

before the post goes out a veto will be put upon my asking him.'

'Just so. But there is a horse in the stable, and you know how to ride, I believe.'

'It is not a sea-horse that I can ride to Boulogne upon, Milly.'

'No, but you can ride to Mirton, and telegraph to Boulogne, silly.'

'Excellent girl?' cried Gresham, rapturously; 'if you were a little better looking I could find it in my heart to kiss you.'

'He is the most impertinent wretch!' exclaimed the young lady, as if to space, and mimicking the fiery tone as well as the words of her companion.

'Seriously, Milly, I am charmed with your sagacity, and I am sure it will please Mayne to hear that you had so set your heart on seeing him that you devised this scheme. I'll be off at once.'

'Now that is so like a man,' observed Milly, sardonically; 'first, in the ingratitude, and, secondly, in the want of intelligence. Why, you're actually going to the stables by the front of the house.'

'True, I will go the back way. You are an angel, Milly, with the wisdom of the serpent added.'

'And look here, George,' added she, as he was hurrying away, 'if you are very anxious about your friend's coming, you had better prepay his message back. When he said, "I'll come," Papa can scarcely say he is not to come.'

'An excellent notion, my dear girl. You are a Machiavelli!'

'I'll tell Papa if you call me such names as that,' replied the young lady, demurely.

'She is too clever by half; I shall pity her husband,' said Gresham to himself, as he passed through the garden gate.

We have said that on the moorland above Halcombe there were no trees; on the extreme edge of the cliff, on the Mirton side of the village, there was, however, a notable exception to this

circumstance, a long though narrow plantation of Scotch firs had been planted there by some previous tenant of the Hall, to which it formed a most picturesque approach. For more than a mile the traveller could ride or drive in shelter, while enjoying the most exquisite glimpses of marine scenery. It was called 'The Wilderness,' and was the favourite haunt of the children of the village.

It was early in the afternoon when Gresham arrived at the entrance of this grove on his return journey. The wind had dropped, and only sighed through the branches of the trees, like an echo of the waves beneath. The sweet breath of the pines, the warmth of the shelter they afforded after the open moorland road were so grateful to the traveller that he almost always drew rein as he entered the Wilderness, and came through it at a foot-pace. Notwithstanding his familiarity with the scene, this was now the case with Gresham, though it is doubtful whether the slackening of his speed was solely due to the attractions of Nature. As he reached this first jut of home it was natural that the consideration of his position there, and of his future prospects, should have suggested themselves, and a gallop (which had hitherto been his pace) is no aid to reflection.

He was still full of indignation against Walcot, but he perceived how dangerous it would be to give expression to it, considering the obvious increase of that person's influence with Sir Robert since he (Gresham) had left home, and especially in view of his own relations with Elise. If these should be discovered, they would afford a dangerous weapon, indeed, to the hand of such an unscrupulous foe. Gresham knew that he was solely dependent upon Sir Robert, but, to do him justice, that was not the consideration which most affected his thoughts. He was attached to his uncle by bonds of affection as well as of gratitude, and feared his displeasure at