

"Gone!" she was thinking. "Cut off in the fulness of his strength. A man as might have stood to work for twenty year an' more accordin' to Nature. An' me laggin' wi' three figures starin' me in the faace a'most. Then who's to keep my secret for Sib? Who's to be trusted now? Somebody must know for certain; but when a body gets to fourscore an' ten, her doan't put no gert belief in men folks. . . . Parson might have been thought worthy; but he thinks of nought but foxes, an' he's dazzled by the Pope of Rome seemin'ly—do preach in a windin'-sheet, or some such fantastic contrivance, 'stead of a orderly black gownd. Who'd trust such a perilous popinjay wi' bank-notes? . . . Gilbert gone! 'Twas awnly essterday I was mindin' the old time an' the far-reachin' bitterness when Mary Gilbert—maiden name Moss—took the farmer when she might have had the Squire. An' Baskervilles be that peacock-proud, by reason that they comed to England wi' the French afore the Word of God, like they Pomeroyes and other foreigners of high renown. . . . Who to tell? Who to trust? There's Dick Gilbert, of course; but