat only by reason of an attachment, held by most to be hopeless, to the head ostler. And for certain, severe as she was, she permitted some liberty of speech on the subject.

Henrietta, however, did not know that here was another slave of love; and her face fell.

"Is Mr. Stewart waiting?" she asked.

"No, miss," the woman answered, civilly enough, but staring

as if she could never see enough of her. "But Mrs. Gilson will be glad if you'll speak to her."

Henrietta raised her eyebrows. It was on the tip of her tongue to answer, "Then let her come to me!" But she remembered that these people did not know who she was-knew indeed nothing of her. And she answered instead: "I will come. Where is she?"

"This way, miss. I'll show you the way."

Henrietta wondered, as the woman conducted her along several low-ceiled passages, and up and down odd stairs, and past windows which disclosed the hill rising immediately at the back of the house, what the landlady wanted.

"She is an odious woman!" she thought, with impatience. "How horrid she was to me last night! If ever there was a bully, she is one! And this creature looks not much better!"

Modest Ann, turning her head at the moment, belied the ill opinion by pointing out a step in a dark corner.

"There is a stair here, miss," she said. "Take care."

"Thank you," Henrietta answered in her clear, girlish voice. "Is Mr. Stewart with Mrs. – What's her name?"

"Mrs. Gilson? No, miss."

And pausing, the woman opened a door, and made way for Henrietta to enter.

At that instant-and strange to say, not before-a dreadful suspicion leapt up in the girl's brain. What if her brother had followed her, and was there? Or worse still, Captain Clyne? What if she were summoned to be confronted with them and to be

taken home in shameful durance, after the fashion of a naughty child that had behaved badly and was in disgrace? The fire sprang to her eyes, her cheeks burnt. It was too late to retreat; but her pretty head went up in the air, and her look as she entered spoke flat rebellion. She swept the room with a glance of flame.

However, there was no one to be burned up: no brother, no slighted, abandoned suitor. In the room, a good-sized, pleasant room, looking on the lake, were only Mrs. Gilson, who stood beside the table, which was laid for breakfast, and a strange man. The man was gazing from the window, but he turned abruptly, disclosing a red waistcoat, as her eye fell on him. She looked from one to the other in great surprise, in growing surprise. What did the man there?

"Where is Mr. Stewart?" she asked, her frigid tone expressing her feelings. "Is he not here?"

Mrs. Gilson seemed about to answer, but the man forestalled her.

"No, miss," he said, "he is not."

"Where is he?"

She asked the question with undisguised sharpness.

Mr. Bishop nodded like a man well pleased.

"That is the point, miss," he answered-"precisely. Where is he?"

CHAPTER IV

TWO TO ONE

Henrietta, high-spirited and thoughtless, was more prone to anger than to fear, to resentment than to patience. But all find something formidable in the unknown; and the presence of this man who spoke with so much aplomb, and referred to her lover as if he had some concern in him, was enough to inspire her with fear and set her on her guard. Nevertheless, she could not quite check the first impulse to resentment; the man's very presence was a liberty, and her tone when she spoke betrayed her sense of this.

"I have no doubt," she said, "that Mr. Stewart can be found if you wish to see him." She turned to Mrs. Gilson. "Be good enough," she said, "to send some one in search of him."

"I have done that already," the man Bishop answered.

The landlady, who did not move, seemed tongue-tied. But she did not take her eyes off the girl.

Henrietta frowned. She threw her bonnet and shawl on a side-table.

"Be good enough to send again, then," she said, turning and speaking in the indifferent tone of one who was wont to have her orders obeyed. "He is probably within call. The chaise is ordered for ten."

Bishop advanced a step and tapped the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other.

"That is the point, miss!" he said impressively. "You've hit it. The chaise is ordered for ten. It is nine now, within a minute-and the gentleman cannot be found."

"Cannot be found?" she echoed, in astonishment at his familiarity. "Cannot be found?" She turned imperiously to Mrs. Gilson. "What does this person mean?" she said. And her tone was brave. But the colour came and went in her cheeks, and the first flutter of alarm darkened her eyes.

The landlady found her voice.

"He means," she said bluntly, "that he did not sleep in his bed last night."

"Mr. Stewart?"

"The gentleman who came with you."

"Oh, but," Henrietta cried, "you must be jesting?" She would not, she could not, give way to the doubt that assailed her.

"It is no jest," Bishop answered gravely, and with something like pity in his voice. For the girl looked very fair and very young, and wore her dignity prettily. "It is no jest, miss, believe me. But perhaps we could read the riddle-we should know more, at any rate-if you were to tell us from what part you came yesterday."

But she had her wits about her, and she was not going to tell them that! No, no! Moreover, on the instant she had a thought-that this was no jest, but a trick, a cruel, cowardly trick, to draw from her the knowledge which they wanted, and which she must

not give! Beyond doubt that was it; she snatched thankfully at the notion. This odious woman, taking advantage of Stewart's momentary absence, had called in the man, and thought to bully her, a young girl in a strange place, out of the information which she had wished to get the night before.

The impertinents! But she would be a match for them.

"That is my affair," she said.

"But--"

"And will remain so!" she continued warmly. "For the rest, I am inclined to think that this is a trap of some sort! If so, you may be sure that Mr. Stewart will know how to resent it, and any impertinence offered to me. You" -- she turned suddenly upon Mrs. Gilson--"you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Mrs. Gilson nodded oracularly.

"I am ashamed of somebody," she said.

The girl thought that she was gaining the advantage.

"Then at once," she said, "let Mr. Stewart know that I am waiting for him. Do you hear, madam?" she stamped the floor with her foot, and looked the pretty fury to the life. "And see that this person leaves the room. Good-morning, sir. You will hear from Mr. Stewart what I think of your intrusion."

Bishop opened his mouth to reply. But he caught Mrs. Gilson's eye; and by a look, such a look as appalled even the Bow Street runner's stout heart, she indicated the door. After a second of hesitation he passed out meekly.

When he was gone, "Very good, miss," the landlady said in

the tone of one who restrained her temper with difficulty-"very good. But if you're to be ready you'd best eat your breakfast-if, that is, it is good enough for you!" she added. And with a very grim face she swept from the room and left Henrietta in possession of the field.

The girl sprang to the window and looked up and down the road. She had the same view of the mild autumn morning, of the grey lake and distant range of hills which had calmed her thoughts an hour earlier. But the beauty of the scene availed nothing now. She was flushed with vexation-impatient, resentful. Where was he? He was not in sight. Then where could he be? And why did he leave her? Did he think that he need no longer press his suit, that the need for *pettis soins* and attentions was over? Oh, but she would show him! And in a moment all the feelings of the petted, spoiled girl were up in arms.

"They are horrid!" she cried, angry tears in her eyes. "It's an outrage-a perfect outrage! And he is no better. How dare he leave me, this morning of all mornings?"

On which there might have stolen into her mind-so monstrous did his neglect seem-a doubt, a suspicion; the doubt and the suspicion which she repelled a few minutes earlier. But, as she turned, her eyes fell on the breakfast-table; and vexation was not proof against a healthy appetite.

"I will show him," she thought resentfully, "that I am not so dependent on him as he thinks. I shall not wait-I shall take my breakfast. That odious woman was right for once."

And she sat down in the seat placed for her. But as quickly she was up again, and at the oval glass over the mantel-where Samuel Rogers had often viewed his cadaverous face-to inspect herself and be sure that she was looking her best, so that *his* despair, when he came and found her cold and distant, would be the deeper. Soon satisfied, she returned, smiling dangerously, to her seat; and this time she fell-to upon the eggs and girdle-cakes, and the home-cured ham, and the tea at ten shillings a pound. The room had a window to the lake and a second window which looked to the south and was not far from the first. Though low-ceiled, it was of a fair size, with a sunk cupboard, with glazed upper doors, on each side of the fireplace, and cushioned seats in the window-places. In a recess near the door-the room was full of corners-were book-shelves; and on the other side of the door stood a tall clock with a very pale face. The furniture was covered with some warm red stuff, well worn; and an air of that snug comfort which was valued by Englishmen of the day pervaded all, and went well with the scent of the China tea.

But neither tea nor comfort, nor the cheerful blaze on the hearth, could long hold Henrietta's thoughts; nor resentment repress her anxiety. Presently she began to listen after every mouthful: her fork was as often suspended as at work. Her pretty face grew troubled and her brow more deeply puckered, until her wandering eye fell on the clock, and she saw that the slowly jerking hand was on the verge of the half-hour.

Then she sprang up, honestly frightened. She flew to the

window that looked on the lake and peered out anxiously; thence to the side window, but she got no glimpse of him. She came back distracted to the table and stood pressing her hands to her eyes. What if they were right, and he had not slept in his bed? What if something had happened to him? But that was impossible. Impossible! Things did not happen on such mornings as this! On wedding mornings! Yet if that were the case, and they had sent for her that they might break it to her-and then their hearts, even that woman's heart, had failed them? What-what then?

She was trying to repel the thought when she fancied that she heard a sound at the door, and with a gasp of relief she looked up. If he had entered at that moment, she would have flung herself into his arms and forgiven all and forgotten all. But he did not enter, and her heart sank again, and lower. She went slowly to the door and listened, and found that the sound which she had heard was caused by the whispering of persons outside.

She summoned her pride to her aid then. She opened the door to its full extent and walked back to the table, and turning, waited haughtily for them to enter. But to speak, to command her voice, was harder, and it was all she could do to murmur,

"Something has happened to him" – her lip fluttered ominously-"and you have come to tell me?"

"Nothing that I know of," Bishop answered cheerfully. He and the landlady had walked in and closed the door behind them. "Nothing at all."

"No?" She could hardly believe him.

"Not the least thing in life, miss," he repeated. "He's alive and well for what I know-alive and well!"

She sat down on a chair that stood beside her, and the colour flowed back to her cheeks. She laughed weakly.

"I was afraid that something had happened," she murmured.

"No," Mr. Bishop answered, more seriously, "it's not that. It's not that, miss. But all the same it's trouble. Now if you were to tell me," he continued, leaning forward persuasively, "where you come from, I need have hardly a word with you. I can see you're a lady; your friends will come; and, s'help me, in six months you'll have your matie again, and not know it happened!"

"I shall not tell you," she said.

The officer shook his head, surprised by her firmness.

"Come now, miss-be advised," he urged. "Be reasonable. Just think for once that others may know better than you, and save me the trouble-that's a good young lady."

But the wheedling appeal, the familiar tone, grated on her. Her fingers, tapping on the table, betrayed impatience as well as alarm.

"I do not understand you," she said, with some return of her former distance. "If nothing has happened to Mr. Stewart, I do not understand what you can have to say to me, nor why you are here."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, miss," he said, "if you must have it, you must. I'm bound to say you are not a young lady to take a hint."

That frightened her.

"If nothing has happened to him-" she murmured, and looked from one to the other; from Mr. Bishop's smug face to the landlady's stolid visage.

"It's not what has happened to him," the runner answered bluntly. "It is what is likely to happen to him."

He drew from his pocket as he spoke a large leather case, unstrapped it, and put the strap, which would have handily spliced a cart-trace of these days, between his teeth. Then he carefully selected from the mass of papers which the case contained a single letter. It was written, as the letters of that day were written, on three sides of a square sheet of coarsish paper. The fourth side served for envelope-that is, it bore the address and seal. But Bishop was careful to fold the letter in such a way that these and the greater part of the writing were hidden. He proffered the paper, so arranged, to Henrietta.

