

THE CASTLE INN.*

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

Mr. Weyman, whose "Gentleman of France" created a new school of historical romance, has found in the England of George III a field for a story that is no less strong in action, and much stronger in its treatment of the human drama of character and emotion, than his tales of French history.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PUBLISHED.

IN the spring of 1767, while detained at the Castle Inn, at Marlborough, by an attack of the gout, Lord Chatham, the great English statesman, sends for Sir George Soane, a young knight who has squandered his fortune at the gaming tables, to inform him that a claimant has appeared for the £50,000 that was left with him by his grandfather in trust for the heirs of his uncle Anthony Soane, and which, according to the terms of the will, would have become Soane's own in nine months more. The mysterious claimant is a young girl known as Julia Masterson, who has been reputed to be the daughter of a dead college servant at Oxford, and who is already at the Castle in company with her lawyer, one Fishwick. Here Sir George, quite ignorant as to her identity, falls in love with her and asks her to be his wife. She promises to give him his answer on the morrow, but before Soane has returned from a journey he has taken, she is abducted by hirelings of Mr. Dunborough, a man whom Sir George has recently worsted in a duel, and who is himself an unsuccessful suitor for Julia's hand. The Rev. Mr. Thomasson, a tutor at Oxford, who has discovered Julia's identity, attempts to interfere and is carried off for his pains. Sir George and Fishwick set out in pursuit, meeting on the road Mr. Dunborough, who has been prevented by an accident from joining his helpers, and who, thoroughly cowed by the dangerous situation in which he now finds himself, sullenly agrees to aid them in effecting the girl's release. When not far from Bastwick, on the road to Bristol, the abductors become alarmed at the nearness of the pursuers and set their captives free. Julia and Thomasson apply at the house of a man known as Bully Pomeroy for shelter for the night, and after the girl retires the tutor acquaints his host and Lord Almeric Dooley, a dissolute young nobleman who is a guest there, with the true state of affairs. The desirability of recouping their fortunes by an alliance with the heiress dawns on them simultaneously, and each signifies his intention of marrying her. The result is a heated argument until Lord Almeric, noticing the cards on the table, suggests playing for her. To Mr. Pomeroy's great disgust, the young nobleman wins, and the following morning he goes to the girl and offers her his heart and hand. Unaware of the real identity of her abductor, Julia has supposed him to be Soane, and moved by a desire to be in a position where she can revenge herself on her recreant lover, she accepts Lord Almeric's offer. He is celebrating his success with Pomeroy and Thomasson when, later in the day, a message is brought to him from Julia asking for an interview.

XXVII.

WE left Sir George Soane and his companions stranded in the little ale house at Bathford, waiting through the small hours of the night for a conveyance to carry them on to Bristol. Soap and water, a good meal, and a brief dog's sleep, in which Soane had no share—he spent the night walking up and down—and from which Mr. Fishwick was continually starting with cries and moans, did something to put them in better plight, if in no better temper. When the

dawn came, and with it the chaise and four for which they had sent to Bath, they issued forth haggard and unshaven, but resolute; and long before the shops in Bristol had begun to look for custom, the three, with Sir George's servant, descended before the old George Inn in Temple Mead.

The attorney held strongly to the opinion that they should not lose a second in seeking the persons Mr. Dunborough had employed; the least delay, he said, and the men might be gone into hiding. But on this a wrangle took place in the empty street before the

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half aroused inn, with a milk girl and a couple of drunken sailors for witnesses. Mr. Dunborough, who was of the party willy nilly, and asked nothing better than to take out in churlishness the pressure put upon him, stood firmly on it he would take no more than one person to the men. He would take Sir George, if he pleased, but no one else.

"I'll have no lawyer to make evidence!" he cried boastfully. "And I'll take no one but on terms. That's flat. I'll have no Jeremy Twitcher with me."

Mr. Fishwick, in a great rage, was going to insist, but Sir George stopped him. "On what terms?" said he to the other.

"If the girl is unharmed, we go unharmed, one and all!" Mr. Dunborough answered. "Damme, do you think I'm going to peach on 'em!" he continued, with a great show of bravado. "Not I! There's the offer, take it or leave it!"

Sir George might have broken down his opposition by the same arguments addressed to his safety which had brought him so far. But time was everything, and Soane was on fire to know the best or worst. "Agreed!" he cried. "Lead the way! And do you, Mr. Fishwick, await me here."

"We must have time," Mr. Dunborough grumbled, looking askance at the attorney—he hated him. "I can't answer for an hour or two. I know a place, and I know another place, and there is another place. And they may be at one, or another, or the other. D'you see?"

"I see that it is your business," Sir George answered, with a glance that lowered the other's truculence. "Wait until noon, Mr. Fishwick. If we have not returned at that hour, be good enough to swear an information against Mr. Dunborough and set the constables to work."

Mr. Dunborough muttered that it was on Sir George's head if ill came of it; but that said, swung sulkily on his heel, defeated. Mr. Fishwick, when the two were some way down the street, ran after Soane to ask, in a whisper, if his pistols were primed; then stood to watch them out of sight. When he turned, the servant whom he had left at the door of the inn had vanished. The lawyer made a shrewd guess that he would have an eye to his master's safety, and retired into the house better satisfied.

He got his breakfast early, and afterwards dozed a while, resting his aching bones in a corner of the coffee room. It was nine and after, and the tide of life was roaring through the city, when he roused himself, and to divert his suspense and fend off his growing stiffness went out to look about him. All was new to him, but he soon wearied of the

main streets, where huge drays laden with puncheons of rum and bales of tobacco threatened to crush him at every corner, and tarry seamen, their whiskers hanging in ringlets, jostled him at every crossing. Turning aside into a quiet court, he stood to gaze at a humble wedding which was leaving a church. He watched the party out of sight, and then, the church door standing open, he took the fancy to stroll into the building. He looked about him, at the maze of dusty, high paneled pews, with little alleys winding hither and thither among them; at the great three decker with its huge sounding board; at the royal escutcheon, and the faded tables of the law, and was about to leave as aimlessly as he had entered when he espied the open vestry door, and, popping in his head, saw a folio bound in sheepskin lying open on a chest, a pen and ink beside it.

The attorney was in that state of fatigue of body and languor of mind when the smallest trifle amuses. He tiptoed in, his hat in his hand, and, licking his lips at thought of the law cases that lay enshrined in the register, he perused a couple of entries with a kind of enthusiasm. He was beginning a third, which was a little hard to decipher, when a black gown that hung on a hook over against him swung noiselessly outward, and a little old man emerged from the door it masked.

The lawyer, who was stooping over the register, raised himself guiltily. "Hallo!" he said, to cover his confusion.

