

because you have suddenly become impressed by your great age? That would be childish, certainly. I am sorry that I have caused you any anxiety — and still more sorry that I have spoken unkindly. But if your voice shakes again, dear, as it did just now, I'll kiss you — though they hang me for it."

Isobel looked swiftly into his eyes, and as swiftly away again. Then, as if working for a wager, she asked him questions about the wilderness, the savage tribes, the fighting, the marching, and the wild animals he had encountered. And while she questioned and he answered they moved forward, side by side, with the horse close at their heels.

The path was so narrow that his right hand presently touched her left. In a second their fingers clasped and held; and so they moved along, talking briskly, though somewhat vaguely, and each pretending unconsciousness of what had happened. In the depths of the woods they crossed a low stone wall that separated Fairwood Manor from Admiral's Pride.

"Now, I must go back to the manor. I am spending the day with Uncle Henry," said the girl. As she spoke she gently withdrew her hand from the young man's. He did not try to retain it. He made no sign of knowing that his hand had been anywhere but in his own pocket.