"D'you know the handwriting," he asked, "of that letter, miss?"

She had watched his actions with fascinated eyes, and could not think, could not imagine, whither they tended. She was really frightened now. But her mettle was high; she had the nerves of youth, and she hid her dismay. The hand with which she took the letter was steady as a rock, the manner with which she looked at it composed; but no sooner had her eyes fallen on the writing than she uttered an exclamation, and the colour rose to her cheeks.

"How did you get this?" she cried.

"No, miss, no," the runner answered. "One at a time. The question is, Do you know the fist? The handwriting, I mean. But I see you do."

"It is Mr. Stewart's," she answered.

He glanced at Mrs. Gilson as if to bespeak her attention.

"Just so," he said. "It is Mr. Stewart's. And I warrant you have others like it, and could prove the fact if it were needed. No—don't read it, miss, if you please," he continued. "You can tell me without that whether the gentleman has any friends in these parts."

"None."

"That you know of?"

"I never heard of any," she answered. Her astonishment was so great that she did not now think of refusing to answer. And besides, here was his handwriting. And why did he not come? The clock was on the point of striking; at this hour, at this minute, they should have been leaving the door of the inn.

"No, miss," Bishop answered, exchanging a look with the landlady. "Just so, you've never heard of any. Then one more question, if you please. You are going north, to Scotland, to be married to-day? Now which way, I wonder?"

She frowned at him in silence. She began to see his drift.

"By Keswick and Carlisle?" he continued, watching her face. "Or by Kendal and Penrith? Or by Cockermouth and Whitehaven? But no. There's only the Isle of Man packet out of Whitehaven."

"It goes on to Dumfries," she said. The words escaped her in spite of herself.

He smiled as he shook his head.

"No," he said; "it'd be a very long way round if it did. But Mr. Stewart told you that, did he? I see he did. Well, you've had an escape, miss. That's all I can say."

The colour rose to her very brow, but her eyes met his boldly.

"How?" she said. "What do you mean?"

"How?" he repeated. "If you knew, miss, who the man was—your Mr. Stewart—you'd know how—and what you have escaped!"

"Who he was?" she muttered.

"Ay, who he was!" he retorted. "I can tell you this at least, young lady," he added bluntly, "he's the man that's very badly wanted—uncommonly badly wanted!" — with a grin—"in more places than one, but nowhere more than where he came from."

"Wanted?" she said, the colour fading in her cheek. "For what? What do you mean?"

"For what?"

"That is what I asked."

His face was a picture of importance and solemnity. He looked at the landlady as much as to say, "See how I will prostrate her!" But nothing indicated his sense of the avowal he was going to make so much as the fact that instead of raising his voice he lowered it.

"You shall have the answer, miss, though I thought to spare you," he said. "He's wanted for being an uncommon desperate

villain, I am sorry to say. For treason, and misprision of treason, and conspiracy. Ay, but that's the man you've come away with," shaking his head solemnly. "He's wanted for bloody conspiracy-ay, it is so indeed-equal to any Guy Fawkes, against my lord the King, his crown and dignity! Seven indictments-and not mere counts, miss-have been found against him, and those who were with him, and him the worst! And when he's taken, as he's sure to be taken by-and-by, he'll suffer!" And Mr. Bishop nodded portentously.

Her face was quite white now.

"Mr. Stewart?" she gasped.

"You call him Stewart," the runner replied coolly. "I call him Walteson-Walteson the younger. But he has passed by a capful of names. Anyway, he's wanted for the business in Spa Fields in '16, and half a dozen things besides!"

The colour returned to Henrietta's cheeks with a rush. Her fine eyes glowed, her lips parted.

"A conspirator!" she murmured. "A conspirator!" She fondled the word as if it had been "love" or "kisses." "I suppose, then," she continued, with a sidelong look at Bishop, "if he were taken he would lose his life?"

"Sure as eggs!"

Henrietta drew a deep breath; and with the same sidelong look:

"He would be beheaded-in the Tower?"

The runner laughed with much enjoyment.

"Lord save your innocent heart, miss," he said-"no! He would just hang outside Newgate."

She shuddered violently at that. The glow of eye and cheek faded, and tears rose instead. She walked to a window, and with her back to them dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. Then she turned.

"Is that all?" she said.

"Good God!" Bishop cried. He stared, nonplussed. "Is that all?" he said. "Would you have more?"

"Neither more nor less," she answered-between tears and smiles, if his astonished eyes did not deceive him. "For now I know-I know why he left me, why he is not here."

"Good lord!"

"If you thought, sir," she continued, drawing herself up and speaking with indignation, "that because he was in danger, because he was proscribed, because a price was set on his head, I should desert him, and betray him, and sell his secrets to you-I, his wife-you were indeed mistaken!"

"But damme!" Mr. Bishop cried in amazement almost too great for words, "you are not his wife!"

"In the sight of Heaven," she answered firmly, "I am!" She was shaking with excitement. "In the sight of Heaven I am!" she repeated solemnly. And so real was the feeling that she forgot for the moment the situation in which her lover's flight had left her. She forgot herself, forgot all but the danger that menaced him, and the resolution that never, never, never should it part her

from him.

Mr. Bishop would fain have answered fittingly, and to that end sought words. But he found none strong enough.

"Well, I am dashed!" was all he could find to say. "I *am* dashed!" Then-the thing was too much for one-he sought support in Mrs. Gilson's eye. "There, ma'am," he said vehemently, extending one hand, "I ask you! You are a woman of sense! I ask you! Did you ever? Did you ever, out of London or in London?"

The landlady's answer was as downright as it was unwelcome.

"I never see such a fool!" she said, "if that's what you mean. And you" – with scorn-"to call yourself a Bow Street man! Bow Street? Bah!"

Mr. Bishop opened his mouth.

"A parish constable's a Solomon to you!" she continued, before he could speak.

His face was purple, his surprise ludicrous.

"To me?" he ejaculated incredulously. "S'help me, ma'am, you are mad, or I am! What have I done?"

"It's not what you've done!" Mrs. Gilson answered grimly. "It's what you've left undone! Oh, you gaby!" she continued, with unction. "You poor creature! You bag of goose-feathers! D'you know no more of women than that? Why, I've kept my mouth shut the last ten blessed minutes for nothing else but to see what a fool you'd make of yourself! And for certain it was not for nothing!"

Henrietta tapped the table.

"Perhaps when you've done," she said, with tragic dignity, "you will both be good enough to leave the room. I desire to be alone."

Her eyes were like stars. In her voice was an odd mixture of elation and alarm.

Mrs. Gilson turned on the instant and engaged her.

"Don't talk nonsense!" she said. "Desire to be alone indeed! You deserve to be alone, miss, with bread and water, and the lock on the door! Oh, you may stare! But do you do now what he should have made you do a half-hour ago! And then you'll feel a little less like a play actress! Alone indeed! Read that letter and tell me then what you think of yourself!"

Henrietta's eyes sparkled with anger, but she fought hard for her dignity.

"I am not used to impertinence," she said. "You forget yourself!"

"Bead," Mrs. Gilson retorted, "and say what you like then. You'll have little stomach for saying anything," she added in an undertone, "or I'm a Dutchman!"

Henrietta saw nothing for it but to read under protest, and she did so with a smile of contempt. In the circumstances it seemed the easier course. But alas! as she read, her pretty, angry face changed. She had that extreme delicacy of complexion which betrays the least ebb and flow of feeling: and in turn perplexity, wonder, resentment, all were painted there, and vividly. She looked up.

"To whom was this written?" she asked, her voice unsteady. Mrs. Gilson was pitiless.

"Look at the beginning!" she answered.

The girl turned back mechanically, and read that which she had read before. But then with surprise; now with dread.

"Who is-Sally?" she muttered.

Despite herself, her voice seemed to fail her on the word. And she dared not meet their eyes.

"Who's Sally?" Mrs. Gilson repeated briskly. "Why, his wife, to be sure! Who should she be?"

CHAPTER V

A JEZEBEL

There was a loud drumming in Henrietta's ears, and a dimness before her eyes. In the midst of this a voice, which she would not have known for her own, cried loudly and clearly, "No!" And again, more violently, "No!"

"But it is 'Yes!'" the landlady answered coolly. "Why not? D'you think" – with rough contempt – "he's the first man that's lied to a woman? or you're the first woman that's believed a rascal? She's his wife right enough, my girl" – comfortably. "Don't he ask after his children? If you'll turn to the bottom of the second page you'll see for yourself! Oh, quite the family man, he is!"

The girl's hand shook like ash-leaves in a light breeze; the paper rustled in her grasp. But she had regained command of herself – she came of a stiff, proud stock, and the very brusqueness of the landlady helped her; and she read word after word and line after line of the letter. She passed from the bottom of the second sheet to the head of the third, and so to the end. But so slowly, so laboriously that it was plain that her mind was busy reading between the lines – was busy comparing, sifting, remembering.

To Bishop's credit be it said, he kept his eyes off the girl. But at last he spoke.

"I'd that letter from his wife's hand," he said. "They are

married right enough-in Hounslow Church, miss. She lives there, two doors from the 'George' posting-house, where folks change horses between London and Windsor. She was a waiting-maid in the coffee-room, and 'twas a rise for her. But she's not seen him for three years-reason, he's been in hiding-nor had a penny from him. Now she's got it he's taken up with some woman hereabouts, and she put me on the scent. He's a fine gift of the gab, but for all that his father's naught but a little apothecary, and as smooth a rogue and as big a Radical, one as the other! I wish to goodness," the runner continued, suddenly reminded of his loss, "I'd took him last night when he came in! But-"

"That'll do!" Mrs. Gilson said, cutting him short, as if he were a tap she had turned on for her own purposes. "You can go now!"

"But-"

"Did you hear me, man? Go!" the landlady thundered. And a glance of her eye was sufficient to bring the runner to heel like a scolded hound. "Go, and shut the door after you," she continued, with sharpness. "I'll have no eavesdropping in my house, prerogative or no prerogative!"

When he was gone she showed a single spark of mercy. She went to the fire and proceeded to mend it noisily, as if it were the one thing in the world to be attended to. She put on wood, and swept the hearth, and made a to-do with it. True, the respite was short; a minute or two at most. But when the landlady had done, and turned her attention to the girl, Henrietta had moved to the window, so that only her back was visible. Even then, for

quite a long minute Mrs. Gilson stood, with arms akimbo and pursed lips, reading the lines of the girl's figure and considering her, as if even her rugged bosom knew pity. And in the end it was Henrietta who spoke-humbly, alas! now, and in a voice almost inaudible.

"Will you leave me, please?" she said.

"I will," Mrs. Gilson answered gruffly. "But on one understanding, miss-and I'll have it plain. It must be all over. If you are satisfied he is a rascal-he has four children-well and good. But I'll have no goings on with such in my house, and no making two bites of a cherry! Here's a bit of paper I'll put on the table."

"I am satisfied," Henrietta whispered.

Under the woman's blunt words she shook as under blows.

But Mrs. Gilson seemed to pay little heed to her feelings.