"Hallo!" said the old man, with a wintry smile. "A shilling, if you please," and he held out his hand.

"Oh!" said Mr. Fishwick, much chaff-fallen, "I was only just looking out of curiosity."

"It is a shilling to look," the newcomer retorted, with a chuckle. "Only one year, I think? Just so, anno domini seventeen hundred and sixty seven. A shilling, if you please."

Mr. Fishwick hesitated, but in the end professional pride swayed him; he drew out the coin, and grudgingly handed it over. "Well," he said, "it is a shilling for nothing; but I suppose, as you have caught me, I must pay."

"I've caught a many that way," the old fellow answered, as he pouched the shilling. "But there, I do a lot of work upon them. There is not a better register kept than that, nor a parish clerk that knows more about his register than I do, though I say it that should not. It is clean, and clean from old Henry eighth, with never a break except at the time of the siege, and there is an entry about that that you could see for another

shilling. No? Well, if you would like to see a year for nothing? No. Now, I know a lad, an attorney's clerk here, name of Chatterton, would give his ears for the offer. Perhaps your name is Smith?" the old fellow continued, peering curiously at Mr. Fishwick. "If it is, you may like to know that the name of Smith is in the register of burials just five hundred and eighty three times—was last Friday. It is not Smith? Well, if it is Brown, it is there four hundred and seventy times—and one over!"

"That is an odd thought of yours," said the lawyer, staring at the conceit.

"So many have said," the old man chuckled. "But it is not Brown? Jones, perhaps? That comes four hundred and—oh, it is not Jones?"

"It is a name you won't be likely to have once, let alone four hundred times," said the lawyer, with a little pride—Heaven knows why.

"What may it be, then?" the clerk asked, fairly put on his mettle; and he drew out a pair of glasses and, settling them on his forehead, looked fixedly at his companion.

"Fishwick."

"Fishwick! Fishwick? Well, it is not a common name, and I cannot speak to it at this moment. But if it is here, I'll wager I'll find it for you. D'you see, I have them here in A B C order," he continued, bustling with an important air to a cupboard in the wall, whence he produced a thick folio bound in roughened calf. "Aye, here's Fishwick, in the burial book, do you see, volume two, page seventeen, anno domini 1750—seventeen years gone, that is. Will you see it? 'Twill be only a shilling. There's many pays out of curiosity to see their names."

Mr. Fishwick shook his head.

"Dods! man, you shall!" the old clerk cried generously, and turned the pages. "You shall see it for what you have paid. Here you are: '*Fourteenth of September, William Fishwick, aged eighty one, barber, West Quay, died the eleventh of the month.*' No, man, you are looking too low. Higher, higher! Here 'tis, do you see? Eh, what is it? What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," Mr. Fishwick muttered hoarsely. But he continued to stare at the page with a face struck suddenly sallow, and the hand that rested on the corner of the book shook as with the ague.

"Nothing?" said the old man, staring suspiciously at him. "I do believe it is something. I do b'lieve it is money. Well, it is five shillings to extract. So there!"

That seemed to change Mr. Fishwick's view. "It might be money," he confessed, still speaking thickly, and as if his tongue were too large for his mouth. "It might

be," he repeated; "but—I am not very well this morning. Do you think you could get me a glass of water?"

"None of that!" the old man retorted sharply, with a sudden look of alarm. "I would not leave you alone with that book at this moment for all the shillings I have ever taken! No! So, if you want water, you've got to get it."

"I am better now," Mr. Fishwick answered; but the sweat which stood on his brow went far to belie his words. "I—yes, I think I'll take an extract. Sixty one, was he?"

"Eighty one, eighty one, it says. There's pen and ink, but you'll please to give me five shillings first. Thank you, kindly. Eh, but that is not the one! Ye're taking out the one above it."

"I'll have 'em all—for identification," Mr. Fishwick replied, wiping his forehead nervously.

"No need."

"I think I will."

"What, all?"

"Well, the one before and the one after."

"Dods, man, but that will be fifteen shillings!" the clerk cried, aghast at such extravagance.

"You'll only charge for the one I want," the lawyer said, with an effort.

"Well—we'll say five shillings for the other two."

Mr. Fishwick closed with the offer, and with a hand which was still unsteady paid the money and extracted the entries. Then he took his hat, and hurriedly, his eyes averted, turned to go.

"If it's money," said the old clerk, staring at him as if he could never satisfy his inquisitiveness, "you'll not forget me?"

"If it's money," said Mr. Fishwick, with a ghastly smile, "it shall be some in your pocket."

"Thank you kindly. Now who would have thought when you stepped in here you were stepping into a fortune—so to speak?"

"Just so," said Mr. Fishwick, a spasm distorting his face. "Who'd have thought it! Good morning!"

"And good luck!" bawled the clerk after him. "Good luck!"

Mr. Fishwick fluttered a hand backwards, but made no answer. He hastened to turn the corner; thence he plunged through a stream of traffic, and, having thus covered his trail, he went on rapidly, seeking a quiet corner. He found one in a court among some warehouses, and standing, pulled out the copy he had made from the register. It was neither on the first nor the second entry, however, that his eyes dwelt, while the hand

that held the paper shook as with the ague. It was the third fascinated him:

September 19th, at the Bee in Steep Street, Julia, daughter of Anthony and Julia Soane of Estcombe, aged three, and buried the 21st of the month.

Mr. Fishwick read it thrice, his lips quivering; then he slowly drew from a separate pocket a little sheaf of papers frayed and soiled with much and loving handling. He selected from these a slip; it was one of those Mr. Thomasson had surprised on the table in his room at the Castle. It was a copy of the attestation of birth "of Julia, daughter of Anthony Soane, of Estcombe, England, and Julia, his wife;" the date, August, 1747; the place, Dunquerque.

The attorney drew a long, quivering breath, and put the papers up again, the packet in the place from which he had taken it, the extract from the Bristol register in another pocket. Then, after drawing one or two more sighs, as if his heart were going out of him, he looked dismally upwards as in protest against Heaven. At length he turned and went back to the street, and there, with a strangely humble air, asked a passer by the nearest way to Steep Street.

The man directed him; the place was near at hand. In two minutes Mr. Fishwick found himself at the door of a small but decent grocer's shop, over the portal of which a gilded bee seemed to prognosticate more business than the fact performed. An elderly woman, stout and comfortable looking, was behind the counter. Eying the attorney as he came forward, she asked him what she could do for him, and before he answered reached for the snuff canister.

He took the hint, requested an ounce of the best Scotch and Havana mixed, and while she weighed it asked her how long she had lived there.

"Twenty six years, sir," she answered heartily, "old style. For the new I don't hold with it, nor them that meddle with things above them. I am sure it brought me no profit," she continued, rubbing her nose. "I have buried a good husband and two children since they gave it us."

