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### CHAPTER VII, (Continued).—THE ANGEL A MESSENGER.

No he had not. For more than a month—a whole long month—he had kept away from the Red Grange; and there had been no sign from him that he knew of her existence. The tremulous gladness of his voice, which he sought to hide but could not, took nothing from the questioning and doubt in her face as she answered him—

“I have not a moment to lose. I must go.”

“Go! go where?”

“There is trouble at home. Mr. Seltarne.”

But Ralph did not move. Trouble at home seemed but a distant, indefinite idea. What had it to do with him that it should cheat him out of this brief moment which belonged to him? Surely it ought to belong to him—one little moment after a whole month of starved, beaten down longing. It was the last time; he would never see her again.

“What trouble? Will you trust me with it, as you would if I were your brother in reality? Will you let me help you if I can?”

He stood there waiting for the answer, with a vague chill beginning to settle over his burst of sunshine. Richard Dundley was ill—one of his old seizures—she was going for the doctor.

“And such a night—no late—was there no one to send but you?”

Hester shrank a little from the vehemence of his manner, so unlike his usual calmness.

“The boys are at school. No, Mr. Seltarne, there was no one to send but me.”

He moved out of the path, but not to say good-bye and let her pass on yet.

“Let me go, Hester. Let me do as much as that for—your father.”

Hester's face brightened with a palpable expression of relief. She would be able to turn back at once, and he would be quicker over the errand than she should be.

“But you!” said Ralph. “Those bleak, lonely fields, and the quarry!”

A smile answered him. She had not crossed them so often to begin fearing now.

“I am going Hester.” He bent down with a desperate effort after calmness. He wanted to tell her they two must meet no more; but he could not. “I had something to say to you—a miserable thing to tell you—but this is not the time; I cannot do it. Good-bye, Hester. God bless you, and help me!”

Out of all the troubled whirl of his thoughts, as the lamps flew past him on his errand, that one idea of help was the only thing to cling to. He