"Very good, very good!" she answered. "But I'll leave the paper all the same. It's but a bit of a handbill that fool of a runner brought with him, but 'twill show you what kind of a poor thing your Joe was. Just a spouter, that got drunk on his own words and shot a poor inoffensive gentleman in a shop! Shame on him for a little dirty murder, if ever there was one."

"Oh, please go! please go!" Henrietta wailed.

"Very well. But there's the paper. And do you begin to think" – removing with housewifely hand a half-eaten dish of eggs from the table, and deftly poising on the same arm a large ham-"do you begin to think like a grown, sensible woman what you'd best do. The shortest folly's soonest over! That's my opinion."

And with that she opened the door, and, heavily laden, made her way downstairs.

The girl turned and stood looking at the room, and her face was wofully changed. It was white and pinched, and full of strained wonder, as if she asked herself if she were indeed herself, and if it could really be to her that this thing had happened. She looked older by years, she looked almost plain. But in her eyes was a latent fierceness. An observer might have guessed that her pride suffered more sharply than her heart. Possibly she had never loved the man with half the fervour with which she now hated him.

And that was true, though the change was sudden; ay, and though Henrietta did not know it, nor would have admitted it. She suffered notwithstanding, and horribly. For, besides pride, there were other things that lay wounded and bleeding: her happy-go-lucky nature that had trusted lightly, and would be slow to trust again; her girlish hopes and dreams; and the foolish fancy that had passed for love, and in a single day, an hour, a minute, might have become love. And one other thing-the bloom of her innocence. For though she had escaped, she had come too near the fire not to fear it henceforth, and bear with her the smell of singeing.

As she thought of that, of her peril and her narrow escape, and reflected how near she had come to utter shipwreck, her face lost its piteous look, and grew harder, and sharper, and sterner; so that the wealth of bright hair, that was her glory, crowned it only too brilliantly, only too youthfully. She saw how he had fooled

her to the top of her bent; how he had played on her romantic tastes and her silly desire for secrecy. A low-born creature, an agitator, hiding from the consequences of a cowardly crime, he had happened upon her in his twilight walks, desired her-for an amusement, turned her head with inflated phrases, dazzled her inexperience with hints of the world and his greatness in it. And she-she had thought herself wiser than all about her, as she had thought him preferable to the legitimate lover assigned to her by her family. And she had brought herself to this! This was the end!

Or no, not the end. The game, for what it was worth, was over. But the candle-money remained to be paid. Goldsmith's stanzas had still their vogue; mothers quoted them to their daughters. Henrietta knew that when lovely woman stoops to folly, even to folly of a lighter dye-when she learns, though not too late, that men betray, there is a penalty to be paid. The world is censorious, was censorious then, and apt to draw from very small evidence a very dark inference. Henrietta's face, flaming suddenly from brow to neck, proved her vivid remembrance of this. Had she not called herself-the words burned her-"his wife in the sight of Heaven"? And now she must go back-if they would receive her-go back and face those whom she had left so lightly, face the lover whom she had flouted and betrayed, meet the smirks of the men and the sneers of the women, and the thoughts of both! Go back to blush before the servants, and hear from the lips of that grim prude, her sister-in-law, many things, both true and untrue! The loss of the tender future, of the rosy anticipations in which

she had lived for weeks as in a fairy palace-she could bear this! And the rough awakening from the maiden dream which she had taken for love-she must bear that too, though it left her world cold as the sheet of grey water before her, and repellent as the bald, rugged screes that frowned above it. She would bear the heartsickness, the loneliness, the pain that treachery inflicts on innocence; but the shame of the home-coming-if they would receive her, which she doubted-the coarse taunts and stinging innuendoes, the nods, the shrugs, the winks-these she could not face. Anything, anything were better, if anything she could find-deserted, flung aside, homeless as she was.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Mrs. Gilson, descending with a sour face, had come upon a couple of maids listening at the foot of the stairs. She had made sharp work of them, sending them packing with fleas in their ears. But they proved to be only the *avant-couriers* of scandal. Below were the Troutbeck apothecary and a dozen gossips, whom the news had brought over the hill; and hangers-on without number. All, however, had no better fate with Mrs. Gilson; not the parish constable of Bowness, whose staff went for little, nor even Mr. Bishop, that great man out of doors, at whose slightest nod ostlers ran and helpers bowed; he smiled superior, indeed, but he had the wisdom to withdraw. In two minutes, in truth, there remained of the buzzing crowd only the old curate

of Troutbeck supping small beer with a toast in it. And he, it was said, knew better than any the length of the landlady's foot.

But this was merely to move the centre of ferment to the inn-yard. Here the news that the house had sheltered a man for whose capture the Government offered six hundred guineas, bred wild excitement. He had vanished, it was true, like a child of the mist. But he might be found again. Meantime the rustics gaped on the runner with saucer eyes, or flew hither and thither at his beck. And Radicals being at a discount in the Lowther country, and six hundred guineas a sum for which old Hinkson the miser would have bartered his soul, some spat on their hands and swore what they would do if they met the devil; while others, who were not apt at thinking, retired into corners and with knitted brows and hands plunged into breeches pockets conjured up a map of the world about Windermere.

It should be borne in mind that at this time police were unknown-outside London. There were parish constables; but where these were not cobblers, which was strangely often the case, they were men past work, appointed to save the rates. If a man's pocket were picked, therefore, or his stack fired, his daughter abducted, or his mare stolen, he had only himself and his friends to look to. He must follow the offender, confront him, seize him, carry him to the gaol. He must do all himself. Naturally, if he were a timid man or unpopular, the rogue went free; and sometimes went free again and again until he became the terror of the country-side. A fact which enables

us to understand the terrors of lonely houses in those days, and explains the repugnance to life in solitary places which is traditional in some parts of England.

On the other hand, where the crime was known and outrageous, it became every man's business. It was every man's duty to join the hue and cry: if he did not take part in it he was a bad neighbour. Mr. Bishop, therefore, did not lack helpers. On the first discovery of Walterson's flight, which the officer had made a little after daybreak, he had sent horsemen to Whitehaven, Keswick, and Kendal, and a boat to Newby Bridge. The nearer shore and the woods on the point below the bishop's house-some called it Landoff House-were well beaten, and the alarm was given in Bowness on the one hand and in Ambleside on the other. The general voice had it that the man had got away early in the night to Whitehaven. But some stated that a pedlar had met him, on foot and alone, crossing the Kirkstone Pass at daybreak; and others, that he had been viewed skulking under a haystack near Troutbeck Bridge. That a beautiful girl, his companion, had been seized, and was under lock and key in the house, was whispered by some, but denied by more. Nevertheless, the report won its way, so that there were few moments when the chatterers who buzzed about the runner had not an eye on the upper windows and a voice ready to proclaim their discoveries.

Even those who believed the story, however, were far from having a true picture of poor Henrietta. With some she passed

for a London Jezebel; locked up, it was whispered, with a bottle of gin to keep her quiet until the chaise was ready to take her to gaol. Others pictured her as the frenzied leader of one of the women's clubs which had lately sprung up in Lancashire, and of which the principal aim, according to the Tories, was to copy the French fish-fags and march one day to Windsor to drag the old king, blind and mad as he was, to the scaffold. Others spoke of a casual light-o'-love picked up at Lancaster, but a rare piece of goods for looks; which seemed a pity, and one of those tragedies of the law that were beginning to prick men's consciences-since there was little doubt that the baggage, poor lass, would hang with her tempter.

A word or two of these whisperings reached Mrs. Gilson's ears. But she only sniffed her contempt, or, showing herself for a moment at the door, chilled by the coldness of her eye the general enthusiasm. Then, woe betide the servant whom she chanced to spy among the idlers. If a man, he was glad to hide himself in the stable; if a woman, she was very likely to go back to her work with a smarting cheek. Even the Troutbeck apothecary, a roistering blade who was making a day of it, kept a wary eye on the door, and, if he could, slipped round the corner when she appeared.

But Juno herself had her moments of failure, and no mortals are exempt from them. About four in the afternoon Mrs. Gilson got a shock. Modest Ann, her face redder than usual, came to her and whispered in her ear. In five seconds the landlady's face

was also redder than usual, and her frown was something to see. She rose.

"I don't believe it!" she answered. "You are daft, woman, to think of such a thing!"

"It's true, missus, as I stand here!" Ann declared.

"To Kendal gaol? To-night!"

"That very thing! And her" – with angry fervour – "scarce more than a child, as you may say!"

"Old enough to make a fool of herself!" Mrs. Gilson retorted spitefully. "But I don't believe it!" she added. "You've heard amiss, my girl!"

"Well, you'll see," the woman answered. "'Twill be soon settled. The justice is crossing the road now, and that Bishop with him; and that little wizened chap of a clerk that makes up the Salutation books. And the man that keeps the gaol at Appleby: they've been waiting for him-he's to take her. And there's a chaise ordered to be ready if it's wanted. It's true, as I stand here!"

Mrs. Gilson's form swelled until it was a wonder the whalebone stood. But in those days things were of good British make.

"A chaise?" she said.

"Yes."

"There's no chaise," the landlady answered firmly, "goes from here on that errand!"

Modest Ann knew that when her mistress spoke in that tone the thing was as good as done. But the waiting-maid, whose heart,

for all her temper, was softer than her features, at which Jim the ostler was supposed to boggle, was not greatly comforted.

"They'll only send to the Salutation," she said despondently.

"Let them send!" the landlady replied. And taking off her apron, she prepared to face the enemy. "They'll talk to me before they do!"

But Ann, great as was her belief in her mistress, shook her head.

"What can you do against the law?" she muttered. "I wish that Bishop may never eat another morsel of hot victuals as long as he lives! Gravy with the joint? Never while I am serving!"

CHAPTER VI

THE INQUIRY

"Who is there?"

Henrietta lifted her tear-stained face from the pillow and awaited the answer. Three hours earlier, her head aching, her heart full, uncertain what to do or what would follow, she had fled from the commotion below, and, locking herself in her bedroom, had lain down with her misery. It was something to find in the apathy of prostration a brief respite; it was something to close her eyes and lie quite still. For a while she might keep her door locked, might nurse her wretchedness, might evade rude looks and curious questions, might postpone decision.

For the pride that had sustained her in the morning had failed, as the day wore on. Solitude and the lack of food-she had refused to eat at midday-had worn down her spirit. At last tears had come, and plentifully-and repentance. She did not say that the fault was her own, but she knew it, she admitted it. The man had behaved to her wickedly, treacherously, horribly; but she had brought it on herself. He had laid the snare in vain had she not stooped to deceit-had she not consented to mislead her friends, to meet him secretly, to listen to him with as little heed of propriety as if she had been Sue at the forge, or Bess in the still-room. Her own vanity, her own folly, had brought her to the very verge

of ruin; and with shame she owned that there was more in the old saws with which her sister-in-law had deafened her than her inexperience had imagined. But the discovery came late. She was smirched. And what-what was she to do? Where could she go to avoid the full penalty-the taunts, the shame, the disgrace that awaited her in the old home? – even if the old home were still open to her.

Meanwhile she got no answer. And "Who is there?" she repeated wearily.

The reply came muffled through the door.

"You are wanted downstairs, lady."

She rose languidly. Perhaps the time was come. Perhaps her brother was here, had followed, traced, and found her. For the moment she was all but indifferent. To-morrow she would suffer, and sorely; but to-day she had fallen too low. She went slowly to the door and opened it.

Ann stood in the passage.

