

is a waste of your time to remind me of what I already know. I should indeed have been a fool to refuse a larger rent than you could afford."

"Yes; when I had paid for all the improvements. Was that just?"

"Just! Well, I don't know; I'm certain it was legal. You forget, I am a lawyer."

"Forget! You take care that none of your dependants should ever do that."

Squire Wolfhurst shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

"You may smile, Squire; but you know what I say is true."

"Pardon me; I do not. When Mr. Raeburn died, I was obliged to take his estates in payment of large sums of money I had advanced to him. I was his legal adviser, you know."

"Yes; and heavily he paid for the advice," muttered Grayling.

"Well, at his death, his son Ernest was left penniless. It was no fault of mine, and I could not have been blamed if I had left him to his fate. Now what did I do? I took the boy, had him educated, and have given him a lucrative post under this roof, which must be a comfort to him considering the place was once his father's."

"A great comfort, I should think, to be a servant were you were once young master," said Grayling, bitterly.

"Better than starvation, my friend. Why don't you ask Farmer Crowther to take you into his service? Because you're too proud. Well, pride, like other things, costs a price; in this case it is absolute want; and, if you like to purchase such expensive luxuries, don't ask me to pay for them!"

"I have asked, and been refused!"

"That is a pity. You see, all are not as kind-hearted as I am. Ernest is fortunate."

"Very," said Grayling, his face flushing with passion at these taunts; "but, if report speaks correctly, Mr. Ernest may, one day, claim his rights, your title here would not be too good, if certain papers, which are missing, could be found."

"That is enough, my friend," put in Mr. Wolfhurst, in bland tones. "To-morrow, unless you pay the money, I put you into prison—turn your wife and child out into the streets to starve or live as best they can. You hear my determination? Now go!"

"Have you no mercy?"

"None; for the words you have spoken do not deserve it!"

At that moment a loud knocking was heard at the door.

"Just in time," muttered Mr. Wolfhurst. "Come in," he cried; and the next moment a servant entered the room, and announced the arrival of a Mr. Chalkey. "Chalkey!" said Mr. Wolfhurst; "what can he want? Tell him to wait. Yet, stay; on consideration, you may show him in, and take this man away."

Grayling suffered himself to be led from the room, merely glancing at Mr. Chalkey, a thin-faced, ferret-looking man, who seemed to have followed the servant right up to the Squire's door.

"I suppose the Squire has been hard on ye Master Grayling? Don't look so downcast upon it, man; the Squire's hard upon all of us. He treats Master Ernest very badly, only the young fellow loves his niece, and so puts up with it. Then there's the niece, Miss Isabel, always being told that she was taken out of the gutter by him. Ay, and that her mother died there, too. It's a lively place, the Hall's become, under him. But—"

The man paused to listen to the violent ringing of a bell.

"That's the Squire's bell. Wait here; I won't be a minute."

He disappeared, leaving Grayling standing close by the kitchen; but returned in a short time, with an amazed look on his face.

"I'm blest if I ever saw the like of that!" said the man. "There's that fellow Chalkey seated in the Squire's chair, and there's master trembling and shaking, a-leaning up agin the mantel-piece. Brandy! Brandy!" says the Squire. 'Ay! brandy!' calls Chalkey, as cool as a cucumber. Well, I get the brandy, and Chalkey fills his glass, winks at Squire, and drinks it off. The Squire, he fills half a tumbler and drinks that off, and then, seeing me, shouts 'Begone!' for all the world like the fellow in the show at the fair. Come and have a glass of ale; it'll do you good, Master Grayling."

"No, thank you, my good fellow," replied the farmer. "I cannot drink in this house; the ale would choke me. If you would do me a service let me out by the side door, leading across the park. I do not care for the servants to see me in this state."

The good-natured fellow looked at Grayling's troubled countenance, and led the way to the side door, where he wished the broken-hearted farmer a friendly good night.

CHAPTER II.

Taking a short cut across the lawn, Grayling made towards a thicket, which nearly surrounded the Hall, and through which ran a road leading to the village.

He had not proceeded far before he heard his name called, and turning round, he beheld a couple hurrying towards him.

"I knew it was Grayling," said one of the new comers, holding out his hand. "How are you, and how did you get on at the Hall?"

