

## CHAPTER XXXV

### ETHERINGTON CHOOSES

**I**T was once more late spring in the lake region, and earth and air were filled with the hope and joy of renewing life, when Etherington set out from York for Castle Monmouth. He and his man had taken the road by easy stages, lying over night at Newark, and coming on from there over the same road travelled by Etherington on that memorable June day the year before.

At the inn in the forest, he found his faithful, hard-worked woman acting as hostess, with the assistance of a slatternly girl; but the men, she told Etherington, had gone to the war, and had not yet returned. She gave her guest of the best of her rude and meagre hospitality, complaining of the change made by the troubles, and of her fear that the country would be ruined by the neglect of farms and all business by the men, who were engrossed by the continual struggle. She also received with profuse thanks, the generous fee which he offered in return for her services. Then, in a vague dream, he continued his journey, under woodlands and by great marshes, and along the edges of cliffs, where, ever and anon, he got a distant glimpse of shining water or hazy headland. So he travelled on,