"They want you downstairs, miss," she said.

The girl saw that the woman looked queerly at her, but she was prepared for such looks. Unconsciously she had steeled herself to bear them. "Very well," she returned, and did not ask who wanted her. But she went back to her table, dabbed her eyes with cold water, and smoothed her hair and her neck-ribbon-she had pride enough for that. Then she went to the door. The woman was still outside, still staring.

"I did not know that you were waiting," Henrietta said, faintly

surprised. "I know my way down."

"I was to come with you, miss."

"Where are they, then?"

"They are where you were this morning," the woman answered. "This way, if you please."

Henrietta followed listlessly, and fancied in the sullenness of her apathy that she was proof against aught that could happen. But when she had descended the stairs and neared the door of Mr. Rogers's room-which was in a dusky passage-she found herself, to her astonishment, brushing past a row of people, who flattened themselves against the wall to let her pass. Their eyes and their hard breathing-perhaps because she was amongst them before she saw them-impressed her so disagreeably that her heart fluttered, and she paused. For an imperceptible instant she was on the point of turning and going back. But, fortunately, at that moment the door opened wide, Ann stood aside, and Mrs. Gilson showed herself. She beckoned to the girl to enter.

"Come in, miss," she said gruffly, as Henrietta complied. "Here's some gentlemen want to ask you a question or two."

Henrietta saw two persons with their faces turned towards her seated behind a table, which bore ink and paper and one or two calf-bound books. Behind these were three or four other persons standing; and beside the door close to her were as many more, also on their feet. But nowhere could she see the dreaded face of her brother, or, indeed, any face that she knew. And after advancing firmly enough into the room, she stopped, and,

turning, looked uncertainly at Mrs. Gilson.

"There must be some mistake," she murmured. "I have come into the-"

"Wrong room, miss?" – the speaker was Bishop, who was one of the three or four who stood behind the two at the table. "No, there's no mistake, miss," he continued, with exaggerated cheerfulness. "It's just a formality. Only just a formality. These gentlemen wish to ask you one or two questions."

The colour rose to her cheeks.

"To ask me?" she repeated, with a slight ring of hauteur in her voice.

"Just so," Bishop answered. "It will be all right, I am sure. But attend to this gentleman, if you please, and answer his questions."

He indicated with his finger the one seated before him.

The girl, half angry, half frightened, lowered her eyes and met those of the person at the table. Apparently her aspect had checked the exordium he had prepared; for instead of addressing her in the tones which were wont to fill the justice-room at Ambleside, Mr. Hornyold, rector and magistrate, sat back in his chair, and stared at her in silence. It was evident that his astonishment was great. He was a portly man, and tall, about forty years old, and, after his fashion, handsome. He had well-formed features and a mobile smile; but his face was masterful-overmasterful, some thought; and his eyes were hard, when a sly look did not soften, without much improving, their expression. The girl before him was young, adorably fresh, above

all, beautiful; and the smile of the man peeped from under the mask of the justice. He stared at her, and she at him, and perhaps of the two he was the more taken aback. At any rate, it was Henrietta who broke the silence.

"I do not understand," she said, with ill-suppressed indignation, "why I am here. Are you sure that there is no mistake?"

He found his voice then.

"Quite sure," he said drily. And he laid down the pen with which he had been toying while he stared at her. He sat a little more erect in his chair. "There is no mistake," he continued, "though for your sake, young woman, I wish I could think there was. I wish I could think there was," he repeated in a more indulgent tone, "since you seem, at any rate, a more respectable person than I expected to see."

"Sir!"

The girl's eyes opened wide. Her face was scarlet.

He leaned forward.

"Come, my girl," he said-and his familiar tone struck her, as it were, in the face, - never had such a tone been used to her before! "Let us have no nonsense. You will not improve your case that way. Let me tell you, we are accustomed to all sorts here. You must speak when you are told to speak, and be silent when you are bid, and in the meantime listen to me! Listen to me, I say!" staying by an imperious nod the angry remonstrance that was on her lips. "And remember where you are, if you wish to be well

treated. If you are sensible and tell the truth, some other course will be found than that which, it is to be feared, must end this business."

"But by what right," Henrietta cried, striving to command both her rage and her fear-"by what right-"

"Am I about to question you?" – with a smirk of humour and a glance at the audience. "By the right of the law, young woman, which I would have you know is of some account here, however it may stand in Lancashire."

"The law?" she stammered. And she looked round terrified. "Why? Why? What have I done?" she cried pathetically.

For a moment all was dark before her.

He laughed slyly.

"That's to be seen," he said. "No hanging matter," he continued humorously, "I hope. And as it's good law that everybody's innocent-that's so, Mr. Dobbie, is it not?" – he addressed the clerk-"until he's found to be guilty, let somebody set the young woman a chair."

"I can stand!" she cried.

"Nay, you sit down!" muttered a gruff voice in her ear. And a hand-it was Mrs. Gilson's-pressed her down in the chair. "And you answer straight out," the woman continued coolly, in defiance of the scandalised look which Mr. Dobbie, the clerk, cast upon her, "and there's not one of 'em can do you any harm."

The magistrate nodded.

"That's true," he said tolerantly, "always supposing that you've

done no wrong, my girl-no wrong beyond getting into bad company, as I trust will turn out to be the case. Now, Mr. Dobbie, take down her answers. What's your name, my girl, first?"

Henrietta looked at him steadily; she was trying to place herself in these new conditions. Something like composure was coming back to her flushed and frightened face. She reflected; and having reflected, she was silent.

He fancied that she had not heard, or did not understand.

"Your name, young woman," he repeated, "and your last place of abode? Speak up! And don't be afraid."

But she did not answer.

He frowned.

"Come, come," he said. "Did you hear me? Where is your home, and what do you call yourself? You are not the man's wife, I know. We know as much as that, you see, so you may as well be frank."

"What is the charge against me?" She spoke slowly, and her face was now set and stubborn. "Of what am I accused?"

Mr. Hornyold's face turned a brick red. He did not rule three parishes through three curates, reserving to himself only the disciplinary powers he was now exercising, to be thwarted by a run-the-country girl; who, in spite of her looks, was, ten to one, no better than the imprudent wenches the overseers were continually bringing before him. He knew at least the company she kept. He raised his voice.

"I am not here to answer your questions!" he said, bending his

brows. "But you mine! You mine!" he repeated, rapping the table sharply. "Do you hear? Now, you will at once tell me-"

He broke off. The clerk had touched his sleeve and was whispering in his ear. He frowned impatiently, but listened. And after a moment he shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well," he said. "Tell her!"

The clerk, a shabby man with a scratch wig and a little glass ink-bottle at his buttonhole, raised his eyes, and looking at her over his glasses, spoke:

"You are not yet charged," he said; "but if you cannot give a satisfactory account of yourself you will be charged with receiving, harbouring, and assisting one William Walterston the younger, otherwise Stewart, otherwise Malins, against whom indictments for various felonies and treason felonies have been found. And with aiding and abetting the escape of the said William Walterston, in whose company you have been found. And with being accessory after the fact to various felonies-"

"To murder!" said Mr. Hornyold, cutting him short emphatically. "To murder! amongst other things. That is the charge, if you must know it. So now" – he rapped the table sharply – "answer at once, and the truth. What is your name? And where was your last place of abode?"

But Henrietta, if she were willing to answer, could not. At the sound of that dreadful word "murder!" – they hanged lightly, so lightly in those days! – the colour had fled from her face. The darkness that had confused her a while before hid all. She kept

her seat, she even retained her erect posture; but the hands which she raised before her as if to ward off something groped idly in the air.

Murder! No wonder that she lost consciousness for a moment, or that Hornyold, secretly relishing her beauty, thought that he had found the weapon that would soon bring her to her knees! or that the little audience by the door, listening awestruck, held their breath. The wonder was that only one of them judged from the girl's gesture that she was fainting. Only one acted. Mrs. Gilson stepped forward and shook her roughly by the shoulder.

"Words break no bones!" the landlady said without ceremony- and not without an angry look at the clerk, who raised his pen as if he would interpose. "Don't you make a fool of yourself. But do you tell them what they want to know. And your friends will settle with them. Murder, indeed! Pack of boddles!"

"Very good advice," said the magistrate, smiling indulgently. "But-"

"But you must not interfere!" snapped the clerk-who kept the books of the Salutation in Ambleside and not of the Low Wood Inn.

"Haven't you sense to see the girl is fainting?" the landlady replied wrathfully.

"Oh, well-"

"I am better now," Henrietta said bravely. And she drew a deep breath. A little colour-induced perhaps by Hornyold's unsparing gaze-was coming back to her cheeks. "Would you-can

I have a glass of water?" she murmured.

Mrs. Gilson was bustling to the door to give the order when it opened, and Mr. Bishop, who had gone to it a moment before, took in a glass of wine, and, secretly pleased that he had anticipated the need, handed it to her. Mrs. Gilson took it with a grunt of distrust, and made the girl swallow it; while the magistrate waited and watched, and thought that he had never seen a young woman who was so handsome, pale or red, fainting or fierce. And so fresh! so admirably, astonishingly fresh for the companion of such a man. A good many thoughts of various kinds flitted through his mind as he watched her, marking now the luxuriance of her fair hair, now the white chin, small but firm, and now the faint, faint freckles that, like clots in cream, only added to the delicacy of her complexion. He waited without impatience until the girl had drunk the wine, and when he spoke it was in a tone approaching the paternal.

"Now, my dear," he said, "you are going to be a good girl and sensible, I am sure. We don't want to send you to prison to herd with people with whom, to judge from your appearance, you have not been wont to mix. And therefore we give you this opportunity-there's no need we should, you know-of telling us who you are, and whence you come, and what you know; that if it appears that you have fallen into this man's company in ignorance, and not knowing what manner of man he was, we may prevent this charge appearing, and instead of committing you to Appleby, place you here or elsewhere under bond to appear.

Which, in a case so serious as this, is not a course we could adopt were you not so very young, and," with a humorous look at the group by the door, "so very good-looking! So now be a good girl and don't be afraid, but tell me at once who you are, and where you joined this man."

"If I do not," Henrietta said, looking at him with clear eyes, "must I go to prison?"

"Appleby gaol," said the clerk, glancing over his glasses.

"Then you must send me there," she replied, a little faintly. "For I cannot tell you."

"Don't be a fool!" growled Mrs. Gilson in her ear.

"I cannot tell you," Henrietta repeated more firmly.

Mr. Hornyold stared. He was growing angry, for he was not accustomed to be set at naught. After their fashion they all stared.

"Come, come, my dear," the runner remonstrated smoothly. "If you don't tell us, we shall think there's more behind."

She did not answer.

"And that being so, it's only a matter of time to learn what it is," the runner continued cunningly. "Tell us now and save time, because we are sure to get to know. Young women as pretty as you are not hard to trace."

But she shook her head. And the face Bishop called pretty was stubborn. The group by the door, marking for future gossip every particular of her appearance, the stuff of her riding-habit, the fineness of her linen, the set of her head, made certain that she was no common trollope. They wondered what would happen to

her, and hoped, the more tender-hearted, that there would be no scene, and no hysterics to end it.