"Badly will answer both questions, Master Ernest," replied Grayling.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," sighed the

girl. "Oh, how I do wish my uncle would be kinder!"

"It's not in his nature, miss," said Grayling. "I often wonder how you can be related to him."

"We are only connected by marriage," replied Isabel, blushing. "That makes it all the kinder his taking care of me."

"Care!" cried Ernest, passionately. "Nice care he has taken of you! Do you think I, who love you, don't see your heart is ready to break? Look here, Grayling; I want Isabel to run away with me. I am sure I can make my way in the world, and we should be so happy, and—"

"Have a care, Master Ernest; no good comes of doing things on the sly. Ask the Squire's consent. Should he refuse, then take your wife openly."

Excusing himself on the ground that he must hasten home to tell the Squire's determination, he bade them good night, and hurried away.

Grayling soon slackened his speed, for he had not courage to face home, and tell his wife the news. His pace grew slower and slower, until, at length, he stopped, and leaning against a tree, gazed at the moon, which was just visible through the overhanging boughs.

Bitter and black were the thoughts that passed through his brain. The very beating of his heart seemed to reiterate the word "vengeance." It would have been a bad thing for Squire Wolfhurst had he been standing by Grayling at that moment.

So lost in thought was the poor fellow that he did not hear the rattle of horse's hoofs until they were close to him. He turned to see who the rider was, by which means he came more into the full moon-light.

Whether the horse was frightened at Grayling's movement, or at some shadow, matters not, but certain it is that the animal raised its head, and sprang quickly on one side, throwing its rider, who was evidently no horseman, to the ground with considerable violence.

In a moment Grayling had caught the horse's bridle to prevent its running away, and then hastened to the man's assistance.

"Are you much hurt, sir?" he asked.

"Not much, I think," said the man.

"You should keep your reins more in command," said Grayling.

"Oh, you country fellows are up to these sort of things, but we city men have other matters to think of. Just give me a lift into the saddle, for I must not lose time."

Grayling did as requested. No sooner had the stranger remounted than the farmer recognised his features as those of the Squire's strange visitor, Mr. Chalkey.

"You were up at the Hall just now?" he asked.

"Right you are!" was the cool reply.

"The Squire was ill?"

"He had a fit of the blues."

Without waiting for further conversation, he galloped down the road.

"Bah!" said Grayling, when the horseman disappeared; "he's but one of the Squire's men. Like master, like man; if he had broken his neck it wouldn't have mattered much. Hilloa! what is this? He has dropped his pocket-book."

He picked up the book, and was about to place it unopened in his pocket, when his curiosity overcame his better judgment. He opened it, and found that it contained some papers, four five-pound notes, and some gold in a small pocket or purse.

A shudder ran through Grayling when he saw the money. For a moment he seemed as if he were about to cast the purse from him; but, changing his mind, he thrust it quickly into his pocket, and with a creeping step, far different from his usual firm tread, slunk into the wood, and seeking a by-path, made his way slowly homewards, where he knew his wife was anxiously awaiting his return.

CHAPTER III.

It was late when Herbert Grayling reached his home—a miserable place, scantily furnished and in bad repair.

By the side of a very small fire sat a thin, half-starved woman, rocking a child's cradle. As Grayling entered, she advanced towards him, and, throwing her arms around his neck, asked him if he had good news.

"Yes and no," replied the man, taking advantage of her kissing his cheek to turn his head. "The Squire is as hard as stone; but I met with a piece of good luck on the road, so that we can settle with Squire and go abroad."

As he spoke, he drew forth the pocket-book, and gave the money to his wife.

It was really a beautiful sight to see how eagerly the woman clutched it. She counted it over, then flew to her husband, and kissed him over and over again; never noticing that, for the first time, her caresses seemed really to trouble him.

Then she hurried to the cradle where her baby was sleeping, and embraced it. Suddenly she became silent, and lifting her head, gazed wonderingly at her husband, who had thrown himself into a chair, in a desponding attitude.

Slowly rising, she went towards him, and, placing her hand upon his shoulder, asked, with a troubled voice, "Herbert, where did you get this money?"

"I—I—borrowed it," stammered Grayling.

"Borrowed it?" repeated the woman, in surprise. "Oh, Herbert, if what you say is true, tell me who has lent it? Surely you would

not hide from me the name of the friend who has saved us from misery and despair?"

