

speak loud! She is in the room above us; if she hears you it will be the death of her. Don't suppose I am talking at random; I have looked at his letters to her; I have got the confession of the servant girl. Such a confession! Emma is his victim, body and soul. I know it! I know that she sent him money (*my* money) from this place. I know that the servant (at *her* instigation) informed him by telegraph of the birth of the child. Oh, Benjamin, don't curse the poor helpless infant—such a sweet little girl! Don't think of it! don't think of it! Show me the letter that brought you here; I want to see the letter. Ah, I can tell you who wrote it! *He* wrote it. In his own interests; always with his own interests in view. Don't you see it for yourself? If I succeed in keeping this shame and misery a secret from everybody—if I take Emma away, to some place abroad on pretence of her health—there is an end of his hope of becoming your son-in-law; there is an end of his being taken into the business. Yes, he, the low-lived vagabond who puts up the shop-shutters, *he* looks forward to being taken into partnership, and succeeding you when you die! Isn't his object in writing that letter as plain to you now as the heaven above us? His one chance is to set your temper in a flame, to provoke the scandal of a discovery—and to force the marriage on us as the only remedy left. Am I wrong in making any sacrifice, rather than bind our girl for life, our own flesh and blood, to such a man as that? Surely you can feel for me, and forgive me, now. How could I own the truth to you, before I left London, knowing you as I do? How could I expect *you* to be patient, to go into hiding, to pass under a false name—to do all the degrading things that must be done, if we are to keep Emma out of this man's way? No! I know no more than you do where Farnaby is to be found. Hush! there is the door-bell. It's the doctor's time for his visit. I tell

you again I don't know—on my sacred word of honour, I don't know where Farnaby is. Oh, be quiet! be quiet! there's the doctor going upstairs! don't let the doctor hear you!

So far, she had succeeded in composing her husband. But the fury which she had innocently roused in him, in her eagerness to justify herself, now broke beyond all control. 'You lie!' he cried furiously. 'If you know everything else about it, you know where Farnaby is. I'll be the death of him, if I swing for it on the gallows! Where is he? where is he?'

A shriek from the upper room silenced him before Mrs. Ronald could speak again. His daughter had heard him; his daughter had recognised his voice.

A cry of terror from her mother echoed the cry from above; the sound of the opening and closing door followed instantly. Then there was a momentary silence. Then Mrs. Ronald's voice was heard from the upper room calling to the nurse, asleep in the front parlour. The nurse's gruff tones were just audible, answering from the parlour door. There was another interval of silence; broken by another voice—a stranger's voice—speaking at the window, close by.

'Follow me up-stairs, sir, directly,' the voice said in peremptory tones. 'As your daughter's medical attendant, I tell you in the plainest terms that you have seriously frightened her. In her critical condition I decline to answer for her life, unless you make the attempt at least to undo the mischief you have done. Whether you mean it or not, soothe her with kind words; say you have forgiven her. No! I have nothing to do with your domestic troubles; I have only my patient to think of. I don't care what she asks of you, you must give way to her now. If she falls into convulsions, she will die—and her death will be at your door.'

So, with feeble and feeble inter-