The clerk raised his pen in the air. "Understand," he said, "you will be remanded to Appleby gaol-it's no very comfortable place, I can tell you-and later, you will be brought up again and committed, I've very little doubt, to take your trial on these charges. If the principal offender be taken, as he is likely to be taken before the day is out, you'll be tried with him. But it is not necessary. Now do you understand?" he continued, speaking slowly. "And are you still determined to give no evidence-showing how you came to be with this man?"

Henrietta's eyes were full of trouble. She shivered.

"Where shall I be tried?" she muttered in an unsteady voice.

"Appleby," the clerk said curtly. "Or in His Majesty's Bench at Westminster! Now think, before it is too late."

"It is too late," she answered in a low tone, "I cannot help it now."

The magistrate leant forward. What a fool the girl was! If she went to Appleby he would see no more of her, save for an hour or two when she was brought up again before being committed. Whereas, if she spoke and they made her a witness, she might be lodged somewhere in the neighbourhood under surveillance. And she was so handsome and so young-the little fool! – he would not be sorry to see more of her.

"I give you a last chance," he said.

She shook her head.

The magistrate shrugged his shoulders.

"Then make the committal out!" he said. "There's enough to justify it." It was some satisfaction to think that locked up with half a dozen sluts at Appleby she would soon be sorry for herself. "Make it out!" he repeated.

If the hysterics did not come now he was very much mistaken if they did not come later, when the gaol doors were shut on her. She was evidently of respectable condition; a curate's daughter, perhaps, figged out by the man who had deceived her, or a lady's lady, spoiled by her mistress, and taught ideas above her station. On such, the gaol, with its company and its hardships, fell severely. It would soon, he fancied, bring her to her senses.

The clerk dipped his pen in the ink, and after casting a last glance at the girl to see if she would still yield, began to write. She watched him with fascinated eyes, watched him in a kind of stupor. The thought throbbed loudly and more loudly in her head, "What will become of me? What will become of me?" Meanwhile the silence was broken only by the squeaking of the pen and a single angry "Lord's sakes!" which fell from the landlady. The others awaited the end with whatever of pity, or interest, or greedy excitement came natural to them. They were within, and others were without; and they had a delicious sense of privilege. They would have much to tell: For one does not every day see a pretty girl, young, and tenderly nurtured, as this girl seemed to be, and a lady to the eye, committed to the common gaol on a charge of murder-murder, and treason felony, was it,

they called it? Treason felony! That meant hanging, drawing, and quartering. Lord's sakes, indeed; poor thing, how would she bear it? And though it is likely that some among them-Mrs. Gilson for one-didn't think it would come to this, there was a frown on the landlady's brow that would have done honour to the Lord Chancellor Eldon himself.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN ANTHONY CLYNE

Mr. Bishop of Bow Street alone watched the clerk's pen with a look of doubt. He had his own views about the girl. But he did not interfere, and his discontent with the posture of affairs was only made clear when a knock came at the door. Then he was at the door, and had raised the latch before those who were nearest could open.

"Have you got him?" he asked eagerly. And he thrust his head into the passage.

Even Henrietta turned to catch the answer, her lips parting. Her breath seemed to stop. The clerk held his pen. The magistrate by a gesture exacted silence.

"No, but-"

"No?" the runner cried in chagrin.

"No!" The voice sounded something peremptory. "Certainly not. But I want to see-ahem! – yes, Mr. Hornyold. At once!"

Henrietta, at the first word of the answer, had turned again. She had turned so far that she now had her back full to the door, and her face to the farthest corner. But it was not the same Henrietta, nor the same face. She sat rigid, stiff, turned to stone; she was scarlet from hair to neck-ribbon. Her very eyes burned, her shoulders burned. And her eyes were wild with insupportable

shame. To be found thus! To be found thus, and by him! Better, far better the gaol, and all it meant!

Meanwhile the magistrate, after a brief demur and a little whispering and the appearance of a paper with a name on it, rose. He went out. A moment later his clerk was summoned, and he went out. Bishop had gone out first of all. Those who were left and who had nothing better to do than to stare at the girl's back, whispered together, or bade one another listen and hear what was afoot outside. Presently these were joined by one or two of the boldest in the passage, who muttered hurriedly what they knew, or sought information, or stared with double power at the girl's back. But Henrietta sat motionless, with the same hot blush on her cheeks and the same misery in her eyes.

Presently Mrs. Gilson was summoned, and she went out. The others, freed from the constraint of her presence, talked a little louder and a little more freely. And wonder grew. The two village constables, who remained and who felt themselves responsible, looked important, and one cried "Silence" a time or two, as if the court were sitting. The other explained the law, of which he knew as much as a Swedish turnip, on the subject of treason felony. But mixing it up with the *Habeas Corpus* which was then suspended, he was tripped up by a neighbour before he could reach the minutiae of the punishment. Which otherwise must have had much interest for the prisoner.

At length the door opened, the other constable cried, "Silence! Silence in the court!" And there entered-the landlady.

The surprise of the little knot of people at the back of the room was great but short-lived.

Mrs. Gilson turned about and surveyed them with her arms akimbo and her lower lip thrust out. "You can all just go!" she said. "And the sooner the better! And if ever I catch you" – to the more successful of the constables, on whose feet her eye had that moment alighted – "up my stairs with those dirty clogs, Peter Harrison, I'll clout you! Now, off you go! Do you think I keep carpets for loons like you?"

"But-the prisoner?" gasped Peter, clutching at his fast-departing glory. "The prisoner, missus?"

"The goose!" the landlady retorted with indescribable scorn. "Go you down and see what the other ganders think of it. And leave me to mind my business! I'll see to the prisoner." And she saw them all out and closed the door.

When the room was clear she tapped Henrietta on the shoulder. "There's no gaol for you," she said bluntly. "Though it is not yourself you've got to thank for it. They've put you in my charge and you're to stay here, and I'm to answer for you. So you'll just say straight out if you'll stay, or if you'll run."

Had the girl burst into tears the landlady had found it reasonable. Instead, "Where is he?" Henrietta whispered. She did not even turn her head.

"Didn't you hear," Mrs. Gilson retorted, "that he had not been taken?"

"I mean-I mean-"

"Ah!" Mrs. Gilson exclaimed, a little enlightened. "You mean the gentleman that was here, and spoke for you? Yes, you are right, it's him you've to thank. Well, he's gone to Whitehaven, but he'll see you tomorrow."

Henrietta sighed.

"In the meantime," Mrs. Gilson continued, "you'll give me your word you'll not run. Gilson is bound for you in fifty pounds to show you when you're wanted. And as fifty pounds is fifty pounds, and a mint of money, I'd as soon turn the key on you as not. Girls that run once, run easy," the landlady added severely.

"I will not run away," Henrietta said meekly-more meekly perhaps than she had ever spoken in her life. "And-and I am much obliged to you, and thankful to you," in a very small voice. "Will you please to let me go to my room, and you can lock me in?"

She had risen from her seat, and though she did not turn to the landlady, she stole, shamed and askance, a look at her. Her lip trembled, her head hung. And Mrs. Gilson, on her side, seemed for a moment on the verge of some unwonted demonstration; she stood awkward and large, and perhaps from sheer clumsiness avoided even while she appeared to invite the other's look. But nothing happened until the two passed out, Henrietta first, like a prisoner, and Mrs. Gilson stiffly following.

Then there were half a dozen persons waiting to stare in the passage, and the way Mrs. Gilson's tongue fell loose was a warning. In two seconds, only one held her ground: the same

dark girl with the gipsy-like features whose mocking smile had annoyed Henrietta as she dressed that morning. Ah, me! what ages ago that morning seemed!

To judge from Mrs. Gilson's indignation, this girl was the last who should have stood.

"Don't you black-look me!" the landlady cried. "But pack! D'you hear, impudence, pack! Or not one drop of milk do I take from your old skinflint of a father! And he'll drub you finely, if he's not too old and silly-till you smile on the other side of your face! I'd like to know what's taken you to-day to push yourself among your betters!"

"No harm," the girl muttered. She had retreated, scowling, half-way down the stairs.

"And no good, either!" the landlady retorted. "Get you gone, or I'll make your ears ring after another fashion!"

Henrietta heard no more. She had shrunk from the uproar and fled quickly to her room. With a bursting heart and a new humility she drew the key from the wards of the lock and set it on the outside, hoping-though the hope was slender-to avoid further words with the landlady. The hope came nearer fulfilment, however, than she expected; for Mrs. Gilson, after panting upstairs, only cried through the door that she would send her up supper, and then went down again-perhaps with a view to catching Bess Hinkson in a fresh trespass.

Bess was gone, however. But adventures are for the brave, and not ten minutes passed before the landlady was at issue

with a fresh adversary. She found the coach-office full, so full that it overflowed into the hall. Modest Ann, called this way and that, had need of four hands to meet the demands made upon her; so furious were the calls for the lemons and rum and Old Geneva, the grateful perfume of which greeted Mrs. Gilson as she descended. Alas, something else greeted her: and that was a voice, never a favourite with her, but now raised in accents particularly distasteful. Tyson, the Troutbeck apothecary—a flashy, hard-faced young man in pepper-and-salt, and Bedford cords—had seized the command and the ear of the company in the coach-office, and was roasting Long Tom Gilson upon his own hearth.

"Not know who she is?" he was saying in the bullying tone which made him hated of the pauper class. "You don't ask me to believe that, Tom? Come! Come!"

"It's what I say," Gilson answered.

He sat opposite the other, his hands on his knees, his face red and sulky. He did not like to be baited.

"And you go bail for her?" Tyson cried. "You have gone bail for her?"

"Well?"

"And don't know her name?"

"Well-no."

The doctor sat back in his chair, his glass in his hand, and looked round for approbation.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "what do you think of that for a

dalesman?"

"Well, it wasn't long-headed, Tom," said one unwillingly. "Not to call long-headed, so to speak," with north-country caution. "I'd not go bail myself, not for nobody I'd not know."

"No," several agreed. "No, no!"

"No, but-"

"But what, Tom, what?" the doctor asked, waiting in his positive fashion for the other to plunge deeper into the mire.

"Captain Clyne, that I do know," Gilson continued, "it was he said 'Do it!' And he said something to the Rector, I don't doubt, for he was agreeable."

"But he did not go bail for her?" the apothecary suggested maliciously.

"No," Tom answered, breathing hard. "But for reason she was not there, but here. Anyway," he continued, somewhat anxious to shift the subject, "he said it and I done it, and I'd do it again for Captain Clyne. I tell you he's not a man as it's easy to say 'No' to, Mr. Tyson. As these Radicals i' Lancashire ha' found out, 'od rot 'em! He's that active among 'em, he's never a letter, I'm told, but has a coffin drawn on it, and yeomanry in his house down beyond both day and night, I hear!"

"I heard," said one, "in Cartmel market, he was to be married next week."

"Ay," said the doctor jocosely, "but not to the young lady as Tom is bail for! I tell you, Tom, he's been making a fool of you just to keep this bit of evidence against the Radicals in his hands."

"Why not send her to Appleby gaol, then?" Tom retorted, with a fair show of sense.

"Because he knows you'll cosset her here, and he thinks to loose her tongue that way! They can gaol her after, if this don't answer."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Ay, while you run the risk! If it's not that, what's he doing here?"

"Why should he not be here?" Gilson asked slowly. "Hasn't he the old house in Furness, not two miles from Newby Bridge! And his mother a Furness woman. I do hear that the boy's to be brought there for safety till the shires are quieter. And maybe it's that brings Captain Anthony here."