"Still, I suppose people died, old style?" the lawyer ventured.

"Well, well, may be."

"There was a death in this house seventeen years gone—this September, if I remember rightly," he said.

The woman pushed away the snuff and stared at him. "Two, for the matter of that," she said sharply. "But should I remember you?"

"No."

"Then, if I may make so bold, what is't

to you?" she retorted. "Do you come from Jim Masterson?"

"He is dead," Mr. Fishwick answered.

She threw up her hands. "Lord! And he a young man, so to speak! Poor Jim! Poor Jim! It is ten years and more—aye, more—since I heard from him. And the child? Is that dead, too?"

"No, the child is alive," said the lawyer, speaking at a venture. "I am here on her behalf, to make some inquiries about her kinsfolk."

The woman's honest red face softened and grew motherly. "You may inquire," she said; "you'll learn no more than I can tell you. And there is no one left that's akin to her. The father was a poor Frenchman, a monsieur that taught the quality about here; the mother was one of his people—she came from Canterbury, where I am told there are French and to spare, but according to her account she had no kin left. He died the year after the child was born, and she came to lodge with me, and lived by teaching, as he had, but 'twas a poor livelihood, you may say, and when she sickened she died—just as a candle goes out."

"When?" said Mr. Fishwick, his eyes glued to the woman's face.

"The week Jim Masterson came to see us, bringing the child from foreign parts—that was buried with her. 'Twas said his child took the fever from her and got its death that way. But I don't know. I don't know. It is true they had not brought in the new style then; but—"

"You knew him before—Masterson, I mean?"

"Why, he had courted me!" was the good tempered answer. "You don't know much if you don't know that. Then my good man came along and I liked him better, and Jim went into service and married Oxfordshire way. But when he came to Bristol after his journey in foreign parts, 'twas natural he should come to see me, and my husband, who was always easy, would keep him a day or two—more's the pity, for in twenty four hours the child he had with him began to sicken, and died, and never was man in such a taking, though he swore the child was not his, but one he had adopted to serve a gentleman in trouble, and because his wife had none. Any way, it was buried along with my lodger, and nothing would serve but he must adopt the child she had left. It seemed ordained-like, they being of an age, and all. And I had two children and was looking for another, which never came, and the mother had left no more than buried her with a little help. So he took it with him, and we heard from him once or twice how it was, and that his wife

took to it, and then—well, writing's a burden. But"—with renewed interest—"she's a well grown girl by now, I guess?"

"Yes," said the attorney absently; "she's—she's a well grown girl."

"And is poor Jim's wife alive?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" the good woman answered thoughtfully. "If she were not, I'd think about taking to the girl myself. It's lonely at times without chick or child. And there's the shop to tend. She could help with that."

The attorney winced. He was looking wretched. But he had his back to the light, and she remarked nothing, save that he seemed to be a somber sort of body and poor company. "What was the Frenchman's name?" he asked, after a pause.

"Parry," said she; and then, sharply, "don't they call her by it?"

"It has an English sound," he said doubtfully, evading her question.

"That is the way he called it. But it was spelled Pare, just Pare."

"Ah!" said Mr. Fishwick. "That explains it." He wondered why he had asked what did not in the least matter; since, if she were not a Soane, it mattered not who she was. "Well, thank you," he continued after an interval, recovering himself with a sigh, "I am much obliged to you. And now—for the moment—good morning, ma'am. I must wish you good morning," he repeated hurriedly, and took up his snuff.

"But that is not all?" the good woman exclaimed in astonishment. "At any rate, you'll leave your name?"

Mr. Fishwick pursed up his lips and stared at her gloomily. "Name?" he said, at last. "Yes, ma'am—Brown. Mr. Peter Brown, the—Poultry—"

"The Poultry!" she cried, gaping at him helplessly.

"Yes, the Poultry, London. Mr. Peter Brown, the Poultry, London. And now I have other business and shall—shall return another day. I must wish you good morning, ma'am. Good morning;" and thrusting his face into his hat Mr. Fishwick hurried precipitately into the street, and with singular recklessness hastened to plunge into the thickest of the traffic, leaving the good woman in a state of amazement.

Nevertheless, he reached the inn safely; and when Mr. Dunborough returned from a futile search, the failure of which condemned him to another twenty four hours in that company, the first thing he saw was the attorney's gloomy face awaiting them in a dark corner of the coffee room. The sight reproached him subtly, he knew not why; he was in the worst of tempers, and for want of

a better outlet vented his spleen on the lawyer's head.

"Damn you!" he cried brutally, "your hang dog phiz is enough to spoil any sport! Hang me if I believe that there is such another mumping, whining, whimpering sneak in the 'varsal world! D'you think any one will have luck with your tallow face within a mile of him?" Then, longing but not daring to turn his wrath on Sir George, "What do you bring him for?" he cried.

"For my convenience," Sir George retorted, with a look of contempt that for the time silenced the other; and that said, Soane proceeded to explain to Mr. Fishwick, who had answered not a word, that the rogues had evaded them and got into hiding; but that by means of persons known to Mr. Dunborough it was hoped they would be heard from that day or the next. Then, struck by the attorney's sickly face, "I am afraid you are not well, Mr. Fishwick," Sir George continued, more kindly. "The night has been too much for you. I would advise you to lie down for a few hours and take some rest. If anything is heard I will send up to you."

Mr. Fishwick thanked him, without looking in his face; and after a minute or two he retired. Sir George looked after him and pondered a little on the change in his manner. Through the stress of the night Mr. Fishwick had shown himself alert and eager, ready and not lacking in spirit; now he had depression written large in his face, and walked and bore himself like a man sinking under a load of despondency.

All that day the messenger from the slums did not come, and between the two men down stairs strange relations prevailed. Sir George dared not let the other out of his sight; yet there were times when they came to the verge of blows, and nothing but the knowledge of Sir George's swordsmanship could have kept Mr. Dunborough's temper within bounds. At dinner, at which Sir George insisted that the attorney should sit down with them, Dunborough drank a good deal of wine, and in his cups fell into a strain peculiarly provoking.

"Lord! you make me sick!" he said. "All this bother about a girl that a month ago your high mightiness would not have looked at in the street. You are vastly virtuous now, and sneer at me, but damme, which of us loves the girl best? Take away her money, and will you marry her? I'd a done it, without a rag to her back. But take away her money, and will you do the same, Mr. Virtuous?"

Sir George, listening darkly and putting a great restraint on himself, did not answer. But in a moment Mr. Fishwick got up sud-

denly and hurried from the room—so abruptly that he left his glass in fragments on the floor.

XXVIII.

