

tended trying, for the last time, my fortunes with Tricksy on this day, and I had looked forward to our ride for doing so. We should have got rid of John, I know, even had he started with us.

When they returned, Tricksy came to me in her habit. She looked positively beautiful.

"Where have you been?" I asked.

"To Gap Lane;" and then she suddenly threw her arms round my neck, and sobbed, "Oh, I am so happy, Wilfred dear!" but the tears rolled down her cheeks as she said so; and then she left me. How my heart beat! Would she choose me?

That day, after dinner, my father proposed a health—Miss Gwyn's future husband. I felt cold and hot by turns. Had Tricksy chosen *me*? I looked for sympathy towards John, but in some unaccountable way he had disappeared.

The next day, at twelve o'clock, we were to assemble in the library, to hear the codicil to my uncle's will; after which, Tricksy was to announce her marriage, or forfeit her heiress-ship. We were all to be present.

Somehow, that morning Thorold House was like a desert. My father and uncles, and the lawyer, breakfasted together. I searched for John, but heard he had gone out. Mrs. Thorold and Tricksy were invisible. I wandered about like a troubled spirit.

At twelve I was seated in the library. Would Tricksy declare she had chosen me before them all, without giving me the sweet certainty of her affection, with her own lips first, in private? I was absolutely tortured with my doubts and conjectures.

Presently my father came in, followed by my two uncles. One, as usual, rubbing his hands, as if he were always typically performing the process which was to him the panacea against all responsibility; the other, with a more than usually sour and sanctimonious look, and a prayer-book in his hand. It was wormwood to him to preside, as it were, over the throwing away of thousands and thousands of pounds on a "trumpety worldly chit of a girl." Such had been his designation of Tricksy. Three separate messages were sent after John. He was at home, but sent word he could not come down.

Then came Mrs. Thorold, fairer and paler than ever, in her widow's weeds. "Beatrix is coming directly," she said.

How strange, I thought for her to let her daughter come in alone upon such an occasion; and where on earth has John gone to?

Then there was a pause.

Then the door opened. I started up; but Tricksy was not alone. She was leaning on the arm of John Tyrrell.

He looked so pale that I thought he would have dropped, but he stepped in quietly and gravely, and led her to her mother.

"I have chosen," said Beatrix in a soft low voice, and she turned round.

"John Tyrrell asked me to be his wife yesterday, and I have accepted him.