

foot was already on the step of the carriage, when some one touched her arm. She turned, and to her utter astonishment, beheld the decrepid form of old Rachel Lagon.

"One word with you, Mildred Rosier!"

"Mildred stepped a few paces back, bewildered and confounded. She felt that all eyes were upon her.

"Go not to B—lodge! The journey is not for good."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I have had a vision. A vision of woe, whether to you or to them. God knoweth. I saw last night in a dream, the trees that surround the lodge, bowed to the earth in a mighty gale. Mark me—that is for violent and sudden death. Take the advice of a friend—a *kinswoman!*" she said, with a bitter smile, "and stay at home."

"A mere dream. You cannot frighten me with a dream, Rachel."

"A mere dream!" muttered the hag. "Proud, unbelieving girl, first explain the nature of dreams, and then hold them in derision."

"I did not mean to vex you, Rachel," said Mildred, mildly. "I have promised Miss Stainer to go, and I cannot break my word. Come again when I return home, and I will bring you to my mother, and tell her your sad story. I am sure she will be very sorry for you."

"Aye—and forget me as soon as her daughter has done. Go thy way, Mildred Rosier! The ill luck of the family has not departed."

The bekame turned away and quickly was out of sight. Mildred still stood gazing after her, when William Stainer came to lead her once more to the carriage.

"Has the witch been telling your fortune, Miss Rosier? I would as soon hear a raven croak out my life, as be spoken to by you ill-omened hag."

"Poor woman! she has been very unfortunate," said Mildred, after she found herself safely seated in the carriage; "and I feel peculiarly interested in her sad fate, as I find that she is great-aunt of mine."

The young people exchanged looks of surprise at this intelligence; and William Stainer smiled sarcastically to himself, as if he pitied Mildred's simplicity in acknowledging such a humiliating fact. "Miss Rosier," he said; "if you are wise, you will carefully conceal such an important family secret."

"What good will that do?" quoth Mildred; "it will neither make the matter better nor worse."

"But it will keep it from the public. We cannot control the prejudices of society; but we

need not awaken them unnecessarily against ourselves."

"It 'appears weak and wicked in me," said Mildred; "to feel ashamed of my relationship to this insane, forlorn creature. The connexion is not of our own making; and as God placed this tie between us, and the miserable, calumniated woman, is suffering from many causes, I ought to do all in my power to serve her."

"Very amiable in you, Miss Rosier; and if you can do it under the rose—all well; but if you will take counsel from a friend, have nothing to do with her; eschew her company for the future. It will draw upon you unpleasant remarks. Are you aware of the character that this woman bears in the neighbourhood?"

"I never heard of her until the other day; and as I do not believe in witchcraft, I can well understand the manner in which she has been belied."

"True—but you must confess, Miss Rosier, that there is something very strange about this woman?"

Mildred recalled the scene in the cabin, and blushed deeply.

"I thought as much," cried the crafty Stainer, fixing his searching eyes upon her varying face. "You have had some dealings with the old hag, and she told you strange things?" This was said at random, in order to find out how far their acquaintance went, and upon what footing it stood. "And what did she communicate just now? You know that, however you may laugh at fables, her words have made an impression upon your heart?"

"They did not exactly concern me," said Mildred. "They were vague and mysterious."

"Tell us, dear Mildred, their import?" cried Charlotte, who had sat quietly holding Mildred's hand within her own, now suddenly turning to her. "It could not concern us?"

Mildred repeated the old woman's dream. Charlotte sat breathless, with her large eyes fixed upon her.

"It is strange and solemn," she said. "Who knows what is about to come to pass? I should like to see and speak with this woman."

"You will do no such thing," said William. "I really wonder how two such sensible girls can listen for a moment to such stuff."

"Oh! that I could look for one moment steadily into the dark future," said Charlotte, pressing her thin white hands upon her breast. "The weight of the present crushes out life and hope. This terrible uncertainty—this constant struggle with despair—will drive me from my senses."

"Dear Charlotte," said Mildred, taking one of the hands of her poor friend affectionately in