

## THE CORNER PLANTATION.

A TALE.

Of late years the village of Wansborough had been singularly free from poachers, and poaching; though the Squire was a very strict preserver of game, and was exceedingly proud of his good and well stocked plantations. It was well known that he would be very severe with any poacher, and perhaps that, combined with the fact that the poor of the village were well looked after, and seldom wanted for anything, had kept thieves away from the game.

But, to everybody's surprise, and to Sir Robert's and the gamekeeper's anger, lately there had been a good deal of quiet poaching. Do what they would, the men could not be caught, and it was more than half suspected that they were professed poachers from the near town of Wortham, who came over to try and get the excellent pheasants and hares of which the Squire was so proud.

"Those men were at it again last night!" said Sir Robert at lunch one day.

"Has not Matthews been able to do anything?" asked his eldest daughter.

"No. Three of the keepers were out all the first part of the night, but the wary fellows kept close, and about four o'clock Matthews heard some guns, and went out, but was too late. So I have given orders that all the keepers are to go to bed early, and turn out at twelve o'clock to-night."

"A very good plan," said Teresa, "I hope they'll catch some of them."

"I hope they won't," murmured

Margaret Granton under her breath. She had a kind of half-sympathy with all poachers, and had particular reasons of her own for devoutly hoping that these particular men would not be caught. More than a suspicion had entered her mind that the poachers were not *all* Wortham men, that one, indeed, was the husband of a sick woman she often went to see; and she was living in hope that he might be induced to give up such a dishonest trade, whereas, she knew, that if he was caught, and punished, it would be the utter ruin of the man's character.

It was a warm September evening, and the girls at the hall were playing croquet on the smooth lawn—all but Margaret;—she came out of the low opened window with a dark cloak thrown round her shoulders, and crossed the lawn towards a little wicket gate leading into the park.

"Where are you going, Maggie?" called one of her sisters.

"Just to sit with Mrs. Styles for half-an-hour," she called back again.

"Hi! Rollo!" and she gave a long shrill whistle, which caused a curly, brown retriever to look up from gravely watching the game of croquet.

"Oh, Maggie," cried Teresa, "you ought not to go now; it will soon be dark."

"Mamma knows I am going, and I'll take Rollo; I'm going through the plantations, so it will not take me many minutes. Come, Rollo, if you mean to come, sir."

And Margaret went down through