

But you had better cut them clean first, as if you had done it to make them mend better, or the coachman will see what made them give way ; and I am not going to tell lies to help you.'

The men looked at me, then at each other.

'I can do them,' said the woman. Her husband took up the saddle, and they walked away together. Then I turned my back on the rest disdainfully—I could not get over the meditated wrong to Flash—and spoke to my conductor.

'Do you have rheumatism very much?' I asked. My experience of sundry old crones who came for periodical doles to the Deanery having suggested my diagnosis of the case.

'I be main bad, sometimes. I be always stiff, and haven't never much use of my hands ; but sometimes I be very bad.'

'Is there anything I could bring you that would do you any good? Papa would give me anything, if I asked him.'

'Thank you kindly, missie. I don't know as there's much. Leastways unless it was some flannel, for bandages for my knee. I 'aint got none, now, and it do ache terrible bad sometimes.'

'I can easily get that for you,' I replied. 'I can buy some with my own money. I'll bring you some as soon as I can. Only, mind,' I said, 'I shall not come in. I shall not lose sight of my pony in the Chase again, while those people are about.'

'Nay, missie,' said one of the men. 'You need not fear. We're not so bad as that. If you make no mischief for us out of this business, you need have no fear a gipsy will ever touch a thing of yours again.'

'You wouldn't, perhaps,' I replied. 'But I would not trust them,' and I pointed contemptuously at my late antagonists, 'after what they've tried to do.'

'What one daren't do, another daren't,' replied the man, turning as he spoke to help his comrade, who had just returned with the saddle, which they forthwith proceeded to girth upon Flash.

'I think it'll do now, missie,' said the man who had brought it. 'My wife has done the best she could, but there's not much