

Bardon strolled upwards, his eyes always fixed upon the range of hills. He looked like some pale-faced townsman enjoying the moorland air. Presently he stared at his watch, then quickened speed, astonished to discover his hands bleeding from scratches, having no recollection of hurling himself through brakes of brambles. He remembered having fought his mother as a child; flinging a Bible into her face and knocking her senseless for the moment. This memory was so distinct it seemed almost as if his father would be waiting to thrash him. But the events of the last hour he could not recall.

He had come there to make sure of Gilda, and so far had not seen her. So much seemed clear; but now he had an idea she had promised to meet him upon a certain hill. There were five hills in front, and upon the highest she would certainly be awaiting him. A storm-cloud floated towards it; those black rocks would be hidden soon, and nobody would know what was taking place in the cloud. He took out a small pocket-mirror and stared into it. "A good-looking face, upon my soul," he muttered. He had forgotten Ernest; or rather could do no more than recall his own words; Ernest was not there. In his present state he was compelled to believe his own lies.

## IX

Ernest waited upon the hill, passing from one face of the rocks to the other. It was past the time, but Gilda did not come; and he remembered with a pang she had generally reached the place of appointment before himself. A few figures drifted among the heather far below, and the merry sound of voices came up to him, making him wonder again at the number of people who seemed happy. Cattle floundered through the marshes; wind whispered in his ears. He did not much care to glance towards the east, because of unmistakable signs threatening the end of that great day. A figure approached, but it was that of a man making, if not for him, at least towards the summit where no other than himself and Gilda had a right to stand.

"She is prevented from coming. Miss Wesley sends a message," he muttered, watching the figure clambering over boulders in a headlong speed.