

Marjorie looked up—she could not understand the love and pity in the dear voice. "I only know that Ralph is gone."

She tried to be brave, but somehow the tears would come.

"My child, there is something more!" Footsteps were now heard coming down the lane from the village. Other lips might tell the tale less kindly, therefore the mother hastened.

"Marjorie, my dear, Will Flemming is dead—murdered—and all his money gone! Folks say that Ralph did it, so you must be prepared to hear unkind things spoken about him." The footsteps were quite close now. "There, go in," and she fairly pushed the girl towards the door, so that the now comer might not catch a glimpse of her pale face.

Ralph kill Will Flemming! The uncle who had been as a father to him (albeit a bad one)! But then Ralph loved him in spite of all the bitter things which the old man was wont to say, and Ralph did not want his money—the money which, it report said truly, had been gained through the nefarious practice of smuggling. Then Marjorie remembered the words he had used about "clearing his name"; but, oh! if people would but believe her, she felt sure that she could set their doubts of him at rest, for surely, surely he would not, could not have come to her with blood, *his uncle's blood*, still clinging to him.

It was a week later, and there had been a coroner's inquest, together with a grave inquiry into the matter. A verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown" was the result of the first, and strong circumstantial evidence against Ralph Belcher that of the second. A large reward, too, had been offered for his apprehension, and Marjorie, who had been the last to see him before he went away, had been examined and cross-examined, till she hardly knew what was truth and what was not.

Well, a week had passed and again it was evening. Marjorie was sitting alone by the sea, on a piece of rock which in former times had served for a seat for herself and one other. Marjorie wondered where he was, wondered if he were thinking of her, and above all she wondered if there was another happy time awaiting her by-and-by, or whether life would always be dark as at present. If so—and as she gazed out over the sea a passing cloud hid the sun's rays for the time being—she would be glad when she had lived her life; glad to lie down and rest beneath the churchyard sod. A fisherman's boat came bounding along towards the shore; but Marjorie did not observe it, did not hear the grating sound of its landing, did not indeed look up till its owner stood before her. The colour which had by this time returned in some measure to her cheeks deepened when her eyes met his: then she again looked down, and one hand sought the pebbles and sands by her side, playing nervously with them, the while the man stood and looked upon her with a look of unutterable fondness. The cloud had passed and the whole scene was as a perfect picture. The rugged slope, the sea, the blue heavens dappled with clouds here and there, the slanting rays of the sun, the pyramid of golden beauties in the western horizon, which would by-and-by glow as crimson and gold together, the glittering white rocks and sands shooting out colours as though diamonds had been strewn about them by no niggard hand; then last of all, came the girl with her sweetly bashful air, and the tall, erect figure before her.

"Marjorie, I'm so glad to see you," and from his voice could be gathered the reason of his gladness. "I was a thinkin' of you out yonder afore I caught even a glimpse of you, and when I came nigh enough to see a little speck just here I made sure 'twas you, though I was terribly afraid I should be disappointed. I wonder if 'twas my thinkin' so much about you as made you come."

"I don't know," and Marjorie glanced up for a moment, then her eyes once more drooped, and she played with the pebbles and sands as before.

"Marjorie, I want to tell you somethin' and I want you to be true and honest by me. I've waited a long time, Marjorie; but somehow I could never come upon you by yourself." His voice was soft and even tremulous in its earnestness, while all the little roughnesses of his speech seemed to melt away in the tender pathos of his words.

"Marjorie!"—he still stood before her, he could not sit by her side in the very place in which Ralph had sat evening after evening. "Marjorie, I've often thought that we've that within us, which can tell us as plain as tongue can speak, when anybody loves us, and somehow, I think we generally find out who 'tis." He paused, as though not quite satisfied with his own eloquence. "When you was a little lass, Marjorie, I loved you, and I've loved you ever since, and

what I want to know is, if anythin' have ever told you, dear, how precious you have been to me all these years.

There was no reply, only the ceaseless roaring of the sea, and the dull beating of the waves upon the shore.

"I don't want you to say Yes, Marjorie, leastways not if you hav'n't found out for yourself about my love, I only want you to be honest, and if you don't know, you don't love; for love don't need no tellin' when 'tis the real thing, you can't help not carin', Marjorie"—his voice shook and his eyes were actually full of tears—"only speak out."

Again she raised her eyes; it was enough, he had read his answer, and yet he pleaded on in the intensity of his great love; but then he was so simple and his love for her so strong, "I've loved you so long, dear, and hoped and prayed so often that the time would come when I should hear you say, 'Jim, I know'd it all along'; but then if you don't love me, why, as I said before, you can't help it," and he stretched out one brown hand and touched her shining hair tenderly, softly, as a mother touches her new-born baby.

He suffered greatly, and Marjorie knew it—that was why her lips refused to speak. Awhile the young man gazed out over the sea, then once more he turned, "Marjorie, do you love the other?"

Her face, which was pale before, now flushed to a deep crimson.

"And, Marjorie, you don't believe what people say?"

"No." She seemed pained by the question, and he hastened to add, "Neither do I." Then he stooped suddenly and kissed her forehead, after which he went away and left her still sitting upon the rock in the sad, sweet evening lights.

Summer came, and with it the dear old purple heather-blossoms. Marjorie smiled sadly to herself the while she strayed over the common. She did not go down to the shore; she had shunned it entirely since the memorable day already recorded; for she deemed that the less Jim saw of her the better it would be for him. But one day, her little sister Lucy pleaded so hard to go and gather shells upon the beach, that Marjorie had not the heart to refuse—be it known the children were not allowed to go there alone, there being treacherous places along the coast where many a little one had been surprised by the tide, and carried out to its death by the pitiless waters. The sea murmured sweetly as Marjorie sat down upon her old seat, and something like pleasure was creeping over her when, footfall on the sand caused her to start, and lo! Jim Weston stood before her. He noted how pale she grew at his approach, and something very like a sigh escaped him; then he plunged suddenly into the task he had set himself to perform, by asking abruptly if she knew aught of Ralph Belcher.

"No, nothing." Marjorie was glad to be able to say it, for she knew not what would come next.

"I wish you did, then; to tell the plain truth I'm uneasy about him, Marjorie. I've dream'd a lot of him of late."

"You don't believe in dreams?" and Marjorie's face lighted up into a smile, very like to the old ones she had worn for Ralph.

"No, of course not, for I used to dream of you, Marjorie; no, I don't believe in dreams," and he spoke lightly to dispel her fears as well as to set her quite at her ease.

Marjorie coloured slightly, and for awhile there was silence between them. "I wish, though, as I said before, that I knew of his whereabouts," he broke forth at last, "for then I could warn him of what was goin' on. They are sayin' down there," and he pointed away in the direction of the fishermen's dwellings, "that they'll have the law of him themselves, if ever he comes back, and I know 'em to be desperate."

"Tell the police," quoth Marjorie,

"No use in that. They'd only set on me for tellin'. They'd know 'twas me, safe enough."

"Did he say aught to you of coming back?" he continued musingly.

"Yes, he said"—she stopped short, for once more came the remembrance of "clearing his name"—"that, that he'd come when he'd made things comfortable for me; but that won't be for years and years, I know," and her face glowed and kindled as she spoke.

"Then he'll come, never you fear, Marjorie; only let me know if you hear about it, for Will Flemming was them chap's mate in more ways than one; but what was that?"

A shriek had burst out upon the stillness, and Marjorie sprang to her feet. "Lucy! Lucy!" was her agonised cry; but Jim Weston was already making way towards his boat.