

“No, it will not. That I am certain of. I do not know why, but I feel that my case is quite hopeless. Why, that Herr has got all the luck to himself; there at Christmas time and with McDonald resigned! Besides, in such matters, I am a very coward. There, you need not tell it, but I plotted for a whole day to ask her for a lock of her hair, begged she would grant me a favour before I named it, she granted it, and yet I could not muster the pluck to get out the words and actually left for England that same night, without daring to make my request.”

“Excuse me, Frank, but you acted like a great fool in that matter.”

“No doubt I did. But if I could not do such a simple thing, how shall I ever— Oh, it is of no use talking about it. That German has flattened me out.”

“Not one bit of it. Come, is it agreed? We start by first train to-morrow and as soon as things are set going at Marston, you go north. Look here, I will accompany you, if you like, or write, or do anything you may think useful.”

“Thanks, dear Ned, thanks, and once again thanks. But on this I am resolved: I will travel down alone; if I succeed you get a telegram from me the same day (or night, I don't know which it will be,) and if I fail, you and yours do not see me for two years. Do not say a word against this, but consider my resolutions as unchangeable, and meanwhile dispose of me as you think most fit.”

Thus ended our talk and Ned's story. The punch, the pipes, were done. The debris of the supper were removed; we contrived a second bed by means of the chairs and rugs, blankets and what not, whereon I took my rest, while Ned, exhausted by his long journey, slept on the “nightmare.” Next day, we were on our road to England, and we reached Wortley Hall, tired but inexpressibly glad to see the old, familiar faces beaming with joy and surprise at my unexpected return.