

I think, Vane. It may be pleasant for her to pose in the part of the heart-broken wife, but it can hardly be agreeable for you.'

Something—a sulky and stifled imprecation it sounds like, ground out between closed teeth, is the answer. Miss Routh is an expert mouser, and knows how to torture her victim well.

'But about this extravagant story—what of that, Vane?'

Miss Routh appears to have the ball of conversation in her own hands, and to unwind at her pleasure.

'Something must be done, and at once. We may disbelieve it, but we cannot afford to ignore it. And others will not if we do. Once let it get abroad that you are not really the rightful baronet—the rightful—'

She is interrupted sullenly, angrily, by her companion.

'I do not propose that I shall get abroad,' he says.

'No? But that is Macdonald's purpose in coming here. How are you to prevent it? Your wife will see him—'

'My wife will not see him. She shall never see him again.'

'What do you mean?' breathlessly.

'Nothing that you need take that startled tone about,' sulkily, 'nothing but what I have a perfect right to do. I mean to remove my wife out of his way.'

'Yes?' eagerly. 'How—where?'

'To Flintbarrow. My mines will keep me there, off and on, for months—years if I like. What more natural,' grimly, 'than that an adoring young wife would wish to remain with her husband? It is a dismal place, I admit—all the more reason why she should enliven my enforced exile there. The old stone house is out of repair, but we can furnish up two or three rooms, and for two loving and lately united hearts, what more is required? And I doubt if M. Rene Macdonald's beautiful Spanish, French, Italian—what is it?—eyes will illuminate the gloom of Flintbarrow for her, though they were twice as sharp as they are.'

There is silence for a moment, they pass out of range in their slow walk, and the sweet song of the nightingale fills up the pause. For Dolores—the world is going round, the stars are reeling; she catches hold of the hedge, but fails to hold herself, and half falls, half sinks in a dark heap in the dew-wet grass.

'She will not go; I tell you she will not go,' are the words of Camilla she hears next. 'She has a great deal of latent force and resolution, once aroused, and she fears, and dislikes, and distrusts us all. Here she has friends—Colonel Deering, the rector's family,

the Broughtons, Lady Ratherripe—to whom she may appeal if she chooses. There she will have no one. She will not go.'

'Will she not?' says the hard, metallic tones of the baronet. 'Ah, we shall see! You taunted me before with my impotence in my own house—I could not compel the woman Gemina to leave. I have banished the maid; I shall banish the mistress, exactly how, and when, and where I please. Meantime, tell Dorothy nothing of this; I don't want to be maddened by her questions and comments. For this Macdonald—'

There is another break; they pass down under the willows. She who crouches under the hedge, prone there on the wet grass, makes no effort to overhear. She has heard enough.

'I shall take high-handed measures with him,'—it is the voice of Vane Valentine on the return walk. 'There is a law to punish scoundrels who conspire for purposes of extortion and fraud. This Farrar—a clever, clear-headed rascal as I know him of old, a vagabond by profession—has added his brains by reading up Roger Tichborne. George Valentine was drowned, beyond all doubt, a score of years ago. Men don't rise from the dead after this fashion, except in the last act of a *Porte St. Martin* melodrama. I don't fear them, with my credulous fool of a wife out of the way. If it got wind that she believed the story and was on their side—well, I can hardly trust myself to say what I might do in such a case. At Flintbarrow she will be safe; at Flintbarrow there are no long-eared neighbours to listen, no prying eyes to see. There she will be, perforce, as silent as in her coffin. And there, by Heaven, she shall remain until she swears to me to resign all complicity or belief in this plot—ay, though it should be until her hair is gray!'

'She will not go,' retorts the quietly resolute voice of Camilla Routh; 'she will suspect your intentions, she will see your anger against her in your face—'

'That she shall not,' grimly; 'she shall suspect nothing. It shall be made a family affair. You will all come down.' They pass by again. A long moment, then returning steps and voices. '—in this way. I shall use finesse until I get her there,' with a laugh that makes Camilla shiver. 'I shall doubt the story, of course, decline to see Farrar's ambassador, refuse to listen to a word, scout the whole impossible romance. Meantime I must at once return to Cornwall, and it is my desire that you and my sister and my wife come down after me to see the place. What can be more natural? and once there—'