

Do not grudge her this little spell of sunshine and calm weather. It was not for long. Her father's memory, too, was ever with her, and Oliver was not slow to see that his interest lay in affecting a sincere admiration and regard for the man he had slain. He was careful to seem to keep this back—to have it forced unwillingly from him. Thus it came out—one can see it!—how good and noble was this man's inner heart, how cruelly he had been entrapped by misadventure into an outward seeming of an assassin and a traitor. It was craft, but it was craft he half-believed honest, and it was the less ignoble seeing the end it was to gain. The tear was almost real that he talked himself into shedding over old Ralph, and the torrent it provoked from Lucinda came as a luxury of grief to a heart half-broken.

Meanwhile Susan Trant was safe in her haven of refuge. Whether her influence over the old groom whose domicile she had invaded was necromantic, and not of the sort that Holy Writ limits and defines, but does not forbid, is a question to which in after days some said yes, some no. If the latter alternative, the transgression was beyond doubt, for Trant the farmer was not trampled by a bull and gored to death till two years later. Probably all who knew anything of the witch-trial at Bury, and John Rackham's deposition against her, decided that this time, too, he was bewitched. For is it likely that a woman would intrigue with a man who had done her so ill a turn—and he an old groom of sixty? *He* was ready, no doubt; but, then, do not some say no man is ever so old he will not soften to a woman? . . . yes!—if she be not uncomely out of all reason.

The denial of the witchcraft in this case, and the ready acceptance of the other explanation, may be due to a proneness to discredit all supernatural causes in human