

the day being over, Martha gave herself up to her favourite pastime of attending to her garden.

"Good-evening, sir," responded Martha, brightening up as she saw the face of Mr. Denman, the newly appointed vicar of Bruntale. "I'm glad to see you, sir, for I have just been looking at the briar I budded for you from my York and Lancaster bush; it has taken beautifully, and I was wondering whether you would like it moved this autumn, or whether you would wait a bit."

"I'll wait till next year if you can give the briar room till then, Mrs. Harker. I am too pleased at the idea of having such a good old-fashioned favourite to risk killing it by too early moving; but are you not well? You don't look yourself at all."

"I don't feel myself, sir; I've been worried to-day, and I can't quite throw it off."

"If it is any matter that I can help you in, Mrs. Harker, you know you have only to speak; you may rest assured I will do my best for you."

"It's beyond your power to help, sir," said Martha, with a heavy sigh.

"Then if it is beyond the power of man to help you, you know where to go, and where you will be sure of the best help. Don't you think, Mrs. Harker, we are apt to forget to cast our care upon Him. We talk about our Father's care for us, but we often forget to put Him to the test."

"I'm sure we do, sir," replied the old woman. "I know I've forgotten it now; but if it isn't troubling you too much, I should like to tell you about it, p'raps you could give me a little advice."

In a few minutes Mr. Denman was seated in the armchair of the neat little parlour, and Mrs. Harker was pouring out the tale of her trouble.

Mr. Denman looked grave. "I

fear your husband has done a very foolish thing," he said. "My acquaintance with Mr. Atherfield is too slight to warrant me in speaking of him personally, but his general reputation is not good; he squanders money in betting and gambling, and he is heavily in debt. I very much fear there may be losses in store for you and your husband. He will have to suffer for his good nature, and, at the same time, I must say his foolish weakness; knowing, as he must know, the character of the man, he would be sure that the only means of getting his money back would be from Mr. Atherfield's gain either at cards, or on the racecourse, and he has tacitly encouraged him in his evil ways by helping him in this manner."

"That's just what I've been telling John. We both have suffered so much trouble through our own boy going wrong by gambling that we can't be too careful not to encourage it in others; not that I think anything we could say or do would change Mr. Atherfield, but still we ought not to encourage him, and kind of back him up in his ways—at least, that's what I think about it, sir."

"You are perfectly right; we must neither encourage evil, nor the appearance of evil in others. I fear, in this case, that no advice that I, or others, can give will help you; and I trust that if your husband is fortunate enough to escape without loss that he will lay the lesson to heart and never back a bill again."

"I should be sorry to promise for him even then, sir. John is that good-natured and kind-hearted he never knows how to say no, 'cept now and then he rouses himself up, and he'll be that firm, not to say obstinate, that you can't move him, do what you will. I've always wanted to put our little savings into the Post Office bank, but John he do hold by Grimshaw's, and I'm afraid, though I don't 'zactly know why."