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and all that. Capital man of business."

In her eagerness to follow the conversation Mary turned towards the speaker, for the first time he saw how pretty she was.

"I hope," he said courteously, "that my cigar does not annoy you; if so I will throw it away."

"It does not annoy me at all, I am accustomed to smoke," she replied quickly, a feeling of burning shame taking possession of her as she reflected that in a few days time he might see her among the factory hands, when he would no longer accord her the deference due to a lady.

The young men continued their conversation, which was principally upon hunting and sport generally.

"And," continued the man, who was going to stay at Willowbridge, "I can tell you the meet there is first rate. No fewer than from five to seven hundred men sometimes assemble in Westlake's grounds. He gives a good breakfast, and always mounts me."

"Introduce me, my dear boy."

"I would if you were here at the right time. But you will be enjoying yourself in London."

"GRINDING, you mean. What a lucky dog you are." And this talk continued until the Eddystone was reached, and some of the party landed.

Mary remained on board. She was tired, and she preferred sitting still and watching the water on the lovely warm evening. When the passengers had departed she found that she and one of the young men were the only two who had remained behind. He was tall and good-looking, with a frank face and gentlemanly figure; his face was brown and clean shaven, and she thought he had the cut of a Naval officer. He was casting about in his mind for some pretence for addressing her without giving offence. An idea at length occurred to him.

"I suppose," he said, "that you are interested, like most people, in our ships. The fleet lying yonder is just come in from the manoeuvres. If you are a stranger to Plymouth may I tell you their names?"

"Thank you very much, I should like to know them," she replied pleasantly. It seemed to her absurd that two people sitting side by side should look on one another as enemies and not be able to exchange a word.

The stately fleet was lying at anchor; battleships, cruisers, gun-vessels, preparatory to dispersing. It required very good eyesight to distinguish them apart, for they were at a considerable distance, but he performed his task creditably, and gave a great many interesting particulars concerning each ship.

"You know a great deal about them," she said.

He laughed. "I ought to as I belong to one of them. I am in the Navy."

"Indeed?"

"Why does this surprise you?"

"I suppose it is because I did not think Naval officers would patronise shore boats."

"Well, it does seem rather absurd. The fact is I have a friend staying with me ashore, who is down from London, consequently he likes to be always on the water, and as there was nothing else to be done this evening we thought we would come out here. I can't be always taking him out in launches and torpedo destroyers, you know, seeing that I am only a lieutenant."

Her spirits rose; human companionship, when congenial, is very soothing. She was not a Suffragette, and did not look on men as natural enemies, on the contrary, she frankly acknowledged to liking their society.

"Are you making any stay in Plymouth?" asked the Naval officer.

"I am not."

Prudence came to her aid, she divulged nothing concerning herself, and at the end of the conversation he could ascertain nothing about her. "Perhaps a young married woman," he thought, "anyhow a thorough lady."

The passengers now came on board. She heard the officer's friend whisper, "Sly dog!" and, feeling vexed, moved to the other side of the steamer, taking care not to land till everyone else had done so. Her lodging was in a quiet

street; she went to bed at once and slept until nine the next morning, rising refreshed and restored.

She arrived at Willowbridge in the afternoon. The farm looked peaceful and quiet, she was more than thankful that her arduous journey was over. After tea, which was served in a primitive fashion, she wandered about the unpruned orchard, thinking far sadder thoughts than girls usually have, then went to church.

The church was comparatively new; it was built next to the ivy-covered ruin which until a few years ago had been the sole place of worship for Church of England people. Dissent flourished in Willowbridge, and the service was scantily attended at the parish church, consequently each member of the congregation was distinctly visible.

Mary seated herself at the end of the church. Before long Mrs. Westlake came in accompanied by a handsome well-dressed girl—who looked round her as if she had come to witness a show and thought herself rather above it—and by Ronald.

His face wore a preoccupied look during the sermon—which though well meant, was not particularly interesting—and at last he turned his head round. She was aware that he had caught sight of her, but he scrupulously avoided looking again, and on leaving the church with his party did not so much as glance in her direction. It was no doubt right, but she felt vexed.

She remained in church until the voluntary was finished, then walked slowly towards the farm. Half way down the hill she met Ronald Westlake, who had escorted his mother and friend home, and returned quickly.

"I am rejoiced that you have returned in safety," he said. "And I thank you very much for writing. Your letter was the greatest possible relief to me. For your own sake I suppose I must not detain you any longer in conversation in the sight of the village, but come to me at nine o'clock tomorrow morning at my office, and then I will give you some particulars. Good-night."

He was about to raise his hat when again timely recollection prevented him.

"I suppose," he said somewhat bitterly, "that I must not pay you the ordinary civility due to a lady. Do I understand that in public you wish me to treat you only as a mill hand?"

"Certainly."

"Then I must not raise my hat to you. Good Heavens! what a world we live in!"

The momentary burst of irritation caused her to laugh. "Good-night, Sir," she replied demurely, "and thank you for giving me work."

He frowned and went away, thinking that no girl dressed in costly attire had ever looked so sweet as this girl in her plain white blouse and hat, and black skirt. There was a finish in everything she wore which stamped her unmistakably, and he dreaded the remarks he knew she would be subjected to from the factory girls.

The meeting had cheered her, it proved his offer of friendship had been real. "It is as he said," she thought, "for my sake he must be careful."

She presented herself at his office punctually at nine o'clock the next morning. He shook hands with her and told her to sit down.

"Now," he said, "I want to hear about this journey of yours. How did you accomplish it, you, a delicate girl, when sometimes, as I before said, even experienced moormen lose their way."

"I have travelled a good deal abroad. I have done a good deal of Alpine climbing. You know different people have different gifts and I have a wonderful facility for finding my way about. I never forget a road, or the main features of a locality. I could draw a map from memory of the way I went."

"You are a very clever girl," he said admiringly. "You made me terribly anxious until your letter came. I wandered about on the Moor for hours at night. I don't know whether I didn't expect to come across your dead body," he said with a laugh.

"But really I encountered no danger,