some such freak, a mere hap, and no reason shown, whereby one may get the knack of ruling another's will, and why I should have chanced to learn it I know not, more than another. But there was no Devil in it ; *that* I know !

" Yes—it was an easy task to get Master Rackham again into leading-strings. But he never knew, look you, but what all he did was of his own free-will. He sheltered me, at my bidding, in the upper story of his stable, where he was master and none could gainsay him, unless it were Sir Oliver himself. And as for him, why—if he had seen me, he would but have looked the other way, or said some word of jest about Rackham's grey hairs, and how he should patch up for Heaven before it was too late—and he, poor man, with never a choice in the matter ! So I was safe sheltered, for a time ; and that was all my thought, at first. . . . What !—do you doubt it ? . . .

" Well, Master, I am sure I had no other thought. Except you will have it one thinks the thought one puts away. Will you, Master Absalom, be so ready to tell all the thoughts you have forbidden to enter your mind ! . . . Not *murder*, I grant you ! But a many other thoughts a man may be more shamefast in the telling of. Children are not packed off to bed to keep a tale of murder from their ears. . . .

" I will tell you, then, and make a clean breast. Down at Kips Manor I had no more hatred for Mistress Lucinda Mauleverer, soiled and spoiled and all ashrink from her fellow-women, than I had for any other of his quarries. She would have her life to go through, as I had mine. But when it came to my Lady Raydon !—to the seeing of my gentleman at her feet ! . . . then I grant you I did lean a little off the balance of my mind to think of a pointed knife, swift to her heart—of the drug the gipsies make and sell, that rots slowly through the liver of the strongest—of any vengeance I could compass. For that