

led to the public-house, and the public-house led to the company, and the company led to the poaching. It was the old story over again from beginning to end; and yet not the old story, but worse. The earnings, that had scarcely been enough for one when drink made a big hole in them, were a good deal less for two. The little place had already begun to lose some of the things that the lass had prided herself upon; the garden that I had done up for her coming was all wilderness and weeds; and though I, like the garden, had got smartened up a bit for the wedding, here I was, just as dirty and ragged, though the lass slaved and toiled to keep things nice and tidy. *And now—was the New Year going to be just the same?*

"There in the loneliness I seemed to see again the sad, pale face and the ghost of the baby; and, when once I saw it, it just looked at me out of everything. It was in the moon and the white-edged clouds, and then it was in the very shadows that flew over me like ghosts. I seemed to feel her hand on my shoulder, and her voice at my ear; and then I could see her far up in the clouds, as if she was gone, vanishing ever so far away in the mists. '*Don't, don't go to-night.*' I could hear the words as plain as if she spoke again in front of me.

"And then I thought of her dream; what did it mean? Grim things and dreadful would sometimes happen in poaching—that I knew well enough. And then I laughed at my folly. No; some day I might see a way out of it, 'but not now,' I said to myself; 'not now.' And so in the silence and waiting, having nothing else to do, I fell asleep. Tired as I was, I slept soundly enough, and knew nothing more until I woke up, cold, and wondering what had become of the others.

"Then the old church clock struck one. So then the Old Year had gone, and the New Year was come, and the men that I had waited for had come and gone, too. I got up, and hurried to the gate and listened. There was not a sound. I gave the signal which each understood, but there was no answer. Whilst I slept they must have passed by, not seeing me anywhere, and now there was no chance of my finding them. At first I was vexed enough to have missed them like this. And then there came again that pale-faced lass, and the poor little one at her breast. 'Come,' I said to myself, 'I shall be able to begin the New Year well, then, after all.'

"I turned in over the fields, and hurried across to the little cottage. As I came near, I saw, late as it was, a light shining in the window. I lifted the latch very quietly, for I dreaded to meet the lass, with her face paler and sadder for this long watching. As I came in I saw her kneeling at a chair fast asleep, with the Bible open before her. A tear was on her cheek; it glistened in the candle light; and there was the trace of tears on the page. There was not a sound except the quick and heavy breathing of the baby in its cradle. The lass looked so white, and with her hands hanging down all helpless over the chair, it was like one dead. I crept behind her, and looked over her shoulder at the