"I—I don't know—that is, I must not, cannot tell you. You have the money—be satisfied."

"I am not satisfied, Herbert," the woman said, reproachfully. "That money was never lent to you. You have not come honestly by it; I see it in your face; I hear it in your voice! Take back your money—I would not touch it for the world!"

"But the child?" urged Grayling.

"The child!" rejoined the wife. "Do you think I would let the babe be fed by the proceeds of your ruin? No; I'd sooner see it dead at my feet, and know you honest, than well, and feel that you were a felon! Listen, Herbert; if you ever love me—if you love that child—tell me where you got this money?"

"I found it in the wood," replied the farmer, drooping down his head.

"Found it in the wood? But you must be aware who is the lawful owner?"

"I don't know. I can't tell. How should I know?"

"By the pocket-book you had just now. It is sure to have the owner's name inside."

"It has not. I have searched through it."

"But I saw some papers in it. They will tell you."

"They are old documents about Mr. Raeburn, so they are no use."

"Yes, yes, that is enough!" cried the wife, as delighted as if the money really belonged to her. "You can take it to Mr. Raeburn in the morning; he will return it to the proper owner."

"And can you part with the money?" asked Herbert.

"Herbert," replied the woman, sorrowfully, "can you do without my love? Touch that money, be it but a single penny to buy bread, and from that moment we separate. Be the same firm, patient, honest Herbert who wooed and won me, and neither poverty or trouble shall part us."

For a moment he gazed at her in silence, then, clasping her to his breast, he sobbed out, "Bless you, Maggy! I will offer the money to young Raeburn the first thing in the morning. He is always in the park early. Kiss me, my own darling! Your love has saved me!"

CHAPTER IV.

Squire Wolfhurst came down to breakfast late the morning after he had received Mr. Chalkey's visit. He was stern, and his voice had lost much of its silvery tone. He first asked for his secretary, Mr. Ernest Raeburn: he was absent. He next called for his niece: she, too, had gone for a walk, and had not come back. So Mr. Wolfhurst retired to the library, leaving instructions for Raeburn and Isabel to be sent to him directly they returned, and also to admit Chalkey when he called.

Once alone, Mr. Wolfhurst paced the room with his hands clasped behind him, but spoke not. Yet it could be seen a struggle was going on within, and that he, with a lawyer's shrewdness, was working a complicated case.

At length the servant knocked at the door.

Quickly seating himself at the writing-table, Wolfhurst assumed an easy attitude, and, scattering some paper about, that it might seem as if he had been working, called to the servant to "Come in."

The door opened, and Raeburn entered, leading Isabel.

"So you are here at last!" said Wolfhurst. "May I ask the meaning of these early walks?"

"It is for that purpose I am here," replied Ernest.

"Proceed, sir; I am all attention."

"Mr. Wolfhurst, I have long loved your niece, and have now come to ask your consent to our union."

"I thank you for the honor," was the bitter rejoinder. "The lady, I suppose, is willing?"

Isabel made no reply, but the blushes suffusing her cheek, as she placed her hand into that of Ernest's, were more expressive than words.

"Ha! I see how it is. Mr. Raeburn, I neither give nor withhold my consent. The lady is able to take care of herself, and, therefore, can do what she likes. But perhaps it would be as well to inform you of one or two things before you conclude this marriage. In the first place this lady will not have a farthing from me, either during my life, or after my death. I have kept her out of charity. When you marry her, you must keep her. How you will manage to do that, I cannot say, for I have appointed a new secretary, Mr. Chalkey, who will arrive here this morning; you will leave in the afternoon. If you still wish to have Isabel, take her with you; if not, she may remain here. Good morning."

"Pardon me, Mr. Wolfhurst; our interview is not at an end," said Ernest. "There are other matters I must speak about before I leave this room, sir!"

"You have heard what I said. I never alter my determination. Leave the room instantly, or I shall have to call my servants, and have you removed."

"Call them if you will," replied Ernest, "but it will only be forcing me to make public that which I would fain keep secret. I advise you to pause, sir, and listen to me before you ring the bell."

Mr. Wolfhurst looked at Ernest Raeburn's face, and seeing his calm determination, left the bell, and seating himself at the table, de-

manded, "What is that you would fain keep private?"

"It is that you are a forger!"

"What!" demanded Wolfhurst, livid with rage; "dare to call me forger in my own house?"

