

pounds from the Squire's mother, to close the bargain. What could I do? I had to wed him, but what was he to me? There was no love thrown away 'twixt me and Jonas Trant.

"But the Squire, though he married before the old Lady Raydon died, would come to Kips Manor still, time and again. And he brought comely company with him, be sure!—young wenches in want of a tirewoman. And when my father died, my mother had the keeping of the house, and I was always to come from the farm to prank them up to his liking. But though I might hate him between whiles, he had but to beckon me and say a sweet word or two, and I was all his own again. Oh—ay!—I know 'tis shame to me to tell it, as the world goes. . . .

"Well!—a woman's looks are not for ever, and the time came for the end of it all. But he did me a good turn that year when they were for burning helpless women by the score, for witching sheep and cattle, and what not. For they would have it 'twas I had overlooked neighbour Turle's child, and stricken it with the falling sickness. But Squire Raydon rode in, and had me up behind his saddle, and rode me over to Kips, and he was too strong with the gentry for the townfolk to dare to say him nay, and they were feared of the butt-end of his riding-whip to boot. But Constance Pratt and Apple Trounce were done to death that day at the stake, in Bury market-place, having confessed on the rack their dealings with the Evil One.

"Of which and suchlike doings I, Master Price, have ever been innocent. For the misleading and deception I put upon John Rackham at Kips Manor to dupe him into the telling of how Lady Raydon's father came by his death at the hands of her husband—but she was not married then, and was no better than I—this deception, I tell you, had no more to do with the Evil One than with