LORD ALMERIC continued to vapor and romance as he mounted the stairs. Mr. Pomeroy attended sneering at his heels. The tutor followed, and longed to separate them. He had his fears for the one and the other, and was relieved when his lordship, at the last moment, hung back, and with a foolish chuckle proposed a course that did more honor to his vanity than his taste.

"Hist!" he whispered. "Do you two stop outside a minute, and you'll hear how kind she'll be to me. I'll leave the door ajar, and then in a minute do you come in, and roast her! Lord, 'twill be as good as a play!"

Mr. Pomeroy shrugged his shoulders. "As you please," he growled. "But I have known a man go to shear and be shorn!"

Lord Almeric smiled loftily, and waiting for no more, winked to them, turned the handle of the door, and simpered in.

Had Mr. Thomasson entered with him the tutor would have seen at a glance that he had wasted his fears, and that trouble threatened from a different quarter. The girl, her face a strange blaze of excitement and shame and eagerness, stood in the recess of the farther window seat, as far from the door as she could go, her attitude that of one driven into a corner. And from that about her her lover should have taken warning. But Lord Almeric saw nothing. Crying, "Most lovely Julia!" he tripped forward to embrace her, the wine emboldening him. She checked him by a gesture unmistakable even by a man in his flustered state.

"My lord," she said hurriedly, yet in a tone of pleading, and her head hung a little and her cheeks began to flame, "I ask your forgiveness for having sent for you. Alas, I have also to ask your forgiveness for a more serious fault, and—and one which you may find it less easy to pardon!"

"Try me!" the little beau answered with ardor, and struck an attitude. "What would I not forgive to the loveliest of her sex?" And under cover of his words he endeavored to come within reach of her.

She waved him back. "No!" she said. "You do not understand."

"Understand?" he cried effusively. "I understand enough to—but why, my Chloe, these alarms? This bashfulness? Sure," he spouted,

"How can I see you, and not love,
While you as opening east are fair?
While cold as northern blasts you prove,
How can I love and not despair?"

And then in wonder at his own readiness, "S'help me, that's uncommon clever of me!" he said. "But when a man is in love with the most beautiful of her sex——"

"My lord," she cried, stamping the floor in her impatience, "I have something serious to say to you. Must I ask you to return to me at another time, or will you be good enough to listen to me now?"

"Sho, if you wish it, child!" he said easily, taking out his snuff box. "And, to be sure, there is time enough. But between us, sweet one——"

"There is nothing between us!" she cried impetuously, snatching at the word. "That is what I wanted to tell you. Do you not understand? I made a mistake when I said there should be. I was mad—I was wicked, if you like. Do you hear me, my lord?" she continued passionately. "It was a mistake. I did not know what I was doing. And now I do understand, I take it back."

Lord Almeric gasped. He heard the words, but the meaning seemed incredible, inconceivable; the misfortune, if he heard aright, was too terrible; the humiliation too overwhelming! He had brought listeners—and for this! "Understand?" he cried, looking at her in a confused, chapfallen way. "But hang me if I do understand? You don't mean to say—oh, it is impossible; stuff me, it is!—you don't mean that—that you'll not have me? After all that has come and gone, ma'am?"

She shook her head, pitying him; blaming herself for the plight in which she had placed him. "I sent for you, my lord," she said humbly, "that I might tell you at once. I could not rest until I had told you. And believe me, I am very, very sorry."

"But do you really mean—that you—you jilt me?" he cried, still fighting off the dreadful truth.

"Not jilt," she said, shivering.

"But that you won't have me?"

She nodded.

"After—after saying you would?" he wailed.

"I cannot," she answered, her face scarlet. Then, "Cannot you understand?" she cried impatiently. "I did not know until—until you went to kiss me."

"But—oh, I say—but you love me?" he protested.

"No, my lord," she said firmly; "and there you must do me the justice to acknowledge that I never said I did."

He dashed his hat on the floor; he was almost weeping. "Oh, damme!" he cried, "a woman should not—should not treat a man like this! It's low! It's——"

A knock on the door stopped him. Recollections of the listeners, whom he had mo-

mentarily forgotten, overwhelmed him. He sprang with an oath to shut the door; before he could intervene Mr. Pomeroy appeared smiling on the threshold, and behind him the reluctant tutor.

Lord Almeric swore, and Julia, affronted, drew back, frowning. But Bully Pomeroy would see nothing. "A thousand pardons, if I intrude," he said, bowing low that he might hide a lurking grin, "but his lordship was good enough to say down stairs that he would present us to the lady who had consented to make him happy. We little thought last night, madam, that so much beauty and so much goodness were reserved for one of us!"

Lord Almeric looked ready to cry. Julia, darkly red, was certain that they had overheard, and glared at the intruders, her foot tapping the floor. No one answered, and Mr. Pomeroy, after looking from one to the other in assumed surprise, pretended to hit on the reason. "Oh, I see, I spoil sport!" he cried, with coarse joviality. "Curse me if I meant to! I fear we have come malapropos, my lord, and the sooner we are gone the better!"

"And though she found his usage rough,
Yet in a man 'twas well enough!"

he continued, with his head on one side and an impudent leer. "We are interrupting the turtle doves, Mr. Thomasson, and had better be gone."

"Curse you, why did you ever come?" my lord cried furiously. "But she won't have me! So there! Now you know!"

Mr. Pomeroy struck an attitude of astonishment. "Won't have you!" he cried. "Oh, stap me, you are biting us!"

"I'm not! And you know it!" the poor little blood cried, tears of vexation in his eyes. "You know it, and you are roasting me!"

"Know it?" Mr. Pomeroy answered, in tones of righteous indignation. "I know it? So far from knowing it, my dear lord, I cannot believe it! I understood that the lady had given you her word."

"So she did!"

"Then I cannot believe that a lady would anywhere, much less under my roof, take it back! Madam, there must be some mistake here," Mr. Pomeroy continued warmly. "It is intolerable that a man of his lordship's rank should be so treated. I'm forsworn if he has not mistaken you!"

"He does not mistake me now," she answered, trembling and blushing. "What error there was I have explained to him."

"But, damme——"

"Sir!" she said, her eyes sparkling, "what has happened is between his lordship

and myself. Interference on the part of any one else is an intrusion, and I shall treat it as such. His lordship understands——"

"Curse me, he does not look as if he understood!" Mr. Pomeroy cried, allowing all his native coarseness to appear. "Sink me, ma'am, there is a limit to prudishness! Fine words butter no parsnips. You plighted your troth to my guest, and I'll not see him thrown over in this fashion. I suppose a man has some rights under his own roof, and when his guest is jilted before his eyes"—here Mr. Pomeroy frowned like Jove—"it is well you should know, ma'am, that a woman, no more than a man, can play fast and loose at pleasure!"

