

10 . IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM

She paused, and then said impulsively: "I don't know what you will think. I—I am so ashamed."

"I hope not. There is no need."

"I mean about—I am not English."

"Are you not? You answered me in English," I said gravely.

A little blush signalled vexation. "As if you did not know. It is no subject for laughter."

"God forbid that I should laugh. You are too evidently in deep trouble."

"And you know that I understood him all the time."

I bowed. "I ask no questions."

"I should like to explain, but I cannot. Oh, how humiliating!" she cried, and the distress and trouble in her tone touched me deeply.

"I am only a stranger, but if I can help you, I beg you to give me the opportunity."

"You cannot. You cannot; oh, I——" She left the sentence unfinished and turned away to stare along the road leading to the village, her arm resting upon a gate near. "If he comes back——" I heard her murmur; but the rest of the sentence was lost.

She was a mystery, and a very fascinating mystery too. Who could she be? Why travelling alone? What was her trouble? Why pretending to be English? Why had she started so at the mention of the police? These and a dozen other questions rushed into my mind in the minute or two that followed. I cudgelled my wits for something