

for if I had my way. Not that I mind that so much as the want of confidence that Mr. Westall has shown in us.' His tone changed now. The idea had flashed into his mind that perhaps 'the young English fool' might be secured afresh through his wife. If so, it would be worth while conciliating and helping her.

Hope cared little in what way she was addressed; her thoughts were all of Harold. 'Has my husband left you?' she asked anxiously.

'Bolted—that's the word, I can't use any other, Mrs. Westall; hardly the thing you expect between gentlemen, and not a shadow of a reason for doing it.'

'Bolted where?' pursued poor Hope.

'Nay, who's to know? Left the train half way between here and Northam, on some shabby pretence of stretching his legs while the engine coaled. Serves him right if he is robbed and murdered in the bush, for he took his bag of money with him.'

There was the grievance evidently. Hope felt that. Harold had tired of these flashy men, probably found out that they were untrustworthy. She was in a fever now to get back to Te-whari, the little roadside station where Harold had last been seen. A train would start in half an hour. She asked for a cup of tea at the inn, and then hastened back to the station. On the whole, she was thankful to find that Harold had so soon severed his connection with these wretched men, towards whom she had always felt a strange repulsion.

It had long been dark when she reached Te-whari. A good-hearted station-master, a Scotchman, pitied the poor dazed passenger by the last train, and offered her his room—he would make shift outside in the station-shed.

Hope was so worn out that she accepted the offer. Only she must know about Harold first. Had he been seen about here? She carefully described his appearance. The station-master shook his head. 'There was some talk about a man having got out of the mid-day train yesterday and made for the woods, but I've my eye chiefly on the line,' he said, 'when I'm not cooking or

sleeping, and I know nothing about it. This is a free country, you see, and a man may go where he likes.' He looked hard at the weary, white-faced woman with the dark-ringed eyes.

'That man was my husband,' said Hope very low.

The Scotchman's honest face drew this much out of her.

'God help you, my lass, if you're in trouble about him,' was the reply.

'Yes, I am in trouble, sore trouble,' she answered with a sob. She was on the point of breaking down.

'There, now, we'll talk all that over in the morning,' said her host. 'It's a cup of strong tea and a shakedown you want to-night, nothing else. The kettle's on the fire; step in, ma'am.'

Hope thankfully did as she was bid; she was literally worn out body and soul. She was positively grateful to be ordered to sit down and compelled to drink a mug of scalding tea and eat a slice of tinned meat.

'And now there's your bed, and don't let me hear of your waking till after the first train to-morrow; it don't come in till half-past six. Things ain't so comfortable as might be here, but they were better once when my poor girl was alive. I've had my troubles too, you see. Good-night, Mum.'

Hope lay down at once on the bed. Whether it was of straw or down she knew not, she only knew that she must sleep or die; and sleep she did, a heavy dreamless sleep, waking to a new day of anxiety with the earliest shriek of the first train.

Angus Blair, the station-master, insisted on keeping his visitor another day till she was quite rested, and Hope, still greatly exhausted, was fain to accept the kind offer, though anxious to lose no time. She did not volunteer any further particulars about her husband, and her host, with the delicacy of true sympathy, asked no questions. Mr. Blair was out all day at his work, but towards evening he came in and looked Hope over from head to foot.

'Is there aught of woman's garments you're short of, since you've come away sudden-like from your home?' he asked