She looked at him with disdain. "Then the sooner I leave your roof the better, sir!" she said, with spirit.

"Not so fast there, either!" he answered, with an unpleasant smile. "You will leave it when we choose, and that is flat, my girl. This morning, when my lord did you the honor to ask you, you gave him your word. Perhaps tomorrow morning you'll be of the same mind again. Any way, you will wait until tomorrow and see."

"I shall not wait on your pleasure," she cried.

"You will wait on it! Or 'twill be the worse for you."

Burning with indignation, she looked to the other two, her breath coming quick; but Mr. Thomasson gazed gloomily at the floor and would not meet her eyes, and Lord Almeric, who had thrown himself into a chair, was glowering sulkily at his shoes. "Do you mean," she cried, "that you will dare to detain me?"

"If you put it so," he answered, grinning, "I think I dare take it on myself."

His voice full of mockery, his insolent eyes, stung her to the quick. "I will see if that is so!" she cried, fearlessly advancing on him. "Lay a finger on me if you dare. I am going out. Make way, sir."

"You are not going out!" he cried between his teeth; and held his ground in front of her.

When she was within reach of him her courage failed her, and they stood a second or two gazing at one another, the girl with heaving breast and cheeks burning with indignation, the man with cynical watchfulness. Suddenly, shrinking from actual contact with him, she sprang nimbly aside and was at the door before he could intercept her. But, with a rapid movement, he turned on his heel and, seizing her round the waist before she could open the door, dragged her shrieking from it, and with an oath flung her panting and breathless into the window seat. "There!" he cried fero-

ciously, his blood fired by the struggle, "lie there! And behave yourself, my lady, or I'll find means to quiet you. For you," he continued, turning fiercely on the tutor, whose face the sudden scuffle and the girl's screams had blanched to the hue of paper, "did you never hear a woman squeak before? And you, my lord? Are you so dainty? But to be sure 'tis your lordship's mistress," he continued ironically. "Your pardon! I forgot that. There, she is none the worse, and 'twill bring her to reason."

But the struggle and the girl's cries had shaken my lord's nerves. "Damn you!" he cried hysterically, "you should not have done that."

"Pooh, pooh!" Mr. Pomeroy answered lightly. "Do you leave it to me, my lord. She does not know her own mind. 'Twill help her to find it. And now, if you'll take my advice, you'll leave her to a night's reflection."

But Lord Almeric only repeated, "You should not have done that."

Mr. Pomeroy's face showed his scorn for the man whom a cry or two and a struggling woman had frightened. He could only look at it one way. "I understand that is the right line to take," he said, and he laughed unpleasantly. "No doubt it will be put to your lordship's credit. But now, my lord," he continued, "let us go. You will see she will have come to her senses by tomorrow."

The girl had remained passive since her defeat; but at that she rose from the window seat where she had sat slaying them with furious glances. "My lord," she cried passionately, "if you are a man, if you are a gentleman, you'll not suffer this."

But Lord Almeric, who had now recovered from his temporary panic and was as angry with her as with Pomeroy, shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, I don't know!" he said resentfully. "It has naught to do with me, ma'am. I don't want you kept, but you have behaved uncommon low to me, sink me, you have! And 'twill do you good to think on it! Stap me, it will!"

And he turned on his heel and sneaked out.

Mr. Pomeroy laughed insolently. "There is still Tommy," he said. "Try him. See what he'll say to you. It amuses me to hear you plead, my dear, you put so much spirit into it. As my lord said, 'tis as good as a play."

She flung him a look of scorn, but did not answer. Mr. Thomasson shuffled his feet uncomfortably. "There are no horses," he faltered, cursing his indiscreet companion. "But Mr. Pomeroy means well, I know. And as there are no horses, even if nothing

prevented you—you could not go tonight, you see."

Mr. Pomeroy burst into a shout of laughter, and clapped the stammering tutor (fallen miserably between two stools) on the back. "There's a champion for you!" he cried. "Beauty in distress! Lord, how it fires his blood and turns his look to flame! What, going, Tommy?" he continued, as Mr. Thomasson, unable longer to bear his railery or the girl's fiery scorn, turned and fled ignobly. "Well, my pretty dear, I see we are to be left alone. And damme, quite right too, for we are the only man and the only woman of the party, and should come to an understanding."

Julia looked at him with shuddering abhorrence. They were alone; the sound of the tutor's retreating footsteps was growing faint. She pointed to the door. "If you do not go," she cried, her voice shaking with rage, "I will rouse the house! I will call your people! Do you hear me? I will so cry to your servants that you shall not for shame dare to keep me! I will break this window and cry for help!"

"And what do you think I should be doing meanwhile?" he retorted, with an ugly leer. "I thought I had shown you that two could play at that game. But there, child, I like your spirit! I like you for it! You are a girl after my own heart, and, damme, we'll live to laugh at those two old women yet!"

She shrank farther from him with an unmistakable expression of loathing. He saw it and scowled, but for the moment he kept his temper. "Fie! the little Masterson playing the grand lady!" he said. "But there, you are too handsome to be crossed, my dear. You shall have your own way for tonight, and I'll come and talk to you tomorrow, when your head is cooler and those two fools are out of the way. And if we quarrel, my beauty, we can but kiss and make it up. Look on me as your friend," he continued, with a leer from which she shrank, "and I vow you'll not repent it."

She did not answer—she only pointed to the door; and, finding that he could draw nothing from her, he went at last. But on the threshold he turned, met her eyes with a grin of meaning, and took the key from the inside of the lock. She heard him put it in on the outside and turn it, and had to grip one hand with the other to stay the scream that rose in her throat. She was brave beyond most women, but the ease with which he had mastered her, the humiliation of contact with him, the conviction of her helplessness in his grasp, were on her still. They filled her with dread, which grew more definite as the light, already low in corners, failed and the shadows thickened about the

dingy furniture; and she crouched alone against the barred window, listening for the first tread of a coming foot—and dreading the night.

XXIX.

MR. POMEROY chuckled as he went down the stairs. Things had gone so well for him he owed it to himself to see that they went better. He had gone up determined to effect a breach, even if it cost him my lord's enmity. He descended, the breach made, the prize open to competition, and my lord obliged by friendly offices and unselfish service!

Mr. Pomeroy smiled. "She is a saucy baggage, but I've tamed worse," he muttered. "'Tis the first step is hard, and I have taken that. Now to deal with old Mother Olney. If she were not such a silly old fool, or if I could get rid of her and Jarvey, and put in the Tamplins, all would be easy. But she'd talk! The kitchen wench need know nothing; and for visitors, there are none in this damp old hole! So win over Mother Olney and the parson, and I don't see where I can fail. The wench is here safe and tight, and bread and water, damp and loneliness, will do a great deal. And she don't deserve better treatment, hang her impudence!"

