

silence she walked on after him along the lonesome, dusty road, straining the sleeping child to her breast with an energy of fierce strength that made his intolerable weight no more than a feather.

The road ended in the village. Ten was striking loudly by the Leamington clocks as they passed through the long, straggling streets. Lights twinkled here and there from cottage homes, and the Vine Inn was brilliant with illumination. The man stopped before it, licking his dry, cracked lips in a wolfish sort of way.

"I'm going in for a pot o' porter, mistress," he said; "wait you here till I come back."

Still dead silence. Growling out inward oaths that seemed to come as naturally as his very breath, he tramped into the inn and vanished like an evil gnome in the lighted door-way.

Stock-still the woman stood looking straight before her into the purplish mists of the night, with a fierce, reckless stare. Once she spoke in a whisper to herself and her own dark thoughts.

"Take your drink, Joe Dawson; it will be your last. You have trodden on the worm for two long years; its time has come to turn. You will never strike the fool who married you another blow."

The man came out of the public-house, wiping his lips with the back of his big, sunburned hand.

"Come on!" he cried, with his customary oath and growl. "None o' your lazy lagging here!"

The landlord had followed his suspicious-looking customer to the door, and stood looking after him until he disappeared. He heard the brutish words and remembered them, and the frail-looking creature to whom they were addressed, long after, when the whole country rang with his name.

"A rough customer," the landlord thought. "Looks as if he had been out on the tramp for a month. A rough customer for that poor little woman—her master, I take it. She had a child in her arms, too, poor soul!"

Away beyond the village the dusty high-road wound tortuously, and lost itself in bleak marshes and ghastly commons. Dark clumps of woodland dotted the way—spots made, one might think, for foul murders, so lonely and desolate were they. And still on and on spread these interminable miles that lay between them and the seaport of Plymouth.

Another hour and another—midnight now. The menacing wind had arisen higher and shriller; the moon had hidden her pallid disk behind the black, scudding clouds; the summer