

'Ay! I believe it's true enough, and I thought you'd heard about it. It was Mr. Glyn's housekeeper that told Mrs. Bennet, being her cousin; and the doctor told her, because he said she ought to know.

I didn't say a word, but I took my cap and made but two steps out of that door, and banged it behind me. It was a pitch-dark night, but I started running, and ran till I lost my breath, and then walked a few steps, and then ran again.

What I was thinking of as I ran was the same that I had been thinking of as I sat by the fire, but it looked very different now.

There was something 'on' that night, and I knew it, and had known it all the time. The lads were meaning to have their revenge upon Mr. Glyn, and they had laid a plan to do it. They did not intend to hurt him, though some of them would have stuck at nothing much short of murder, they were so mad with him. But I think they knew that he would mind folks laughing at him as much as anything.

This was the scheme. They knew just the time that he would be coming along a dark lonely bit of lane, coming back from a cottage service that he had to hold in an outlying part of the parish once a week. There was to be a rope stretched across the road, about a foot from the ground. Over this he'd trip, of course, and fall all his length. Then half a dozen of them that were hidden near would rush out to help him up, but it would only be to slip a coal-sack over his head and shoulders and arms and tie it firm round his waist. Then they'd let him go, to blunder along as best he could till he found somebody that would be kind enough to untie him; and they laughed fit to split at the notion of what he'd look like when they took the sack off him.

Now, I didn't care for Mr. Glyn, as I've said before. He was never one of the jolly kind of parsons, to clap the fellows on the back and play cricket or football with them; and as for that last I knew why, now. But I didn't like this scheme for paying him out, either. It seemed to me that a parson was a parson, and shouldn't be served as you might serve any other man; and, what was more, I supposed that he'd done nothing but what he thought was right, although I couldn't abide his soft voice and his quiet, precise ways.

So altogether, I thought I'd rather be out of it, though I durst'nt tell the other chaps so, and the more I turned the notion over in my mind the less I liked it.

Half a dozen and more against one wasn't fair play, even if the one was a parson. I let them tell me all about it, and I knew it was little good saying anything to them against it; but the night before they'd fixed to carry it out I wrote a line to Mr. Glyn, warning him to be on the lock-out at Trueman's Corner, and if possible to have somebody with him, and I signed it 'From a Well-Wisher.'

That was all I dared do, and I knew if the lads ever came to hear of that I should have to leave the parish and go to work somewhere else.

I was in two minds whether to go with them and pretend to be helping them or to stop at home; but at last I settled that it would be less sneaking to stop at home, and when I'd done that I felt that I'd done all that Mr. Glyn could have expected of me if he'd been my own brother.

Ah! but how different things looked as I raced down that dark road, and thought it twice as far as ever I'd found it before. I

thought how Mr. Glyn might never have got my letter, or might pay no attention to it,—which was more like'y,—and how the shock and the fright and the anger would certainly be his death, and the chaps would have done what they'd never be sorry for but once, and that would be all their lives.

That wasn't the worst of it, either. We'd none of us known how things were with him,—it was like an accident, that, though it terrified me to think of it,—but I had known that this thing was wrong, and I hadn't told them so; I had skulked out of sight like a coward, and thought of my own skin instead of stopping mischief. I had tried to do nothing but what was safe

they don't want to know. It seemed likely enough that I should set them all against me, and do no good to Mr. Glyn either.

People say that, however careless men may be at other times, when they're in trouble there's always something that makes them cry out to God. I do believe that's true, for I know it came quite natural to me to make a prayer then, for all I was in such a hurry. It was rather a queer prayer, but I meant every word of it.

'O God,' I said, 'I know I've acted a mean part; but don't let Mr. Glyn suffer for that, nor the lads do a murder when they don't mean any such thing. If anybody's got to be hurt over this business, let it be me.'



I GROPED FOR THE CORD AND CUT IT.

for myself, and I had done what might well be no good at all.

How dark the road was! I kept running into the hedge every now and then, and once or twice I trod on a loose stone and was all but down. I had not stopped to look at the time before I left home, but I knew about what o'clock it was, and that if I could get to that corner a minute or two before Mr. Glyn did, it would be all that I should manage. I began to think what I should say to the others, how I could put it to them in the best way, and the quickest, so as to persuade them to take their rope and be off before Mr. Glyn came.

I didn't believe there was one of them that would really wish to injure him if they once understood that he was not right inside like other folks, but it wasn't easy in a hurry to make men understand what

The last few hundred yards between me and Trueman's Corner was uphill, but after I'd made that bit of a prayer I raced along it faster than I'd come down the hill before.

I knew just where the rope was to be stretched, for they'd settled to have it where a shed beside the road made it darker than any other part, and was handy, too, for them to hide ready to spring out. There was a gate on one side of the road and a tree on the other, that would do to tie it there.

I came round the end of the shed, and either it was fancy, or I could hear the lads breathing hard as they crouched against the wall. I was just going to call out to them and tell them who I was, when I heard steps coming the other way.

There was no time for thinking. I had got to do something first, and there was only one thing to do. I pulled my knife