

gave her the news of the flock in the full belief that she would be just as interested in it as she was eight months ago or more.

She was. And she said:

"Well, Melton, from all you tell me, I don't think they can be so daft after all. They might have perished in that snowstorm, you know. Instead of which, they deliberately took shelter in the new barn. I call that highly intelligent. It seems to me that they've developed brains instead of lost them in my absence!"

"Aye, aye, perhaps they have," he said, pleased with her praise of his beloved flock.

Suddenly he stopped and sniffed the air.

"A smell of burning," he said. "Don't ye smell something burning? Some of they tramps firing the moor again, I'll be bound."

She had stopped, too.

"Yes, I smell it," she said.

For a little while they passed on in silence. But all at once she stopped again, framed her eyes with her hands, scanned her home, which had now come into sight, and exclaimed:

"Melton, it isn't the moor — it's my home."

And before the meaning of her words had dawned on him, she had dashed off at full speed.

"My poor Horace, my poor Horace," she cried.

"What has been happening to you, alone, wretched and miserable?"

As she rushed to the rescue, it flashed across her mind that it was more than probable that he had been drugging himself and, careless as ever of fire, had piled on the logs and sunk into one of those stupors of which she had often had experience, but which, as she told Beaudesart, she had accepted as she accepted the Renaissance, or anything else that pertained to him.