"But what has that to do with the young woman you're going bail for?" the doctor retorted. "Go bail, Tom, for a wench you don't know, and that'll jump the moon one of these fine nights! I tell you, man, I never heard the like! Never! Go bail for a girl you don't know!"

"And I tell you," cried a voice that made the glasses ring, "I have heard the like! And I'll give you the man, my lad!" And Mrs. Gilson, putting aside the two who blocked the doorway, confronted the offending Tyson with a look comparable only to that of Dr. Keats of Eaton when he rolled up his sleeves. "I'll give you the name, my lad!" she repeated.

"Well," the doctor answered, though he was manifestly taken aback, "you must confess, Mrs. Gilson--"

"Nay, I'll confess nothing!" the landlady retorted. "What need, when you're the man? Not give bail for a woman you don't know? Much you knew of Madge Peters when you made her your wife! And wasn't that going bail for her? Ay, and bail that you'll find it hard to get out of, my man, though you may wish to! For the matter of that, it's small blame to her, whatever comes of it!" Mrs. Gilson continued, setting her arms akimbo. "If all I hear of your goings-on is true! What do you think she's doing, ill and sick at home, while you're hanging about old Hinkson's? Ay, you may look black, but tell me what Bess Hinkson's doing about my place all this day? I never saw her here twice in a day in all my life before, and—"

"What do you mean?" Tyson cried violently. To hear a thing which he thought no one suspected brought up thus before a roomful of men! He looked black as thunder at his accuser.

"I mean no harm of your wife," the terrible landlady answered; something-perhaps this roasting of her husband on his own hearth-had roused her beyond the ordinary. "None, my gentleman, and I know none. But if you want no harm said of her, show yourself a bit less at Hinkson's. And a bit less in my house. And a bit more in your own! And the harm will be less likely to happen!"

"I'll never cross your doorstep again!" Tyson roared.

And stumbling to his feet he cast off one or two who in their well meaning would have stayed him. He made for the door. But he was not to escape without further collision. On the threshold

he ran plump against a person who was entering, cursed the newcomer heartily, and without a look pushed violently by him and was gone.

He neither cared nor saw who it was whom he had jostled. But the company saw, and some rose to their feet in consternation, while others, carried their hands to their heads. There was an involuntary movement of respect which the new comer acknowledged by touching his hat. He had the air of one who knew how to behave to his inferiors; but the air, also, of one who never forgot that they were his inferiors.

"Your friend seems in a hurry," he said. His face was not a face that easily betrayed emotion, but he looked tired.

"Beg your honour's pardon, I am sure," Gilson answered. "Something's put him out, and he did not see you, sir."

Mrs. Gilson muttered that a pig could have seen. But her words were lost in the respectful murmur which made the company sharers in the landlord's apology.

Not that for the most part they knew the strange gentleman. But there is a habit of authority which once gained becomes a part of the man. And Anthony Clyne had this. He retained wherever he went some shadow of the quarter-deck manner. He had served under Nelson, and under Exmouth; but he had resisted, as a glance at his neat, trim figure proved, that coarsening influence which spoiled for Pall Mall too many of the sea-dogs of the great war. Like his famous leader, he had left an arm in the cockpit; and the empty sleeve which he wore pinned

to the lappel of his coat added, if possible, to the dignity of the upright carriage and the lean, shaven face. The death of his elder brother had given him the family place, a seat in the House, a chair at White's, and an income handsome for his day. And he looked all this and more; so that such a company as now eyed him with respect judged him a very perfect gentleman, if a little distant.

But from Clyne Old Hall, where he lived, he could see on the horizon the smoke of toiling cities; and in those cities there were hundreds who hated his cold proud face, and thousands who cursed his name. Not that he was a bad man or a tyrant, or himself ground the faces of the poor. But discipline was his watchword, and reform his bugbear. To palter with reform, to listen to a word about the rights of the masses, was to his mind to parley with anarchy. That governors and governed could be the same appeared to his mind as absurd as that His Majesty's ships could be commanded from the forecastle. All for the people and nothing by the people was his political maxim, and one amply meeting, as he believed, all eventualities. Lately he had had it carved on a mantel-piece, and the prattle of his only child, as the club-footed boy spelled it out syllable by syllable, was music to his ears.

Whoever wavered, therefore, whoever gave to the violence of those times, he stood firm. And he made others stand. It was his honest belief that a little timely severity—in other words, a whiff of grape-shot—would have nipped the French Revolution in the

bud; and while he owned that the lower orders were suffering and times were bad, that bread was dear and work wanting, he was for quelling the least disorder with the utmost rigour of the law.

Such was the man who accepted with a curt nod Tom Gilson's apology. Then "Have you a room ready?" he asked.

"The fire is still burning in Mr. Rogers's room," Mrs. Gilson answered, smoothing at once her apron and her brow. "And it'll not be used again to-night. But I thought that you had gone on, sir, to Whitehaven."

"I shall go on to-morrow," he answered, frowning slightly.

"I'll show your honour the way," Tom Gilson said.

"Very good," he answered. "And dinner, ma'am, as soon as possible."

"To be sure, sir." And "This way, your honour." And taking two candles Gilson went out before Captain Clyne, and with greater ceremony than would be used in these days, lighted him along the passage and up the stairs to Mr. Rogers's room in the south wing.

The fire had sunk somewhat low, but the room which had witnessed so many emotions in the last twenty-four hours made no sign. The table had been cleared. The glass fronts of the cupboards shone dully; only a chair or two stood here or there out of place. That was all. But had Henrietta, when she descended to breakfast that morning, foreseen who would fill her chair before night, who would dine at her table and brood with stern unseeing eyes on the black-framed prints, for whom the pale-faced clock

would tick off depressing seconds, what-what would she have thought? And how would she have faced her future?

CHAPTER VIII

STARVECROW FARM

The company at Mrs. Gilson's, impressed by the appearance of a gentleman of Captain Clyne's position, scarce gave a second thought to the doctor's retreat. But to Tyson, striding homewards through the mud and darkness, the insult he had suffered and the feeble part he had played filled the world. For him the inn-parlour still cackled at his expense. He saw himself the butt of the evening, the butt of many evenings. He was a vain, ill-conditioned man, who among choice spirits would have boasted of his philandering. But not the less he hated to be brought to book before those whom he deemed his inferiors. He could not deny that the landlady had trounced him, and black bile whelmed all his better feelings as he climbed the steep track behind the inn. "D-d shrew!" he growled, "D-d shrew!" and breathing hard, as much in rage as with exertion, he stood an instant to look back and shake his fist before he plunged into the darkness of the wooded dell through which the path ascended.

Two or three faint lights marked the position of the inn a couple of fields below him. Beyond it the pale surface of the lake reflected a dim radiance, bestowed on it through some rift in the clouds invisible from where he stood. A far-away dog barked, a curlew screamed on the hill above him, the steady fall of a pair

of oars in the rowlocks rose from the lake. The immensity of the night closed all in; and on the thoughtful might have laid a burden of melancholy.

But Tyson thought of his wrongs, not of the night, and with a curse he turned and plunged into the wood, following a path impossible for a stranger. As it was he stumbled over roots, the saplings whipped him smartly, a low bough struck off his hat, and when he came to the stream which whirled through the bottom of the dingle he had much ado to find the plank bridge. But at length he emerged from the wood, gained the road, and mounted the steep shoulder that divided the Low Wood hamlet from the vale of Troutbeck.

Where his road topped the ridge the gaunt outline of a tall, narrow building rose in the gloom. It resembled a sentry-box commanding either valley. It was set back some twenty paces from the road with half a dozen ragged fir trees intervening; and on its lower side-but the night hid them-some mean farm-buildings clung to the steep. With the wind souging among the firs and rustling through the scanty grass, the place on that bleak shoulder seemed lonely even at night. But in the day its ugliness and barrenness were a proverb. They called it "Starvecrow Farm."

Nevertheless, Tyson paused at the gate, and with an irresolute oath looked over it.

"Cursed shrew!" he said, for the third time. "What business is it of hers if I choose to amuse myself?"

And with his heart hardened, he flung the gate wide, and entered. He had not gone two paces before he leapt back, startled by the fierce snarl of a dog, that, unseen, flung itself to the end of its chain. Disappointed in its spring, it began to bay.

The doctor's fright was only momentary.

"What, Turk!" he cried. "What are you doing here? What the blazes are you doing here? Down, you brute, down!"

The dog knew his voice, ceased to bark, and began to whimper. Tyson entered, and assured that the watchdog knew him, kicked it brutally from his path. Then he groped his way between the trees, stumbled down three broken steps at the corner of the house, and passing round the building reached the door which was on the further side from the road. He tried it, but it was fastened. He knocked on it.

A slip-shod foot dragged across a stone floor. A high cracked voice asked, "Who's there?"

"I! Tyson!" the doctor answered impatiently. "Who should it be at this hour?"

"Is't you, doctor?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Who's wi' ye?"

"No one, you old fool! Who should there be?"

A key creaked in the lock, and the great bar was withdrawn; but slowly, as it seemed to the apothecary, and reluctantly. He entered and the door was barred behind him.

"Where's Bess?" he asked.

The bent creeping figure that had admitted him replied that she was "somewheres about, somewheres about." After which, strangely clad in a kind of bedgown and nightcap, it trailed back to the settle beside the turf and wood fire, which furnished both light and warmth. The fire, indeed, was the one generous thing the room contained. All else was sordid and pinched and mean. The once-whitened walls were stained, the rafters were smoked in a dozen places, the long dresser-for the room was large, though low-was cracked and ill-furnished, a brick supported one leg of the table. Even in the deep hearth-place, where was such comfort as the place could boast, a couple of logs served for stools and a frowsy blanket gave a squalid look to the settle.

Tyson stood on the hearth with his back to the fire, and eyed the room with a scowl of disgust. The old man, bent double over a stick which he was notching, breathed loudly and laboriously.

"What folly is this about the dog?" Tyson asked contemptuously.

The old man looked up, cunning in his eyes.

"Ask her," he said.

"Eh?"

The miser bending over his task seemed to be taken with a fit of silent laughter.

"It's the still sow sups the brose," he said. "And I'm still! I'm still."

"What are you doing?" Tyson growled.

"Nothing much! Nothing much! You've not," looking up with

greed in his eyes, "an old letter-back to spare?"

Tyson seldom came to the house unfurnished with one. He had long known that Hinkson belonged to the class of misers who, if they can get a thing for nothing, are as well pleased with a scrap of paper, a length of string, or a mouldy crust, as with a crown-piece. The poor land about the house, which with difficulty supported three or four cows, on the produce of which the Hinksons lived, might have been made profitable at the cost of some labour and a little money. But labour and money were withheld. And Tyson often doubted if the miser's store were as large as rumour had it, or even if there were a store at all.

"Not that," he would add, "large or small, some one won't cut his throat for it one day!"

He produced the old letter, and after showing it, held it behind him.

"What of the dog now?" he said.

"Na, na, I'll not speak for that!"

"Then you won't have it!"

But the old fellow only cackled superior.

"What's-what's-a pound-note a week? Is't four pound a month?"

"Ay!" the doctor answered. "It is. That's money, my lad!"

"Ay!"

The old man hugged himself, and rocked to and fro in an ecstasy.

