

the room. A man sat by the table with his face buried in his arms, and Margaret thought she knew who it was.

"Come in, my dear," said the old Rector; "are you better to-day? Rather pale and feeble still, I see; now, sit down in my arm-chair, and Jem Styles wants to speak to you."

The man was standing up now, but almost as though he dared not look at her; his hands were clasped in front of him, and his head bent down upon his chest.

"You want to speak to me, Jem?" she said kindly. Then the poor fellow looked up for an instant. "Yes, miss," he said, in a broken voice. "I want to tell you that—"

"Stop," said Margaret, gently, as she stood up and put her hand on his. "I think I know what you want to say; there is no need to tell me. We met the other night in the corner plantation; is not that all?"

"Did you know it, miss?" he sobbed. "Did you know it was me?"

"Yes, I knew you, though you thought I was the keeper," said Margaret, smiling, in order to force some tears back.

"I didn't mean to shoot anybody!" he cried in distress, "but, oh, miss, I was frightened when I heard some one coming, and the dog; and I aimed at the dog, I did indeed. I never thought to have come to this," sobbed the strong man; "I shall never hold up my head again!"

Margaret was fairly crying now, and the Rector spoke in answer.

"Jem, you ought to be very thankful that God has sent you this awful warning, the first time you tried to steal what was not your own."

"Had you never poached before?" asked Margaret suddenly.

"No miss, never. I suppose bad thoughts had been in my mind; I'd had nothing but odd jobs for a long time, and my wife was so ill, and all on a sudden I thought I'd go out and shoot a rabbit, and make her something nice for supper, and I wandered

on, uneasy in my mind; and then I heard some one coming, and the dog, and I was awful afraid I should be caught, and then they'd think 'twas I had done all the poaching, so I fired, and oh, I wish I'd been dead first!" said the man with a groan.

"Jem," said Margaret, and Jem looked up, to see his young lady all bright and flushing with pleasure, through her tears. "Jem, I am very, very thankful I happened to pass through that plantation: it may keep you from evil for the future, and I don't see why you should not hold up your head again among your friends; you have done your duty by coming to Mr. Lexworth, and confessing all to him, and I am quite sure you are very sorry for your wrong doing."

"God bless you, miss, he faltered.

"Begin again, from this day Jem," said the Rector; what has passed is only known to Miss Margaret and to me, and it will go no further. Begin afresh, and God Almighty bless and be with you! You will, I am sure, never do so again."

"Never again, sir; never again," said the man, as he passed from their presence.

"Surely they are two angels of God, sent to help me," he murmured as he went homewards "Surely, Miss Margaret is a rare one, she is." And the two stood together for a moment or two in earnest thought.

"Maggie," said the Rector at last, "it will be the saving of that man."

"God grant it may," she said simply, "this is a very little thing to do so much," she added, touching her wounded arm.

"Oh, I am thankful, I am thankful, Maggie," said the good clergyman, turning away to hide some tearful eyes, "though it has been pain to you, it has brought another careless one to repentance, true and deep."

"More joy than pain to me," she said gently.

And Jem Styles's "Never again" lasted for his whole life.

THE END.