

CHAPTER XXXVI

ETHERINGTON DECIDES HIS FATE

IT was a beautiful day, and early in the forenoon of that morning in the latter end of May, when Etherington went forth to know his fate from the lips of the girl he loved.

The tragic problem of the preceding night seemed to roll off from him, and to recede into a vague mist, and all earth teemed with life and youth, and the early promise of summer, as he went along the woodland path that ran across the Philpotts place in the direction of Bradford's Cove. Monmouth, or his uncle, as he must henceforth know him in secret, had excused himself after breakfast, and advised him to take a walk, and he had not delayed in taking advantage of the hint.

As he went along, he began already to plan out what he should do, how he should make the place his home, and make his influence felt here in the wilderness. All his old despondency had departed, and hope and expectancy had taken its place in his consciousness.

When he arrived at the Philpotts place, he saw that a rude hut now occupied the place where the house had once stood, and as he went past, a bold-faced, stout, young woman came to the door and shouted.

"Tom, Tom, you beast, come here!" but there was no answer; only from the angle of a rude rail fence, there issued a loud snore, where Etherington perceived that a