"That's money! And four pound a month," he consulted the

stick he was notching, "is forty-eight pound a year?"

"And four to it," Tyson answered. "Who's paying you that?"

"Na, na!"

"And what's it to do with the dog?"

Hinkson looked knavish but frightened.

"Hist!" he said. "Here's Bess. I'd use to wallop her, but now--"

"She wallops you," the visitor muttered. "That's the ticket, I expect."

The girl entered by the mean staircase door and nodded to him coolly.

"I supposed it was you," she said slightly.

And for the hundredth or two-hundredth time he felt with rage that he was in the presence of a stronger nature than his own. He could treat the old man, whose greed had survived his other passions, and almost his faculties, pretty much as he pleased. But though he had sauntered through the gate a score of times with the intention of treating Bess as he had treated more than one village girl who pleased him, he had never re-crossed the threshold without a sense not only of defeat, but of inferiority. He came to strut, he remained to kneel.

He fought against that feeling now, calling his temper to his aid.

"What folly is this about the dog?" he asked.

"Father thinks," she replied demurely, "that if thieves come it can be heard better at the gate."

"Heard? I should think it could be heard in Bowness!"

"Just so."

"But your father-"

"Father!" sharply, "go to bed!" And then to the visitor, "Give him a ha'penny," she muttered. "He won't go without!"

"But I don't care-"

"I don't care either-which of you goes!" she retorted. "But one of you goes."

Sullenly he produced a copper and put it in the old man's quivering hand-not for the first time by several. Hinkson gripped it, and closing his hand upon it as if he feared it would be taken from him, he hobbled away, and disappeared behind the dingy hangings of the box-bed.

"And now what's the mystery?" Tyson asked, seating himself on one of the stools.

"There is none," she answered, standing before him where the firelight fell on her dark face and gipsy beauty. "Call it a whim if you like. Perhaps I don't want my lads to come in till I've raddled my cheeks! Or perhaps" – flippantly-"Oh, any 'perhaps' you like!"

"I know no lad you have but me," he said.

"I don't know one," she answered, seating herself on the settle, and bending forward with her elbows on her knees and her face between her hands. It was a common pose with her. "When I've a lad I want a man!" she continued-"a man!"

"Don't you call me a man?" he answered, his eyes taking their fill of her face.

"Of a sort." she rejoined disdainfully. "Of a sort. Good enough for here. But I shan't live all my life here! D'you ever think what a God-forsaken corner this is, Tyson? Why, man, we are like mice in a dark cupboard, and know as much of the world!"

"What's the world to us?" he asked. Her words and her ways were often a little beyond him.

"That's it!" she answered, in a tone of contemptuous raillery. "What's the world to us? We are here and not there. We must curtsy to parson and bob to curate, and mind our manners with the overseers! We must be proud if Madam inquires after our conduct, but we must not fancy that we are the same flesh and blood as she is! Ah, when I meet her," with sudden passion, "and she looks at me to see if I am clean, I-do you know what I think of? Do you know what I dream of? Do you know what I hope?" – she snapped her strong white teeth together – "ay, hope to see?"

"What?"

"What they saw twenty years ago in France-her white neck under the knife! That was what happened to her and her like there, I am told, and I wish it could happen here! And I'd knit, as girls knitted there, and counted the heads that fell into the baskets! When that time comes Madam won't look to see if I am clean!"

He looked at her uncomfortably. He did not understand her.

"How the devil do you come to know these things?" he exclaimed. It was not the first time she had opened to him in this strain-not the first by several. And the sharp edge was gone from

his astonishment. But she was not the less a riddle to him and a perplexity—a Sphinx, at once alluring and terrifying. "Who told you of them? What makes you think of them?" he repeated.

"Do you never think of them?" she retorted, leaning forward and fixing her eyes on his. "Do you never wonder why all the good things are for a few, and for the rest—a crust? Why the rector dines at the squire's table and you dine in the steward's room? Why the parson gives you a finger and thinks he stoops, and his ladies treat you as if you were dirt—only the apothecary? Why you are in one class and they in another till the end of time?"

"D-n them!" he muttered, his face a dull red. She knew how to touch him on the raw.

"Do you never think of those things?" she asked.

"Well," he said, taking her up sullenly, "if I do?"

She rocked herself back on the settle and looked across at him out of half-closed eyes.

"Then—if you do think," she answered slowly, "it is to be seen if you are a man."

"A man?"

"Ay, a man! A man! For if you think of these things, if you stand face to face with them, and do nothing, you are no man! And no lad for me!" lightly. "You are well matched as it is then. Just a match and no more for your white-faced, helpless dumpling of a wife!"

"It is all very well," he muttered, "to talk!"

"Ay, but presently we shall do as well as talk! Out in the world

they are doing now! They are beginning to do. But here-what do you know in this cupboard? No more than the mice."

"Fine talk!" he retorted, stung by her contempt. "But you talk without knowing. There have been parsons and squires from the beginning, and there will be parsons and squires to the end. You may talk until you are black in the face, Bess, but you won't alter that!"

"Ay, talk!" she retorted drily. "You may talk. But if you do-as they did in France twenty years gone. Where are their squires and parsons now? The end came quick enough there, when it came."

"I don't know much about that," he growled.

"Ay, but I do."

"But how the devil do you?" he answered, in some irritation, but more wonder. "How do you?" And he looked round the bare, sordid kitchen. The fire, shooting warm tongues up the black cavernous chimney, made the one spot of comfort that was visible.

"Never you mind!" she answered, with a mysterious and tantalising smile. "I do. And by-and-by, if we've the spirit of a mouse, things will happen here! Down yonder-I see it all-there are thousands and tens of thousands starving. And stacks burning. And mobs marching, and men drilling, and more things happening than you dream of! And all that means that by-and-by I shall be knitting while Madam and Miss and that proud-faced, slim-necked chit at the inn, who faced us all down to-day-"

"Why," he struck in, in fresh surprise, "what has she done to

you now?"

"That's my business, never you mind! Only, by-and-by, they will all smile on the wrong side of their face!"

He stared morosely into the fire. And she watched him, her long lashes veiling a sly and impish amusement. If he dreamed that she loved him, if he fancied her a victim of his bow and spear, he strangely, most strangely, misread her. And a sudden turn, a single quick glance should have informed him. For as the flames by turns lit her face and left it to darkness, they wrought it to many expressions; but never to kindness.

"There's many I'd like to see brought down a piece," he muttered at last. "Many, many. And I'm as fond of my share of good things as most. But it's all talk, there's nought to be done! Nor ever will be! There have been parsons and squires from the beginning."

"Would you do it," she asked softly, "if there were anything to be done?"

"Try me."

"I doubt it. And that's why you are no lad for me."

He rose to his feet in a temper at that. He turned his back on the fire.

"What's the use of getting on this every time!" he cried. And he took up his hat. "I'm weary of it. I'm off. I don't know that I shall come back again. What's the use?" with a side-long glance at her dark, handsome face and curving figure which the firelight threw into prominence.

"If there were anything to do," she asked, as if he had never spoken, never answered the question, "would you do it?" And she smiled at him, her head thrown back, her red lips parted, her eyes tempting.

"You know I would if-" He paused.

"There were some one to be won by it?"

He nodded, his eyes kindling.

"Well-"

No more. For as she spoke the word, and he bent forward, something heavy fell on the floor overhead; and she sat up straight. Her eyes, grown suddenly hard and small-perhaps with fright-held Tyson's eyes.

"What's that?" he cried, frowning suspiciously. "There's nobody upstairs?"

"Father's in bed," she said. She held up a finger for silence.

"And there's nobody else in the house?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Who should there be?" she said. "It's the cat, I suppose."

"You'd better let me see," he rejoined. And he took a step towards the staircase door.

"No need," she answered listlessly, after listening anew. "I'm not afraid. The cat is not here; it must have been the cat. I'll go up when you are gone, and see."

"It's not safe," he grumbled, still inclined to go. "You two alone here, and the old man said to be as rich as a lord!"

"Ay, said to be," she answered, smiling "As you said you were

going ten minutes ago, and you are not gone yet. But-" she rose with a yawn, partly real and partly forced, "you must go now, my lad."

"But why?" he answered. "When we were just beginning to understand one another."

"Why?" she answered pertly. "Because father wants to sleep. Because your wife will scratch my eyes out if you don't. Because I am not going to say another word to-night-whatever I may say to-morrow. And because-it's my will, my lad. That's all."

He muttered his discontent, swinging his hat in his hand, and making eyes at her. But she kept him at arm's length, and after a moment's argument she drove him to the door.

"All the same," he said, when he stood outside, "you had better let me look upstairs."

But she laughed.

"I dare say you'd like it!" she said; and she shut the door in his face and he heard the great bar that secured it shot into its socket in the thickness of the wall. In a temper not much better than that in which he had left the inn, he groped his way round the house, and up the three steps at the corner of the building. He swore at the dog that it might know who came, and so he passed into the road. Once he looked back at the house, but all was dark. The windows looked the other way.

CHAPTER IX

PUNISHMENT

Anthony Clyne came to a stand before her, and lifted his hat.

"I understand," he said, without letting his eyes meet hers—he was stiffness itself, but perhaps he too had his emotions—"that you preferred to see me here rather than indoors?"

"Yes," Henrietta answered. And the girl thanked heaven that though the beating of her heart had nearly choked her a moment before, her tone was as hard and uncompromising as his. He could not guess, he never should guess, what strain she put on nerve and will that she might not quail before him; nor how often, with her quivering face hidden in the pillow, she had told herself, before rising, that it was for once only, once only, and that then she need never see again the man she had wronged.

"I do not know," he continued slowly, "whether you have anything to say?"

"Nothing," she answered. They were standing on the Ambleside road, a short furlong from the inn. Leafless trees climbed the hill-side above them; and a rough slope, unfenced and strewn with boulders and dying bracken, ran down from their feet to the lake.

"Then," he rejoined, with a scarcely perceptible hardening of the mouth, "I had best say as briefly as possible what I am come

to say."

"If you please," she said. Hitherto she had faced him regally. Now she averted her eyes ever so slightly, and placed herself so that she looked across the water that gleamed pale under the morning mist.

Yet, even with her eyes turned from him, he did not find it easy to say what he must say. And for a few seconds he was silent. At last "I do not wish to upbraid you," he began in a voice somewhat lower in tone. "You have done a very foolish and a very wicked, wicked thing, and one which cannot be undone in the eyes of the world. That is for all to see. You have left your home and your friends and your family under circumstances--"

She turned her full face to him suddenly.

"Have they," she said, "empowered you to speak to me?"

"Yes."

"They do not wish to see me themselves?"

"No."

"Nor perhaps-wish me to return to them?"

"No."

She nodded as she looked away again; in sheer defiance, he supposed. He did not guess that she did it to mask the irrepressible shiver which the news caused her.

He thought her, on the contrary, utterly unrepentant, and it hardened him to speak more austere, to give his feelings freer vent.

"Had you done this thing with a gentleman," he said, "there

had been, however heartless and foolish the act, some hope that the matter might be set straight. And some excuse for yourself; since a man of our class might have dazzled you by the possession of qualities which the person you chose could not have. But an elopement with a needy adventurer, without breeding, parts, or honesty-a criminal, and wedded already-

"If he were not wedded already," she said, "I had been with him now!"

