

"There's some in luck that don't know it!" the man said oracularly. And he slid away.

"If he said black was white, I'd believe him after this," his wife exclaimed, "asking your pardon, Miss, for the liberties we've taken! But you'd always a fancy for 'Truria. Anyway, if there's one will be pleased to hear the news, it's the Squire! If I'd some of those nine here that voted against him I'd make their ears burn!"

"But perhaps they thought that Mr. Basset was wrong," Mary said.

"What business had they o' thinking?" Mrs. Toft replied. "They had ought to vote; that's enough for them."

"Well, it does seem a pity," Mary allowed. And then, because she fancied that Mrs. Toft looked at her with meaning, she went upstairs and, putting on her hat and cloak, went out. The day was cold and bright, a sprinkling of snow lay on the ground, and a walk promised her an opportunity of thinking things over. Between the Butterflies, at the entrance to the flagged yard, she hung a moment in doubt, then she set off across the park in the direction of the Great House.

At first her thoughts were busy with Etruria's fortunes and the mysterious windfall which had enriched Toft. How had he come by it? How could he have come by it? And was the man really sane? But soon her mind took another turn. She had strayed this way on the morning after her arrival at the Gatehouse, and, remembering this, she looked across the grey, frost-bitten park, with its rows of leafless trees and its naked vistas. Her mind travelled back to that happy morning, and involuntarily she glanced behind her.

But to-day no one followed her, no one was thinking of her. Basset was gone, gone for good, and it was she who had sent him away. The May morning when he had hurried after her, the May sunshine, gay with the songs of larks and warm with the scents of spring, were of the past. To-day she looked on a bare, cold landscape, and her thoughts