

just now with bloom, reached above her ankles, it certainly did serve as something of a hindrance.

Downwards they struggled, Miss Ryder refusing any suggestions but those of her own brain. The result of which arrangement was that the pair speedily found themselves involved in a labyrinth of enclosures, each surrounded by a low, loosely built stone wall, almost impossible to climb, and in which there never seemed more than one gateway, that was always on the side furthest from the desired haven. Even Wynne grew tired of that sort of thing at last, especially as dusk was beginning to fall.

There had been a silence of some minutes, during which Dr. Jaxon had been watching with considerable amusement the changes of her countenance from glee to despondency, and from hope to despair. Finally she sank down upon a hillock in the midst of a trackless sea of gorgeous heather—though, indeed, it looked almost black now—and owned herself beaten.

"They'll be devouring all the ham!" she sighed. "Dr. Jaxon, you've got us into this scrape, and I'll never forgive you if you don't get us out of it—and quickly, too!"

"I shall pull down a bit of the wall," he laughingly replied, more accustomed than she was to the flat stones, piled without cement or mortar, one on the top of the other. "This is what I tried to suggest some time ago, to be——"

"Don't! Only go to work," she said. "And if you venture to hint to Stella what has happened——"

But he was magnanimous. Not a glance betrayed the secret when, on their arrival at the tea table, disparaging remarks were passed upon his talents as a guide. And Wynne felt really grateful. She hated to own herself conquered, even in such trifles as this.

It was late in the evening when the travellers at length reached the door of the Vicarage. All the homeward journey had been rendered beautiful by the beams of the full harvest moon, and the air had been chilly enough to make the glimpse of firelight which shone out of the dining-room window most welcome. Mrs. Jaxon, senior, whose tastes did not lie in the direction of four-in-hand coaches which took steep descents at a gallop, and who had therefore remained at home, met them on the doorstep.

"One of your curates, Walter, I don't

know his name, has been in to say that a man named Candey died in the middle of the week. He only heard of it to-day, when the funeral took place."

Mary and Walter exclaimed in horror, "That wretched man!" "It must have been sudden," the Vicar added. "Why didn't they send for one of us?"

"There is no need for you to do anything to-night. The Curate has attended to the case. But he fancied that perhaps Mary would look in to-morrow."

"I'll go at once," she said. "It is close here. And the widow may very likely have nothing in the house for Sunday. No, I won't have you with me, Walter. I shall do better alone, though the woman's sorrow can't be very great."

"Take me," said Stella. "I should really like to go." Then she added as they started, "I expect you have some droll experiences, as well as sad ones, in your visits occasionally, don't you? Guy often tells us the queerest tales of what people have said to him. And here, in the north, folks are still more outspoken."

"They don't mince matters generally. But here we are. I told you it wasn't far. I wonder if the neighbours are with her? That is so often what one finds after a 'burying,' as they call it."

"Poor thing!" from Stella. "Imagine the crowd and noise."

"But, indeed, she can scarcely regret her husband," the usually sympathetic Mary paused to whisper, standing on the doorstep. "He was a dreadful man, and treated her so cruelly at times."

The room was utterly bare of furniture, and looked so neglected and miserable. The firelight only served to display more clearly the surrounding desolation, as well as to show the despairing attitude of the woman, seated upon a low stool in front of the hearth, and rocking herself backwards and forwards in apparently the most profound grief. Mary went up to her in real surprise, and, laying her hand upon the trembling shoulder, said, "What is the matter, you poor thing? Are you in pain, or have you had no food? You should have come to me if you were in want."

Mrs. Candey raised her face and the swollen, lack-lustre eyes.

"Pain? No. But my ma:——"

The outburst of sobs which succeeded irritated the Vicar's wife, who hated hypocrisy. She stood and waited rather impatiently until there was a pause in the noisy grief. Then she exclaimed,