

knew that he was very much worried about Laurence, and her young heart was filled with indignation against its cause. If only she had been the eldest son there would have been no trouble in Halliwell Mills, nor any anxiety in her father's heart.

There were several small houses standing near to each other on the banks of the little stream which watered the base of the hills, but among them Rose Cottage seemed to stand out in beauty, well-deserving of its name. The garden, which had ever been one of John Fletcher's hobbies, was still a blaze of late spring flowers, and the roses to which it owed its name gave promise of an abundant harvest. Adair was somewhat relieved to see John himself standing at the door enjoying an evening pipe in a leisurely fashion, which did not suggest much anxiety of mind. When he saw her at the side gate he came quickly to meet her, lifting his cap with the fine courtesy never lacking.

"Good evening, Miss Adair," he said. "It is not often we have a visit from you so late."

"Well, I heard from Mrs. Anderson this afternoon that dear Mrs. Fletcher was not well, and I thought I'd better come and see," she said, in the most pleasant tones of a singularly sweet and pleasant voice; "but as I don't see any terrible anxiety in your face, John, I hope that the report was exaggerated."

"She's no very well, Miss Adair," said John, and his face shadowed slightly. "She doesn't know what it is, but there is something. Mrs. Anderson was for her going to Edinburgh to see one of the big doctors. I doubt it will have to come to that."

"Oh, well, I hope that it is nothing very serious. Isn't this a lovely evening? It is just a joy to be alive."