

the natural gutter ran between two ears of crag just high enough to serve as posts for the beam behind them. He fastened one end of our longest line of rope, with practiced skill, round the middle of the oars; he had already made the other end into a noose, as soon as his ready eyes had taken in at a glance the chances of the ground. He paid out the whole rope over the edge of the cliff; there was no time left for arguing about who should go down.

Indeed, I felt as if forced by an impulse from outside myself to take that matter into my own hands. It is true, I was a great deal younger and by so much the more active than the old tar, who was still as strong in the arms and shoulders as tugging at oars can make a man, but had certainly not been in the habit, as I had been, of spending his leisure in clambering among rocks instead of staring through a spy-glass at the offing; so that I was likely to feel a great deal more at home among the gulls and cormorants than he. There was every reason for placing him at the fast head of the rope, and me at the noose. But had it been otherwise I should have stood upon my rights, as representing the lord of the manor, to do as I pleased above the line of high water. Do something I must—something, anything which had the semblance of helping a living creature, however unconnected it might be with the storm that was gathering over the head of my friend. As I have said, there was no time left for a needless word; I took my way, and, resolutely thinking of nothing but of keeping my eyes fixed on the highest visible part of the cliff, was, before a word could be spoken, letting myself down the rope with my knees and hands. It was not that I had room left in my heart to care, save in the most general way, for the woman on the Carricks. I was in anything but a philanthropic mood, or in one that would excite me to risk a sprained wrist for any soul on earth but Reginald Gervase. It was all sheer impulse; neither foolhardiness on the one hand, nor courage on the other. I claim no credit for the climb; rather blame. It could in nowise be of the smallest help to Gervase; on the contrary, I was risking the only life that could in any way hope to aid him. Only I had no hope for him left in me, in the face of these proofs and of the woman in whose hands they were. It all came from just what I have said, the overwhelming hunger for action of any sort or form.

Of course our idea was to fasten whomever I might find below to the loose end of the rope, in the hope that the sailor, with whatever hope the letter-carrier could give him, would be able to draw her up, and then let down the rope again, so that I might follow. With a view to the first part of the work, I carried down with me a second rope to fasten to the noose and to act as a guide from below, so that she might not swing against the face of the cliff on her upward journey. As to my own return, I might manage a good deal by climbing, or I might, at any rate, be pulled up far enough to swing above the tide until further help should come.

At last I stood upon the last slab of slippery rock which the sea had not wholly covered. There was just room enough upon it for two. And I stood face to face with Adrienne Lavalle—nay, I must call her so—Lady Gervase.

Why had she been brought here, out of the reach of all aid but mine? Why had the tidings of her peril been brought to me? What was the true nature of that impulse which had brought me—me of all men—face to face with her thus, and here?

Think of the first sentence of this history! We were absolutely, utterly, alone together, unseen even from the cliffs that rose up between us two and the whole world. Her secret was known to me alone: its proof was in my own hands. If she had died there unaided, what would have signified the loss of a woman such as she? Why had she not been left there to die? And if she was left to live—in one instant I saw the whole of that vision upon which my mind and been dwelling ever since she had left me—the ruined lives, the broken hearts, all the world's loss, all the shame, all the cruel punishment of an innocent mother and her children for the weakness of a good man. I had despaired of helping them all. But what was that now? Nothing, less than nothing, when I realized that all this storm would burst upon them, no longer from the hands of this woman, because she lived, but from my hands, because I did not let her die.

Would there not be something unspeakably mean and cowardly in preferring the perfect serenity of my own selfish conscience to the lives of those to whom I owed more than even a worse sin for their sake could repay? Surely the ways of justice are not the same as human law. For the sake of others we must punish what, for the sake of others, we must call crimes; but we do not call crimes necessarily sins, and what we condemn with our cold reason we may in our hearts and souls approve. At last I could do all things for Reginald Gervase. Was I to flinch, so that my weakness should let loose upon him all from which I could save him, and that in such a way that he would never guess the peril in which he had been? I swear that I felt as if for this very purpose she had, as if by Providence, been delivered into my hands. If only that wretched lad had never caught sight of her? But was I to let such a miserable chance as that destroy Reginald Gervase? Was I there but to counteract chance, and to do all things for him? Suppose I did murder her, what but good would have been done? I did not shrink from thinking of the thing by its name. I had completely cooled my blood by now.