But when he appeared in the hall an hour later, his gloomy face told a different story. "Where's Doyley?" he growled; and, stumbling over a dog, kicked it howling into a corner. "Has he gone to bed?"

The tutor, brooding sulkily over his wine, looked up. "Yes," he said, as rudely as he dared—he was sick with disappointment. "He is going in the morning."

"And a good riddance!" Pomeroy cried, with an oath. "He's off it, is he? He gives up?"

The tutor nodded gloomily. "His lordship is not the man," he said, with an attempt at his usual manner, "to—to——"

"To win the odd trick unless he holds six tricks," Mr. Pomeroy cried. "No, by God, he is not! You are right, parson. But so much the better for you and me."

Mr. Thomasson sniffed. "I don't follow you," he said stiffly.

"Don't you? You weren't so dull years ago," Mr. Pomeroy answered, filling a glass as he stood. He held it in his hand and looked over it at the other, who, ill at ease, fidgeted in his chair. "You could put two and two together then, parson, and you can put five and five together now. They make ten—thousand."

"I don't follow you," the tutor repeated, steadfastly looking away from him.

"Why? Nothing is changed since we

talked—except that he is out of it, and that that is done for me for nothing which I offered you five thousand to do. But I am generous, Tommy. I am generous."

"The next chance is mine," Mr. Thomasson cried, with a glance of spite.

Mr. Pomeroy, looking down at him, laughed—a galling laugh. "Lord, Tommy, that was a hundred years ago!" he said contemptuously.

"You said nothing was changed."

"Nothing is changed in my case," Mr. Pomeroy answered confidently, "except for the better. In your case everything is changed—for the worse. Did you take her part up stairs? Are your hands clean now? Does she see through you, or does she not? Or, put it in another way, Mr. Parson. It is your turn. What are you going to do?"

"Go," said the tutor viciously. "And glad to be quit."

"You withdraw?"

Mr. Thomasson shrugged his shoulders.

Mr. Pomeroy sat down opposite him. "You'll withdraw, but you'll not go," he said, in a low voice; and, drinking off half his wine, set down the glass and regarded the other over it. "Five and five are ten, Tommy. You are no fool, and I am no fool."

"I am not such a fool as to put my neck in a noose," the tutor retorted; "and there is no other way of coming at what you want."

"There are twenty," Pomeroy returned coolly. "And, mark you, if I fail, you are spun, whether you help me or no. You are blown on, or I can blow on you! You'll get nothing for your cut on the head."

"And what shall I get if I stay?"

"I have told you."

"The gallows?"

"No, Tommy; eight hundred a year."

Mr. Thomasson sneered incredulously, and, making it plain that he refused to think, thought! He had risked so much in this enterprise, gone through so much; and to lose it all! He cursed the girl's fickleness, her coyness, her obstinacy! He hated her. And, do what he might for her now, he doubted if he could cozen her or get much from her. Yet in that lay his only chance, apart from Mr. Pomeroy. His eye was cunning and his tone sly when he spoke again.

"You forget one thing," he said. "I have only to open my lips after I leave."

"And I am nicked?" Mr. Pomeroy answered. "True; and you will get a hundred guineas—and have a worse than Dunborough at your heels."

The tutor wiped his brow. "What do you want?" he whispered.

"That old hag Olney has turned rusty," Mr. Pomeroy answered. "She has got it into

her head something is going to be done to the girl. I sounded her, and I cannot trust her. I could send her packing, but Jarvey is not much better, and talks when he is drunk. So the girl must be got from here."

Mr. Thomasson raised his eyebrows scornfully.

"You need not sneer, you fool!" Pomeroy said, with a little spurt of rage. "'Tis no harder than to get her here?"

"Where will you take her?"

"To Tamplin's farm, by the river. There you are no wiser, but you may trust me. I can hang the man, and the woman is no better. They have done this sort of thing before. Once get her there, and sink me, she'll be glad to see the parson!"

The tutor shuddered. The water was growing very deep. "I'll have no part in it!" he said firmly. "No part in it, so help me God!"

"There's no part for you!" Mr. Pomeroy answered, with grim patience. "Your part is to thwart the scheme."

Mr. Thomasson, half risen from his chair, sat down again. "What do you mean?" he muttered.

"You are her friend. Your part is to help her to escape. You'll sneak to her room, and tell her that you'll steal the key when I'm drunk after dinner. She'll be ready at eleven, you'll let her out, and have a chaise waiting at the end of the avenue. It will be there, you'll put her in, you'll go back to the house. I suppose you see it now?"

The tutor stared in stupefaction. "She'll get away," he said.

"Half a mile," Mr. Pomeroy answered dryly, as he filled his glass. "Then I shall stop the chaise—with a pistol if you like—jump in—a merry surprise for the nymph—and before twelve we shall be at Tamplin's. And you'll be free of it."

Mr. Thomasson pondered, his face flushed, his eyes moist. "I think you are the devil!" he said at last.

"Is it a bargain? And see here: his lordship has gone silly on that girl. You can tell him before he leaves what you are going to do. He'll leave easy, and you'll have an evidence—of your good intentions!" Mr. Pomeroy added with a chuckle.

"I'll not do it!" Mr. Thomasson cried faintly. "I'll not do it!"

But he sat down again, their heads came together across the table; they talked long in low voices. Presently Mr. Pomeroy fetched pen and paper from a table in one of the windows, where they lay along with odd volumes of Crebillon, a tattered Hoyle on whist, and Foote's jest book. Something was written and handed over, and the two rose.

Mr. Thomasson would have liked to say a word before they parted as to no violence being contemplated or used; something smug and fair seeming that might go to show that his right hand did not understand what his left was doing. But even his impudence was unequal to the task, and, with a shamefaced good night, he secured the memorandum in his pocketbook and sneaked up to bed.

He need have lost no time in carrying out Pomeroy's suggestion to make Lord Almeric his confidant, for he found his lordship awake, tossing and turning in the shade of the green moreen curtains, in a pitiable state between chagrin and rage. But the tutor's nerve failed him. He had few scruples, but he was weary and sick at heart, and for that night felt that he had done enough. So, to all my lord's inquiries, he answered as sleepily as consisted with respect, until the young roué's suspicions were aroused, and on a sudden he sat up in bed, his nightcap quivering on his head.

"Tommy," he cried feverishly, "what is afoot down stairs? Now, do you tell me the truth!"

"Nothing," said Mr. Thomasson soothingly.

