

"In about three weeks' time ; that is, I must sail then. But I have to go to Liverpool next week to order my outfit, and I have to run up to town to see some business friends who can give me introductions out there that may be useful. I wish you could have made up your mind to live here with my mother, Mary. She wants you to—she told me so."

"She wants to help me, Gerald ; she does not need me. She is so energetic and independent. I could not do it. I am independent myself. The land is now let, but for very little, you know—it is not worth much, and I have not enough to live upon. Mrs. Tomlinson has a brother in London who has got on very well as a dealing in mouldings and carved panels, and a procurer of all kinds of carving and turned work. He has a shop in a small street near Oxford street. Another sister keeps his place and lives over his business place. She was staying at the Tomlinson's last summer, and they showed her some of my work. She said her brother employed several men in that sort of thing. He sells to cabinet-makers and picture-framers. I have been thinking that I would get her to write and ask her to find a lodging for me near them. I love the work."

"But you could never live in one of those dull, dark streets—all alone, too. No, you must not think of it. I cannot imagine you existing even in such a place after the free life on our moorlands."

"I could not make any money here, Gerald. I must go where I could."

"If I were in a better position—if even I had not to go away just now—Mary, you should not do anything of the sort. That is, if you would only give me the right to—"

Just at this point Joyce returned, and Gerald's words remained unspoken, words which might have influenced not only her own, but also Joyce Middleton's immediate future. And Mary slipped out and hurried away to a tiny glen near, so that Gerald had no opportunity of watching for any signs of the effect of his words on her. Joyce found him unusually dull and quiet, also cross, she thought, and she wondered if he and Mary had quarrelled a little. When they all gathered in the drawing room at tea-time, she felt sure they must have done so, for they avoided each other, and the doctor soon carried Gerald off to have a pipe and a talk in his den.

When they bade each other good-bye, he held her hand as long as he dared in his own, and tried hard to get some responsive pressure from it, whilst his eyes sought hers eagerly. But in nervous, highly-strung natures, when the heart is warmest, the hand is often cold as ice, and so it was now, and Mary dared not trust herself to look clear-