

shut her in, and involuntarily she shivered. What if, in this solitary place—and then through the silence the sharp click of the iron gate reached her ear.

The stillness and the associations shook her nerves. She heard footsteps, and, hardly knowing what she feared, she slipped among the trees and stood half-hidden. A moment passed and a man appeared. He came from the Great House. He crossed the opening slowly, his chin sunk upon his breast, his eyes bent on the path before him. A moment and he was gone by the way by which she had come, without seeing her.

It was Lord Audley, and foolish as the impulse to hide herself had been, she blessed it. Nothing pleasant, nothing good, could have come of their meeting; and into her thoughts of him had crept so much of distaste that she was glad that she had not met him in this lonely spot. She went on to the iron gate, and viewed for a few moments the desolate lawn and the long, gaunt front. Then, reflecting that if she turned back at once she might meet him, she took a side-path through the plantation, and emerged on the park at another point.

She was careful not to reach home until late in the day, and then she learned that he had called, that he had waited, and that in the end Toft had seen him; and that he had departed in no good temper. "What Toft said to him," Mrs. Toft reported, "I know no more than the moon, but whatever it was his lordship marched off, Miss, as black as thunder."

After that nothing happened, and of the four at the Gatehouse Etruria alone was content. Mrs. Toft was uneasy about the future—what were they going to do?—and perplexed by Toft's mysterious fortune—how had he come by it? Toft himself was on the rack, looking for things to happen—and nothing happened. And Mary knew that she must take action. She could not stay at the Gatehouse, she could not remain as the guest either of Basset or of Lord Audley.

But she did not know where to go, and no suggestion