"Because—well, she's played it uncommon low on me, uncommon low she's played it," my lord repeated pathetically; "but fair is fair, and willing's willing! And I'll not see her hurt. Pom's none too nice, I know, but he's got to understand that. I'm none of your Methodists, Tommy, as you are aware—no one more so! But s'help me, no one shall lay a hand on her against her will!"

"My dear lord, no one is going to," said the tutor, quaking in his bed.

"That is understood, is it? Because it had better be!" the little lord continued, with unusual vigor. "I vow and protest I have no cause to stand up for her. She's a saucy baggage, and has treated me with— with cursed disrespect. But—oh, Lord, Tommy!—I'd have been a good husband to her. I would, indeed. And been kind to her! And now—she's made a fool of me. She's made a fool of me!"

And my lord took off his nightcap and wiped his eyes with it.

XXX.

JULIA passed such a night as a girl instructed in the world's ways might be expected to pass in her position and after the rough treatment of the afternoon. The room grew dark, the dismal garden and weedy pool that closed the prospect faded from sight, and still as she crouched by the

barred window or listened breathlessly at the door all that part of the house lay silent; not a sound of life came to the ear.

By turns she resented and welcomed this. At one time, pacing the floor in a fury of rage and indignation, she was ready to dash herself against the door, or scream and scream until some one came to her. At another the recollection of Pomeroy's sneering smile, of his insolent grasp, returned to chill and terrify her; and she hid in the darkest corner, hugged the solitude, and, scarcely daring to breathe, prayed that the silence might endure forever.

But the hours in the dark room were long and cold, and at times the fever of rage and fear left her in a chill. Of this came another phase that she had, as the night wore on and nothing happened. Reverting bitterly to him who should have been her protector, but had become her betrayer, and by his treachery plunged her into all this misery, a sudden doubt of his guilt flashed into her mind and blinded her by its brilliance. Had she done him an injustice? Had all been a plan concerted not by him, but by Mr. Thomasson and his confederates? The setting down near Pomeroy's gate the reception at his house, the rough, hasty suit paid to her—were all these parts of a cunningly arranged drama? And was he innocent? Was he still her lover—almost her husband?

Oh, God, if she could think so! She rose and softly walked the floor, tears raining down her face. Oh, God, if she could be sure of it! At the mere thought she glowed from head to foot with happy shame. And fear? If this were so, if his love were still hers, and hers the only fault of doubting him, she feared nothing! Nothing! She felt her way to a tray in the corner where her last meal remained untasted, and ate and drank humbly, and for him. She might need her strength.

She had finished and was groping her way back to the window seat when a faint rustle, as of some one moving outside the door, caught her ear. In the darkness, brave as she had fancied herself an instant before, a great horror of fear came on her at that. She stood rooted to the spot, and heard the noise again. It was followed by the sound of a hand passed stealthily over the door, feeling, as she thought, for the key; she could have shrieked in her helplessness. But while she stood, her face turned to stone, came relief. A cautious voice, subdued in fear, whispered, "Hist, ma'am, hist!"

She could have fallen on her knees in thankfulness. "Yes?" she cried eagerly. "Who is it?"

"It is me—Olney!" was the wary answer. "Keep a heart, ma'am! They are gone to bed. You are quite safe."

"Can you let me out?" Julia cried. "Oh, let me out!"

"Let you out!"

"Yes, yes!"

"God forbid, ma'am!" was the horrified answer. "He'll kill me. And he has the key. But—"

"Yes? Yes?"

"Heart up, ma'am! Jarvey'll not see you hurt. Nor will I. So you may sleep easy. And good night!"

She stole away before Julia could answer; but she left comfort behind her. In a glow of thankfulness the girl pushed a heavy chair against the door, and, wrapping herself for warmth in the folds of the shabby curtains, lay down on the window seat. She was willing to sleep now, but the agitation of her thoughts, the whirl of fear and hope, as she went again and again over the old ground, kept her long awake. The moon had risen and run her course, decking the old garden and sluggish pool with a solemn beauty as of death, and was beginning to retreat before the dawn, when Julia slept at length.

When she awoke it was broad daylight. A moment she gazed upwards, wondering where she was and how she came there; the next a harsh, grating sound and the last notes of a mocking laugh brought her to her feet in a panic of remembrance.

The key was still turning in the lock—she saw it withdrawn; but the room was empty. And while she stood staring, heavy footsteps retired along the passage. The chair which she had set against the door had been pushed back, and milk and bread stood on the floor beside it.

She drew a deep breath; he had been there then. But her worst terrors had passed with the night. Outside the sun was shining, and all was light and cheerfulness. Through the morning she thought scorn of her jailer. She even panted to be face to face with him, that she might cover him with ridicule, overwhelm him with the shafts of her woman's wit and her woman's tongue; show him how little she feared and how greatly she despised him.

But he did not appear, and with the afternoon came a clouded sky, and weariness and reaction of spirits; and fatigue of body and something like illness; and on that a great terror. If they drugged her? If they tampered with her food? The thought was like a knife in her heart, and while she still writhed under it her ear caught the creak of a board in the passage without, and a furtive tread that came and softly went again, and once more returned. She stood, her heart

beating, and fancied she heard the sound of breathing on the other side of the door. Then her eye alighted on a something white at the foot of the door that had not been there a minute earlier. It was a note. While she gazed at it the footsteps stole away again.

She pounced on the note and opened it, thinking it might be from Mrs. Olney, though it seemed unlikely that that good woman could write. But the opening lines smacked of other modes of speech than hers, and though Julia had no experience of Mr. Thomasson's epistolary style, she felt no surprise on finding the initials "F. T." appended to the message.

"Honored lady," it ran: "You are in danger here, and I in no less of being held to account for acts which my soul abhors. Openly to oppose myself to Mr. P., the course my soul dictates, were dangerous for us both, and another must be found. If he drinks after dinner tonight I will, Heaven assisting, purloin the key and release you at ten, or as soon after as may be possible. Jarvey, who is honest, and fears the turn things are taking as too serious, will have a carriage waiting in the road. Be ready, hide this, and when you are free, though I ask no return for services attended by some risk, yet if you should desire to seek it, an easy way may appear of requiting,

"Madam, your devoted obedient servant,
"F. T."

Julia's face glowed. "He cannot do even a kind act as it should be done," she thought. "But, once away, it will be easy to reward him. And at least he shall tell me how I came here."

She spent the rest of the day divided between anxiety on that point—for Mr. Thomasson's intervention, welcome in other respects, went some way to weaken the theory she had built up with so much joy—and impatience for night to come and put an end to her suspense. She was now as much concerned to escape the ordeal of Mr. Pomeroy's visit as she had been, earlier in the day, to see him. And she had her wish. He did not come; she fancied he was not unwilling to let the dullness and loneliness, the monotony and silence of her prison, work their due effect on her mind.

