

she stood aimlessly in the middle of the gun-room floor that he might have gone to a little quaint room in the turret of the castle which was used sometimes as a smoking-room, and had always been a favourite retiring-place with his father. She mounted the long and winding stairs with feet which somewhat lagged. She was not less brave and unscrupulous than she had been twenty years before, but her physical strength was less. She felt the effects of the shock in every limb, and was, perhaps, on that account less able to bear the look of almost vindictive hatred with which her son greeted her when she entered the room.

He was crouching on the window-seat, with his eyes fixed on the rolling uplands of the fair domain which was no longer his. Whatever his faults, Tom Lyndon was to be pitied in that most bitter hour. He was young, but during the years of his short life he had made few friends and many enemies. Being without resources of any kind his position was desperate indeed. His mother closed the door, at the same time taking the precaution to turn the key; then she approached the window. She had a hard task before her, and she knew it well.

"Look at me, Tom," she said, with a touch of preceptoriness which only betrayed her inward agitation. "Look up, and let us talk this dreadful business over. It is only by taking counsel together that anything can be done."

He turned his head sullenly.

"All the talking in the world will neither make nor mend it," he answered. "I wish you'd go and leave me alone. You've done enough, God knows, to make me hate the sight of you."