

ing his way of the first policeman whom he met, he turned to the left, and reached the cliff on which the houses in Albion-place are situated. Farnaby followed him at a discreet distance; and the woman followed Farnaby.

Arrived in sight of the lodging-house, Mr. Ronald paused—partly to recover his breath, partly to compose himself. He was conscious of a change of feeling as he looked up at the windows; his errand suddenly assumed a contemptible aspect in his own eyes. He almost felt ashamed of himself. After nineteen years of undisturbed married life, was it possible that he had doubted his wife—and that at the instigation of a stranger whose name even was unknown to him? 'If she was to step out in the balcony, and see me down here,' he thought, 'what a fool I should look!' He felt half-inclined, at the moment when he lifted the knocker of the door, to put it back again quietly, and return to London. No! it was too late. The maid-servant was hanging up her bird cage in the area of the house; the maid-servant had seen him.

'Does Mrs. Ronald lodge here?' he asked.

The girl lifted her eyebrows and opened her mouth—stared at him in speechless confusion—and disappeared in the kitchen regions. This strange reception of his inquiry irritated him unreasonably. He knocked with the absurd violence of a man who vents his anger on the first convenient thing that he can find. The landlady opened the door, and looked at him in stern and silent surprise.

'Does Mrs. Ronald lodge here?' he repeated.

The landlady answered with some appearance of effort—the effort of a person who was carefully considering her words before she permitted them to pass her lips.

'Mrs. Ronald has taken rooms here. But she has not occupied them yet.'

'Not occupied them yet?' The words bewildered him as if they had been spoken in an unknown tongue. He stood stupidly silent on the doorstep. His anger was gone; an all-mastering fear throbbed heavily at his heart. The landlady looked at him, and said to her secret self: 'Just what I suspected; there *is* something wrong!'

'Perhaps I have not sufficiently explained myself, sir,' she resumed with grave politeness. 'Mrs. Ronald told me that she was staying at Ramsgate with friends. She would move into my house, she said, when her friends left—but they had not quite settled the day yet. She calls here for letters. Indeed, she was here early this morning, to pay the second week's rent. I asked when she thought of moving in. She didn't seem to know; her friends (as I understood) had not made up their minds. I must say I thought it a little odd. Would you like to leave any message?'

He recovered himself sufficiently to speak. 'Can you tell me where her friends live?' he said.

The landlady shook her head. 'No, indeed. I offered to save Mrs. Ronald the trouble of calling here, by sending letters or cards to her present residence. She declined the offer—and she has never mentioned the address. Would you like to come in and rest, sir! I will see that your card is taken care of, if you wish to leave it.'

'Thank you, ma'am—it doesn't matter—good morning.'

The landlady looked after him as he descended the house-steps. 'It's the husband, Peggy,' she said to the servant, waiting inquisitively behind her. 'Poor old gentleman! And such a respectable-looking woman, too!'

Mr. Ronald walked mechanically to the end of the row of houses, and met the wide grand view of sea and sky. There were some seats behind the railing which fenced the edge of