What she read in my face I know not. But something she must have read,

or it was very far from the birth of a hope of rescue that I saw in hers. She seemed looking through my eyes into my heart, as if she feared it more than the sea. Neither of us spoke a word; but, meanwhile, the sea itself rose and rose, and the wind began to rise too.

I was absolutely making plans. I could leave her there—it would not be my fault if she was found drowned. The body could be recovered at low water, and buried, and nobody would be the wiser. I must give up Lottie, of course; it was one thing to commit a murder, but quite another to make her the wife of a murderer, even though of one who had right on his side. I could take it into my head to leave England, and should soon be forgotten.

"Can you save me?" she said, at last. "What are you going to do with me?"

"I with you?" I asked. "God knows. What are you doing with Reginald Gervase? Look, the tide will be waist-high soon. I am his friend. Are your rights or is your life the dearer to you? But I can't trust you."

I turned faint and sick at heart. How could I nerve myself even for his sake, to be strong enough to let this weak woman die? Suddenly a heavy wave swept over the rock, brought her to her knees, and would have carried her into deep water at once had I not instinctively thrown the noose round her and held her so. It must be done, though; it was some weaker self that had saved her for a minute more.

"You can save me, and you bid me sell my rights for my life!" she said, with real scorn, and with a courage that startled me. "Yes, you say truly; you are his friend. Like master, like man."

Should I have held her there till she was drowned? Should I have been able to face the unspeakable shame of returning to the cliff alone, or should I have waited there until the tide had covered me also? I say to myself, and I say to you, what I said to myself. God knows. I trust not; but I have never very confidently believed on the goodness of the good or the badness of the bad, or the weakness of the weak or the strength of the strong since that day.

"Ahoy, there! Hold on!" I heard a shout, and the grind of wood on the rock, and the unshipping of oars. I think we were both in the boat before we knew where we were. She was saved without my help, and I—I scarce know from what, if from anything, I had been saved.

Sir Reginald himself was at the helm. What could I do now? Absolutely nothing, at last, except give up everything to despair, I waited for the storm to burst even there and then.

It was simply to my amaze that no look or sign of recognition passed between the husband and the wife whom he—he, not I—had saved to destroy him. I waited in vain.

"Thank God I saw you from the yacht in time!" said he. "It was like you, old fellow, to try to break your neck for nothing, but I don't think both of you could have got up without damage. May I ask the name of the lady whom I have been lucky enough to—Allow me to introduce myself."

"I am Lady Gervase!" she said, with a scornful look at me. "I thank you, Sir, for saving my life—"

"Lady Gervase!"

"You seem surprised? I am the wife of Sir Reginald Gervase, of St. Moor's. May I know whom I have to thank for—"

"I really must ask you to pardon me," said he courteously bewildered. "But Lady Gervase happens to be on board that yacht yonder. I am Sir Reginald Gervase."

What could it all mean?

If you reader, cannot guess, you must be as blind as I had been. You must have forgotten my telling you that my Sir Reginald had inherited St. Moor's from a cousin of his own age, and that Reginald was the family name. If that cousin had chosen to die suddenly before he had time to communicate with his wife or his friends, or to make a will, his wife was perfectly entitled to call herself Lady Gervase if she pleased; but it could not possibly effect his heir beyond compelling him to pay a certain part of the personal estate to the widow, which he was able enough to do. What a worse than fool I had been!

When I have heard people talk lightly of their temptations to do this or that, I have said. "The greatest and strongest temptation I ever felt was to murder, in cold blood, a woman who had never done me a shadow of wrong." People think me jesting; but it is true.

THE following anecdote of General Garfield, the Republican candidate for the Presidency of the United States, has a special literary interest. Once he was visited at Washington, and found surrounded with a huge pile of books. He explained his occupation by saying: "I find I am overworked, and need recreation. Now, my theory is that the best way to rest the mind is not to let it be idle, but to put it to something quite outside of the ordinary line of its employment. So I am resting by learning all the Congressional Library can show about Horace and the various editions and translations of his poems."

THE following curious advertisement appears in the Paris paper *Les Petits Affiches*: "A poor blind man wants an infirm woman, unable to work, that would lead him. She would have two francs a day, without her food, or she might share his daily earnings; or he would be glad to meet with an afflicted little boy, from 10 to 12 years old, and able to read. He desires either of these persons to address him (M. Pierre) either in—street or else on the Boulevard—, the places where he is always to be found."