His face grew a shade more severe, but otherwise he did not heed the taunt.

"Such an-an act," he said, "unfits you in your brother's eyes to return to his home." He paused an instant. "Or to the family you have disgraced. I am bound-I have no option, to tell you this."

"You say it as from them?"

"I do. I have said indeed less than they bade me say. And not more, I believe on my honour, than the occasion requires. A young gentlewoman," he continued bitterly, "brought up in the country with every care, sheltered from every temptation, with friends, with home, with every comfort and luxury, and about to be married to a gentleman in her own rank in life, meets secretly, clandestinely, shamefully a man, the lowest of the low, on a par in refinement with her own servants, but less worthy! She deceives with him her friends, her family, her relatives! If" – with some emotion-"I have overstated one of these things, God forgive me!"

"Pray go on!" she said, with her face averted. And thinking that she was utterly hardened, utterly without heart, thinking that

her outward calm spelled callousness, and that she felt nothing, he did continue.

"Can she," he said, "who has been so deceitful herself, complain if the man deceives her? She has chosen a worthless creature before her family and her friends? Is she not richly served if he treats her after his own nature and her example? If, after stooping to the lawless level of such a poor thing, she finds herself involved in his penalties, and her name a scandal and a shame to her family!"

"Is that all?" she asked. But not a quiver of the voice, not a tremour of the shoulders, betrayed what she was feeling, what she suffered, how fiercely the brand was burning into her soul.

"That is all they bade me say," he replied in a calmer and more gentle tone. "And that they would make arrangements-such arrangements as may be possible for your future. But they would not take you back."

"And now-what on your own account?" she asked, almost flippantly. "Something, I suppose?"

"Yes," he said, answering her slowly, and with a steady look of condemnation. For in all honesty the girl's attitude shocked and astonished him. "I have something to say on my own account. Something. But it is difficult to say it."

She turned to him and raised her eyebrows.

"Really!" she said. "You seem to speak so easily."

He did not remark how white, even against the pale shimmer of the lake, was the face that mocked him; and her heartlessness

seemed dreadful to him.

"I wish," he said, "to say only one thing on my own account."

"There is only one thing you must not say," she retorted, turning on him without warning and speaking with concentrated passion. "I have been, it may be, as foolish as you say. I am only nineteen. I may have been, I don't know about that, very wicked-as wicked as you say. And what I have done in my folly and in my-you call it wickedness-may be a disgrace to my family. But I have done nothing, nothing, sir," - she raised her head proudly-"to disgrace myself personally. Do you believe that?"

And then he did notice how white she was.

"If you tell me that, I do believe it," he said gravely.

"You must believe it," she rejoined with sudden vehemence. "Or you wrong me more cruelly than I have wronged you!"

"I do believe it," he said, conquered for the time by a new emotion.

"Then now I will hear you," she answered, her tone sinking again. "I will hear what you wish to say. Not that it will bend me. I have injured you. I own it, and am sorry for it on your account. On my own I am unhappy, but I had been more unhappy had I married you. You have been frank, let me be frank," she continued, her eyes alight, her tone almost imperious. "You sought not a wife, but a mother for your child! A woman, a little better bred than a nurse, to whom you could entrust the one being, the only being, you love, with less chance of its contamination," she laughed icily, "by the lower orders! If you

had any other motive in choosing me it was that I was your second cousin, of your own respectable family, and you did not derogate. But you forgot that I was young and a woman, as you were a man. You said no word of love to me, you begged for no favour; when you entered a room, you sought my eye no more than another's, you had no more softness for me than for another! If you courted me at all it was before others, and if you talked to me at all it was from the height of wise dullness, and about things I did not understand and things I hated! Until," she continued viciously, "at last I hated you! What could be more natural? What did you expect?"

A little colour had stolen into his face under the lash of her reproaches. He tried to seem indifferent, but he could not. His tone was forced and constrained when he answered.

"You have strange ideas," he said.

"And you have but two!" she riposted. "Politics and your boy! I cared," with concentrated bitterness, "for neither!"

That stung him to anger and retort.

"I can imagine it," he said. "Your likings appear to be on a different plane."

"They are at least not confined to fifty families!" she rejoined. "I do not think myself divine," she continued with feverish irony, "and all below me clay! I do not think because I and all about me are dull and stupid that all the world is dull and stupid, talking eternally about" – and she deliberately mocked his tone – "'the licence of the press!' and 'the imminence of anarchy!'"

To talk," with supreme scorn, "of the licence of the press and the imminence of anarchy to a girl of nineteen! It was at least to make the way very smooth for another!"

He looked at her in silence, frowning. Her frankness was an outrage on his dignity-and he, of all men, loved his dignity. But it surprised him at least as much as it shocked him. He remembered the girl sometimes silly, sometimes demure, to whom he had cast the handkerchief; and he had not been more astonished if a sheep had stood up and barked at him. He was here, prepared to meet a frightened, weeping, shamefaced child, imploring pardon, imploring mediation; and he found this! He was here to upbraid, and she scolded him. She marked with unerring eye the joints in his armour, and with her venomous woman's tongue she planted darts that he knew would rankle-rankle long after she was gone and he was alone. And a faint glimpse of the truth broke on him. Was it possible that he had misread the girl; whom he had deemed characterless, when she was not shy? Was it possible that he had under-valued her and slighted her? Was it possible that, while he had been judging her and talking down to her, she had been judging him and laughing in her sleeve?

The thought was not pleasant to a proud nature. And there was another thing he had to weigh. If she were so different in fact from the conception he had formed of her, the course which had occurred to him as the best, and which he was going to propose for her, might not be the best.

But he put that from him. A name for firmness at times

compels a man to obstinacy. It was so now. He set his jaw more stiffly, and-

"Will you hear me now?" he asked.

"If there is anything more to be said," she replied. She spoke wearily over her shoulder.

"I think there is," he rejoined stubbornly, "one thing. It will not keep you long. It refers to your future. There is a course which I think may be taken and may be advantageous to you."

"If," she cried impetuously, "it is to take me back to those-"

"On the contrary," he replied. He was not unwilling to wound one who had shown herself so unexpectedly capable of offence. "That is quite past," he continued. "There is no longer any question of that. And even the course I suggest is not without its disadvantages. It may not, at first sight, be more acceptable to you than returning to your home. But I trust you have learnt a lesson, and will now be guided." After saying which he coughed and hesitated, and at length, after twice pulling up his cravat, "I think," he said-"the matter is somewhat delicate-that I had better write what I have in my mind."

Under the dead weight of depression which had succeeded to passion, curiosity stirred faintly in her. But-

"As you please," she said.

"The more," he continued stiffly, "as in the immediate present there is nothing to be done. And therefore there is no haste. Until this" - he made a wry face, the thing was so hateful to him-"this inquiry is at an end, and you are free to leave, nothing

but preliminaries can be dealt with; those settled, however, I think there should be no delay. But you shall hear from me within the week."

"Very well." And after a slight pause, "That is all?"

"That is all, I think."

Yet he did not go. And she continued to stand with her shoulder turned towards him. He was a man of strong prejudices, and the habit of command had rendered him in some degree callous. But he was neither unkind by nature, nor, in spite of the story Walterson had told of him, inhuman in practice. To leave a young girl thus, to leave her without a word of leave-taking or regret, seemed even to him, now it came to the point, barbarous. The road stretched lonely on either side of them, the woods were brown and sad and almost leafless, the lake below them mirrored the unchanging grey above, or lost itself in dreary mist. And he remembered her in surroundings so different! He remembered how she had been reared, by whom encircled, amid what plenitude! And though he did not guess that the slender figure standing thus mute and forlorn would haunt him by night and by day for weeks to come, and harry and torment him with dumb reproaches—he still had not the heart to go without one gentler word.

And so "No, there is one thing," he said, his voice shaking very slightly, "I would like to add—I would like you to know. It is that after next week I shall be at Rysby in Cartmel-Rysby Hall—for about a month. It is not more than two miles from the foot of

the lake, and if you are still here and need advice--"

"Thank you."

"-- or help, I would like you to know that I am there."

"That I may apply to you?" she said without turning her head.

He could not tell whether at last there were tears in her voice, or whether she were merely drawing him on to flout him.

"I meant that," he said coldly.

"Thank you."

Certainly there was a queer sound in her voice.

He paused awkwardly.

"There is nothing more, I think?" he said.

"Nothing, thank you."

"Very well," he returned. "Then you will hear from me upon the matter I mentioned--in a day or two. Good-bye."

He went then--awkwardly, slowly. He felt himself, in spite of his arguments, in spite of his anger, in spite of the wrong which she had done him, and the disgrace which she brought on his name, -- he felt himself something of a cur. She was little more than a child, little more than a child; and he had not understood her! Even now he had no notion how often that plea would ring in his ears, and harass him and keep him wakeful. And Henrietta? She had told herself before the interview that with it the worst would be over. But as she heard his firm tread pass slowly away, down the road, and grow fainter and fainter, the pride that had supported her under his eyes sank low. A sense of her loneliness, so cruel that it wrung her heart, so cruel that she could have run

after him and begged him to punish her, to punish her as he pleased, if he would not leave her deserted, gripped her throat and brought salt tears to her eyes. The excitement was over, the flatness remained; the failure, and the grey skies and leaden water and dying bracken. And she was alone; alone for always. She had defied him, she had defied them all, she had told him that whatever happened she would not go back, she would not be taken back. But she knew now that she had lied. And she crossed the road, her step unsteady, and stumbled blindly up the woodland path above the road, until she came to a place where she knew that she was hidden. There she flung herself down on her face and cried passionately, stifling her sobs in the green damp moss. She had done wrong. She had done cruel wrong to him. But she was only nineteen, and she was being punished! She was being punished!

CHAPTER X

HENRIETTA IN NAXOS

Youth feels, let the adult say what he pleases, more deeply than middle age. It suffers and enjoys with a poignancy unknown in later life. But in revenge it is cast down more lightly, and uplifted with less reason. The mature have seen so many sunny mornings grow to tearful noons, so many days of stress close in peace, that their moods are not to the same degree at the mercy of passing accidents. It is with the young, on the other hand, as with the tender shoots; they raise their heads to meet the April sun, as naturally they droop in the harsh east wind. And Henrietta had been more than girl, certainly more than nineteen, if she had not owned the influence of the scene and the morning that lapped her about when she next set foot beyond the threshold of the inn.

She had spent in the meantime three days at which memory shuddered. Alone in her room, shrinking from every eye, turning her back on the woman who waited on her, she had found her pride insufficient to support her. Solitude is a medium which exaggerates all objects, and the longer Henrietta brooded over her past folly and her present disgrace, the more intolerable these grew to the vision.

Fortunately, if Modest Ann's heart bled for her, Mrs. Gilson viewed her misfortunes with a saner and less sensitive eye. She

saw that if the girl were left longer to herself her health would fail. Already, she remarked, the child looked two years older-looking a woman. So on the fourth morning Mrs. Gilson burst in on her, found her moping at the window with her eyes on the lake, and forthwith, after her fashion, she treated her to a piece of her mind.

"See here, young miss," she said bluntly, "I'll have nobody ill in my house! Much more making themselves ill! In three days Bishop's to be back, and they'll want you, like enough. And a pale, peaking face won't help you, but rather the other way with men, such fools as they be! You get your gear and go out."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.