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He went back into the lane beneath the trees.

She joined him before ten minutes elapsed, and he told her what had been done.

"What must you think of me?" she asked, for having allowed you to receive an escaped convict. And without a moment's warning you heard about it and helped me at once. I do not know how to thank you."

"I was not so unprepared as you think. I had known he was a convict for some time."

"And you kept him, and did not reproach me! I have only one thing to say, Mr. Westlake, but I say it from my heart, May God bless you." Her voice trembled.

"Don't," he said hurriedly. "You will unman me. I have not done half as much for you as I should like to do."

"You have risked imprisonment, according to your belief, and are still risking it."

"Even for you I would not steal or do anything really wrong, but I do not think it is wrong to help a distressed fellow creature. If I have put myself within reach of the law I am quite willing to take the consequences. But there is one thing I cannot do; I cannot help you to marry him at such a time," and he told her of Cornwallis' wild proposal.

SHE looked very grave, and to Ronald's arrangement replied. "Since he wishes it I will marry him and go away with him."

"Surely not," he said with excitement, "you cannot know what you are doing. Wait, I implore you, and should he get away safely marry him abroad."

"I know very well what I am doing"; she replied with deeper gravity, "he is right in saying he cannot do without me. That is true; he cannot. I must go with him and take more care of him than he will take of himself."

"I am minded," said Ronald bitterly, "to withdraw my help. How am I to stand by and see you make this awful sacrifice of yourself. Suppose he should be retaken."

"I must risk that. I promised to marry him and I will keep my word."

"Tell me, will you be happy in marrying him?"

She looked at him with reproach.

"There are some questions, Mr. Westlake, which even our dearest friends must not ask."

Then details were entered into and much settled.

"I shall walk back to Plymouth at once; it will excite no remark if I go by back lanes, and it will be safer than taking the train."

"But it is eleven miles."

"That is not much. Do you come to-day, and, if you can manage it, walk to the next station and get into the train there. Do not tell your landlady you will not return. You can write from Plymouth after a time and pay her the rent that is due. But see my father before you go, and tell him if enquiry is made by Simpson about Jackson that he is employed by me elsewhere."

She obeyed his instructions, and in doing so was told by Mr. Westlake of the warder's visit. He did not remark how pale she turned.

"I said," he continued, "that all our workmen were honest. My son would not employ this Jackson if he were a doubtful character."

She turned away with a sigh, reflecting how easy it was to lose a character, and how next to impossible to regain one if people knew of a previous error.

"Mr. Ronald says I am to take a holiday during his absence," she observed.

"Ah, it will do you good. And where are you going?"

"I scarcely know at present, Sir." She was very grave and subdued during her long walk. She was no joyful bride going to meet her bridegroom. How was this possible? An outcast from her father's house, about to join her lot with that of a hunted convict, and in her heart there was a deeper sorrow still.

Ronald met her at Plymouth station.

"Mr. Cornwallis agrees with me that he had better not show himself

at present"; he said; "though he looks so different from the workman at Willowbridge that I doubt if he could be recognized. You must not go to see him. I have taken a quiet lodging for you; it will be better than an hotel. I hope if all goes well to get you both off to-morrow, for I have hired a steam yacht, which is to start from Millbay as soon as it is dark."

"And our marriage?"

"YOUR marriage," said Ronald, speaking against his will sternly; "will be performed on board the yacht a little while before starting by a friend of mine, a young clergyman, whom I happened to meet in Plymouth. He has seen the license and says the marriage will be quite legal."

"To-morrow is very soon, but I suppose no other course is open to us."

"It is a choice between that or giving it up altogether. I am going with you. I shall land you on the coast of Spain where you had better live quietly for a time. But I have much to hear and to say. I cannot do it here," for the conversation had been carried on in low tones in the waiting room, which happened to be deserted. "Will you not go a little way out of Plymouth with me by train? It will be our last talk together, for after you are married I shall not intrude my society although I shall be on board."

"I will go wherever you like."

The first train going was on the Tavistock line; Ronald took tickets for Bickleigh. The afternoon was beautiful, bright and clear, the Autumn leaves in their rich tints, still hung on the trees. They had the carriage to themselves, which was not surprising.

"I am afraid Horace will be very dull," she said after they had started.

"I gave him plenty of books and papers, and he will have much to think of. I am most anxious not to connect you with him in the sight of anyone as you were seen with him at Willowbridge." They passed through the wooded vale of Bickleigh, all ablaze with Autumn colouring, and alighted at Bickleigh station.

"I am going to take you to Shangh Bridge," he said, "and then on to the top of one of your favourite tors; it is not a very high one and you can manage the climb. We can talk more freely out there."

"I will tell you everything. I know you are putting yourself in great danger for our sakes, and the least I can do is to be open with you, late in the day as it is."

"I shall feel honoured by your confidence."

"You know how I met Horace. I loved him, and believed him all that was good. He got into debt, and, to relieve himself of pressing difficulties, in an evil hour he forged another man's name. I saw him as soon as he had to appear before the magistrates and he told me how grievously he had been tempted by a bad companion, but he assured me of his deep repentance, in fact he seemed broken down by emotion and grief. What could I say when he had confessed his sin? How could I be hard? I felt towards him as a mother to her son in one way, as if he had placed himself in my hands for judgment, and what was I that I should not show mercy? I felt assured that if I forgave him he would, as he promised, thoroughly amend his life, whereas if I forsook him I knew that he would go to the bad even if he were not sent for trial and convicted. So I comforted him and said I would help him in every way possible."

"Do you still think you were right in your course?"

She hesitated. "It is very difficult to decide whether any course is right if you think about it too much," she replied after a time.

"In one way you acted like an angel of mercy, but I say decidedly that you were wrong."

"Perhaps, but love cannot be hard. He was committed for trial; the facts were so clear that neither of us had any doubt that he would be convicted. While he was still out on bail I saw him, and it was then that we arranged a plan for his escape as soon as he should be sent away from London such