Night, as welcome today as it had been unwelcome the previous day, fell at last, hiding the dingy familiar objects, the worn furniture, the dusky outlook. She counted the minutes, and before it was really nine o'clock was the prey of impatience, thinking the time past and gone and the tutor a poor deceiver. Ten was midnight to her; she hoped against hope, walking her narrow bounds, in the darkness. Eleven found her

lying on her face, heaving dry sobs of despair, her hair disheveled. And then suddenly she sprang up; the key was grating in the lock. While she stared, half demented, scarcely believing her happiness, Mr. Thomasson appeared on the threshold, his head—he wore no wig—muffled in a woman's shawl, and a small shaded lanthorn in his hand.

"Come!" he said. "There is not a moment to be lost."

"Oh!" she cried hysterically—yet kept her shaking voice low, "I thought you were not coming! I thought it was all over."

"I am late," he answered hurriedly. "It is eleven o'clock, but I could not get the key before. Follow me close and silently, child, and in a few minutes you will be safe."

"Heaven bless you!" she cried, almost weeping; and would have taken his hand.

He turned from her so sharply that she marveled, for she had not judged him a man averse to thanks. But she set his manner down to the need of haste, and, taking the hint, prepared to follow him in silence. Holding the lanthorn before them so that its light fell on the floor, he listened an instant, then led the way on tiptoe down the corridor. The house was hushed round them; if a board creaked, it seemed to her scared ears a pistol shot. At the entrance to the gallery, which was partly illumined by lights still burning in the hall below, the tutor paused an instant to listen, then turned quickly from it, and by a narrow passage on the right gained a back staircase. Descending the narrow stairs, he guided her by devious turnings through dingy offices and servants' quarters until they stood in safety before an outer door. To withdraw the bar that secured it, while she held the lanthorn, was for the tutor the work of an instant. They passed through and he softly closed the door behind them.

After the confinement of her prison room the night air that chilled her temples was rapture to Julia, for it breathed of freedom. She turned her face up to the dark boughs that met and interlaced above her head, and whispered her thankfulness. Then, obedient to Mr. Thomasson's impatient gesture, she hastened to follow him along a dank path that skirted the wall of the house for a few yards, then turned off among the trees.

They had left the house no more than a dozen paces behind when Mr. Thomasson paused, as if in doubt, and raised his light. They were in a little beech coppice that grew close to the walls of the offices. The light showed the dark, shining trunks, standing in solemn rows on this side and that, and more than one path trodden across the roots. The lanthorn disclosed no more; but it was

enough. Mr. Thomasson pursued his path, satisfied, and less than a minute's walking brought them into the avenue.

Julia drew a breath of relief and looked behind and before. "Where is the carriage?" she whispered, shivering with excitement.

Before he answered he raised the lanthorn thrice to the level of his head, as if to make sure of his position, and lowered it again. Then, "In the road," he answered. "And the sooner you are in it the better, child, for I must get back and replace the key before he sobers—or 'twill be worse for me," he added snappishly, "than for you!"

"You are not coming with me?" she exclaimed, in surprise.

"No, I—I can't quarrel with him," he answered hurriedly. "I am under obligations to him. And once in the carriage you'll be safe enough."

"Then, please to tell me this," Julia rejoined, her breath a little short. "Mr. Thomasson, did you know anything of my being carried off before it took place?"

"I?" he cried. "Did I know?"

"I mean—were you employed to bring me to Mr. Pomeroy's?"

"I employed? Good heavens, ma'am, what do you take me for?" cried the tutor, in righteous indignation. "No, ma'am; certainly not!" And then, blurting out the truth in his surprise, "Why, 'twas Mr. Dunborough!" he said. "And like him, too! Heaven keep us from him!"

"Mr. Dunborough?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, yes."

"Oh," she said, in a helpless, foolish kind of way. "It was Mr. Dunborough, was it?" And she begged his pardon so humbly, in a voice so broken by feeling and gratitude, that, bad man as he was, his soul revolted from the work he was upon; he stood still, the lanthorn swinging in his hand.

She misinterpreted his movement. "Are we right?" she said anxiously. "You don't think we are out of the road?" Though the night was dark and it was difficult to make out anything beyond the circle of light thrown by the lanthorn, it struck her that the avenue they were traversing was not the one by which she had approached the house two nights before. The trees seemed to stand farther from one another and to be smaller. Or was it her fancy?

At any rate, it was not that which had moved him to stand; for presently, with a curious sound between a groan and a curse, he led the way on, without answering her. Fifty paces brought them to the gate, and the road. Thomasson held up his lanthorn and looked over the gate.

"Where is the carriage?" she whispered, startled by the darkness and silence.

"It should be here," he answered, his voice betraying his perplexity. "It should be here at this gate. But I—I don't see it."

"Would it have lights?" she asked anxiously. He had opened the gate; as she spoke they passed through, and stood looking up and down the road. The moon was obscured, and the lanthorn's rays were of little use to find a carriage which was not there.

"It should be here, and it should have lights," he said, in evident dismay. "I don't know what to think of it. I—ha! What is that? It is coming, I think. Yes, I hear it. It must have drawn off a little for some reason, and now they have seen the lanthorn."

He had only the sound of wheels to go upon, but he was right; she uttered a sigh of relief as the lights of a closed chaise, approaching round a bend of the road, broke upon them. They drew near and nearer, and he waved his light. For a brief second the driver appeared to be going to pass them; then, as Mr. Thomasson again waved his lanthorn and shouted, he drew up.

"Halloa!" he said.

Mr. Thomasson did not answer, but with a trembling hand hurriedly opened the door and pushed the girl in. "God bless you!" she murmured. "And——" He slammed the door, cutting short the sentence.

"Well!" the driver said, looking down, his face in shadow, "I am——"

"Go on!" Mr. Thomasson cried peremptorily, and, waving his lanthorn again, so startled the horses that they plunged away wildly, the man tugging vainly at the reins. The tutor fancied that he caught a faint scream from the inside of the chaise, but set it down to fright caused by the sudden jerk; and after standing long enough to assure himself that the carriage was keeping the road, he turned to retrace his steps to the house.

He was opening the gate, his thoughts no pleasant ones—for the devil pays scant measure—when his ear was surprised by the sound of wheels approaching from the direction whence the chaise had come. He stood to listen, thinking he heard an echo; but in a second or two he saw lights approaching precisely as the others had approached. Once seen, they came on so swiftly that he was still gaping in wonder, when a carriage and pair, a post boy riding, and a cloaked man sitting in the rumble, swept by, dazzling him a moment; the next it was gone, whirling away into the darkness.

(*To be continued.*)