

starting to see his neighbour. 'The woman, he said, had correctly described his conduct; but the reason of his restlessness was his doubts as to the manner in which Manning would receive his friendly advances. He acknowledged that he felt almost glad when he found that his meeting with his opponent was deferred over for a few hours, for his mind was fully made up to call again the next morning. He had taken the path through the woods, not with the hope of coming across Manning, but simply because he had always gone that way, on previous visits, as it shortened the distance to his own farm by at least a quarter of a mile. To his surprise he did meet the old man close to the beeches, who received him very angrily, and in fact drove him away with the harshest language. He had only restrained himself with great difficulty from retaliating with equally strong language, from the conviction that it would only increase the breach between them, and still further defer that reconciliation which he now so anxiously wished, for his son's sake. He had left the old man hurriedly—in fact, ran away from him for fear that his feelings might overcome his prudence at the last; and this fact would account for the excited manner in which he had made his way homeward. These explanations were plausible enough, and were corroborated by the son so far as they referred to the willingness of his father to make friendly advances to Manning; but they availed little on the opinion of those who remembered his quarrel with the old man, and the threat he had used, in the presence of a number of persons, that he would "pay him up some of those days." It was certainly mysterious that the gun could not be found, but it was generally believed that Gordon, in the squabble, succeeded in getting possession of the weapon and instantly shooting Manning with it, and that he had then concealed it somewhere in the woods after he had committed the terrible crime. Several instances of the elder Gordon's passion, when he was once aroused, now came up in array against him, rather than many acts of generosity he had displayed when his neighbours had suffered from short crops or family afflictions. Under all the circumstances, the Jury had no alternative except to bring in a verdict which led to the arrest of the elder Gordon and his subsequent commitment for trial by the Local Magistracy.

Acquainted as I was with all the parties, I took much interest in this singular case from the outset. Whether Gordon was guilty or not, I could not but deeply sympathize with the son who seemed fated to be so unhappy in his love. My impression, at first, was that Gordon had committed the deed under very strong provocation, and that it was quite possible that he had sought out his neighbour with the object of coming to some friendly arrangement; for it was very improbable that any one in his sober senses would have acted as he had done, had he premeditated the crime. But when I had seen the accused in gaol more than once, I came to the conclusion that if he were really guilty then he must have a remarkable command of language and demeanour, for he did not show any of the signs of a man who had stained his hands with the blood of a neighbour.