

Maurice Malherb entered the cabin, then started back with an oath as an old woman rose and confronted him. She, too, exhibited the liveliest astonishment.

"Lovey Lee!"

"Ess fay, Lovey Lee it is," she answered slowly; "an' you'm Maurice Malherb or the living daps of him. To think! Ten years! An' all your curses haven't come home to roost neither by the looks of you."

"No," he replied. "They've hit the mark rather—or you are playing miser still and saving your crusts and tatters and living as you loved to live."

"I be an old, abused creature," she said. "I starve here wi' scarce a penny in the world, an' your faither's paltry legacy growing smaller day by day. I'll outlast it an' die wanting food, an' laugh at churchyard worms, since there'll be nought of me for 'em to breed in."

She rose and proclaimed herself a woman of extraordinary stature—a female colossus of bones. She stood six feet three inches, and, but for her wild and long grey hair, looked like a man masquerading.

Lovey Lee was a widow, and had spent most of her life in the service of the Malherbs. At twenty years of age she married a gamekeeper, and, twelve months later, her husband lost his life in a poaching affray. Then Lovey had returned to service. A posthumous girl was born to her, and the son of that daughter, now a lad of sixteen, dwelt with his grandmother upon the Moor. Mrs. Lee was clad in rags, and barely wore enough of them for decency. Her great gnarled feet were naked; her huge hands protruded from tattered sleeves; and the round ulnar condyles at her wrists were as big as pigeon's eggs. Lean, wiry, and as hard as adamant, the miser lived in this fastness with her cattle and her daughter's son. Mystery shrouded her doings in the past. She seldom spoke, and seldom appeared among the moorland haunts of men. Therefore humble folks feared her for a witch, and avoided her by day or night. In reality, the passion of her life and the mainspring of every action was greed; and she exceeded the vulgar miser in this—that intrinsic worth, not alone the rude glitter of money, commanded her worship. Value was the criterion; she rose superior to the chink of gold; she loved a diamond as well as the coins that represented it; or a piece of