

'Devil and beast! faithless mother! faithless wife! May God——'

I raised my hand, looking him full in the face. 'Pray sit, Wilfrid. Lady Monson has left you, you say. With or for whom?'

'Hope-Kennedy,' he answered, 'Colonel Hope-Kennedy,' bringing out the words as though they were rooted in his throat. 'My good friend Hope-Kennedy, Charles; the man I have entertained, have hunted with, assisted at a time when help was precious to him. Ay, Colonel Hope-Kennedy. That is the man she has left me for, the fellow that she has abandoned her baby for. It is a dream—it is a dream! I loved her so. I could have kissed her breast, where her heart lay, as a Bible for truth, sincerity, and all beautiful thought.'

He passed his hand over his forehead and seated himself again, or rather dropped into his chair, resting his chin upon the palm of his hand with the nails of his fingers at his teeth, whilst he watched me with a gaze that was rendered indescribably pathetic by the soft near-sighted look of his grey eyes under the shadow of his forehead, that had a wrinkled, twisted, even distorted aspect with the pain his soul was in. There was but one way of giving him relief, and that was by plying him with questions to enable him to let loose his thoughts. He extended his hand for the brandy and mixed himself a bumper. There was little in spirits to hurt him at such a time as this. Indeed I believe he could have carried a whole bottle in his head without exhibiting himself as in the least degree overspurred. This second dose distinctly rallied him, and now he lay back in his chair with his arms folded upon his breast.

'When did your wife leave you, Wilfrid?'

'A week to-day.'

'You know, of course, without doubt, that Hope-Kennedy is the man she has gone off with?'

He nodded savagely, with a smile like a scowl passing over his face.

'But how do you know for certain?' I cried, determined to make him talk.

He pulled a number of letters from his side-pocket, overhauled them, found one, glanced at it, and handed it to me with a posture of the arm that might have made one think it was some venomous snake he held.

'This was found in my wife's bedroom,' said he, 'read it to yourself. Every line of it seems to be written in fire here.' He struck his breast with his fist.

What I am telling happened a long time ago, as you will notice presently. The letter my cousin handed to me I read once and never saw again, and so, as you may suppose, I am unable to give it as it was written. But the substance of it was this: It was addressed to Lady Monson. The writer called her, I recollect, 'my darling,' 'my adorable Henrietta.' It was all about the proposed

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