"It is not your house," returned Raeburn, quietly; "it is mine!"

"Yours? It would have been but for the recklessness of your father."

"Stop!" interrupted Ernest. "I would have spared you, for this lady's sake; but now you would abuse the dead, whom you robbed when alive, I have no mercy! You have called down vengeance on your own head; I will not stay it."

Stepping quickly to the door, Ernest called, "Mr. Ingledew," and a short, bustling, little, old man hurried into the room.

"Mr. Ingledew," said Ernest, "tell this man what discoveries we have made."

"Mr. Wolfhurst, my dear sir," commenced Mr. Ingledew, carefully avoiding the proffered hand of him he was addressing. "It is now some fifteen years ago since I told you I knew you had no title to these estates, and that one day I should have the pleasure of ejecting you from them. At one time, my late friend, the deceased Mr. Raeburn, did me the honor of employing me as his legal adviser. You met him, and he fell into your clutches. You became his lawyer, but while I held that position I had seen some documents which I knew would prevent your ever having these estates. In a word, Mr. Raeburn could not sell them. They must go to his son, the gentleman who stands here. I could not find these papers, but last night the clue was given in a most mysterious way. How it came about had better be told by the man who made the discovery. Please to call Grayling, Mr. Raeburn."

Ernest did so. Grayling entered the room, and described how he had found the pocket-book, and had intended keeping it, but was persuaded to restore it by his wife.

"Early this morning," he continued, "I met Mr. Ernest in the park. He took the pocket-book, and examined its contents. He found, amongst other papers, a letter written by a Mr. Chalkey to you, wherein he stated he had the missing papers in his possession, and could turn you out of your estates. 'But,' he said, 'if you take me into partnership, all will be well.' He then hints at some forgery, and ends by signing himself, 'Your old clerk, W. Chalkey.'"

"It's false—basely false!" cried Mr. Wolfhurst.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Ingledew, "the papers are in my possession; and what is more, we have Mr. Chalkey here, who has confessed all. Call Mr. Chalkey."

The person named walked into the room with a quiet swagger, nodded carelessly to Mr. Wolfhurst, and said, "Game's up, gov'nor; it's no use holding out. Rather hard lines for me. I knew your game all through, and have spent all my time and money to find these papers. You have had an innings; I haven't."

For a moment, Mr. Wolfhurst remained silent; then, looking up, he said, calmly, "Gentlemen, I perceive you have a strong case. If the papers are correct, I shall only be too happy to hand over the estates, although doing so will leave me a beggar; for what money I have laid out upon them."

"On improvements!" chuckled Grayling.

"On improvements, as you say," repeated Mr. Wolfhurst. "Still, it will be my duty to hand them over. As for the forgery and fraud, they are nonsensical."

"Pardon me, I can send you to prison instantly," said Mr. Ingledew. "I have the proofs necessary to establish the charge."

"He's right, gov; he has," said Mr. Chalkey, nodding.

"Oh, no," interposed Isabel; "he must not go to prison! Ernest, if you love me, do not let them hurt him. Remember he saved me from destitution."

"Mr. Ingledew," said Ernest, "this man must not be injured. For this lady's sake, he must go free. I want no account of how he has managed the estate. I only bid him depart at once thankful that the love I bear this lady has saved him."

With a bland smile, Mr. Wolfhurst bowed and left the room, and, within an hour, quitted the Hall for ever.

A month had scarcely passed before Isabel became Mrs. Raeburn, and there were gay doings at Offerton. How the bells of the old church did ring! They seemed as if they were ready to crack their sides with merriment, and the old belfry rocked until the oak beams creaked under the vibration of the music.

Of course, Grayling and his wife were there, amongst the tenants. He made the speech at the dinner on the lawn, wherein he told them how the gay Squire had put him into the large farm over the meadow lands; and, having imbibed pretty freely of the "October," he gave the story of the pocket-book and his dreadful temptation, and how he had eventually been "Saved by Love."

Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd happened to be seated at dinner next to a daughter of Sir William Drysdale. She was a charming young lady—unaffected, affable, and clever. To some remark which he made, she replied, "You're a funny man, Mr. Hogg." To which he instantly rejoined, "And ye're a nice lassie, Miss Drysdale. Nearly all girls are like a bundle of pens cut by the same machine—ye're not of the undie."