

of this news was tremendous. Fortunately, Ruth Powlett was not there to become the centre of talk, for she had that morning been carried off by Mr. Armstrong and Mary, to stay with them for a while in London. The cottage was shut up, and upon the following day a cart arrived from Plymouth to carry off the furniture, which had been only hired by the month. The evening before leaving, Mr. Armstrong had intercepted Hiram Powlett on his way to the snuggery, and taking him up to the cottage, where Ruth was spending the evening with Mary, informed him on the way of the strange discovery that had been made, and Ruth's share in it.

"I trust, Mr. Powlett," he said, "that you will not be angry with your daughter. She was placed in a terrible position, having the option of either denouncing as a murderer a man she had loved, or permitting another to lie under the imputation of guilt. And you must remember that she was prepared to come forward at the trial and tell the truth about the matter, had Captain Mervyn been found guilty. No doubt she acted wrongly; but she has suffered terribly, and I think that as my daughter has forgiven her for allowing Captain Mervyn to suffer for her silence, you may also do so."

Hiram Powlett had uttered many expressions of surprise and concern as he listened to the story. It seemed to him very terrible that his girl should have all the time been keeping a secret of such vital importance. He now said in a tone of surprise—

"I don't understand you, Mr. Armstrong, about your daughter. What has Miss Mary to do with forgiving? How has she been injured?"

"I don't know that upon the whole she has been injured," Mr. Armstrong said. "At least, I am sure she does not consider so. Still, I think she has something to forgive, for the fact is she is engaged to be married to Captain Mervyn, and would have been his wife a year ago had he not been resolved never to marry so long as this cloud remained over him."

Hiram Powlett was so greatly surprised at this news, that his thoughts were for a moment diverted from Ruth's misdemeanors. Captain Mervyn, the owner of the Hall, and now of the Carne estate also, was a very great man in the eyes of the people of Carnesford, and the news that he