

No. Master and man looked at each other in silence. Sally was gone.

CHAPTER XLII.

TOFF was the first who recovered himself.

'Courage, sir!' he said. 'With a little thinking, we shall see the way to find her. That rude American man, who talked with her this morning, may be the person who has brought this misfortune on us.'

Amelius waited to hear no more. There was the chance, at least, that something might have been said which had induced her to take refuge with Rufus. He ran back to the library to get his hat.

Toff followed his master, with another suggestion. 'One word more, sir, before you go. If the American man cannot help us, we must be ready to try another way. Permit me to accompany you as far as my wife's shop. I propose that she shall come back here with me, and examine poor little Miss's bedroom. We will wait of course for your return, before anything is done. In the meantime, I entreat you not to despair. It is at least possible that the means of discovery may be found in the bedroom.'

They went out together, taking the first cab that passed them. Amelius proceeded alone to the hotel.

Rufus was in his room. 'What's gone wrong?' he asked, the moment Amelius opened the door. 'Shake hands, my son, and smother up that little trouble between us this morning in silence. Your face alarms me—it does! What of Sally?'

Amelius started at the question. 'Isn't she here?' he asked.

Rufus drew back. The mere action said, No, before he answered in words.

'Have you seen nothing of her? heard nothing of her?'

'Nothing. Steady, now! Meet it

like a man; and tell me what has happened.'

Amelius told him in two words. 'Don't suppose I'm going to break out again as I did this morning,' he went on; 'I'm too wretched and too anxious to be angry. Only tell me, Rufus, have you said anything to her—?'

Rufus held up his hand. 'I see what you're driving at. It will be more to the purpose to tell you what she said to me. From first to last, Amelius, I spoke kindly to her, and I did her justice. Give me a minute to rummage my memory.' After brief consideration, he carefully repeated the substance of what had passed between Sally and himself, during the latter part of the interview between them. 'Have you looked about in her room?' he inquired, when he had done. 'There might be a trifling something to help you, left behind her there.'

Amelius told him of Toff's suggestion. They returned together at once to the cottage. Madame Toff was waiting to begin the search.

The first discovery was easily made. Sally had taken off one or two little trinkets — presents from Amelius, which she was in the habit of wearing — and had left them, wrapped up in paper, on the dressing table. No such thing as a farewell letter was found near them. The examination of the wardrobe came next — and here a startling circumstance revealed itself. Every one of the dresses which Amelius had presented to her was hanging in its place. They were not many; and they had all, on previous occasions, been passed in review by Toff's wife. She was absolutely certain that the complete number of the dresses was there in the bedroom. Sally must have worn something, in place of her new clothes. What had she put on?

Looking round the room, Amelius noticed in a corner the box in which he had placed the first new dress that he had purchased for Sally, on the morning after they had met. He