

and you know it—if one of us married you, dear.”

Our Lady’s hands gripped on the rough flax, and her eyes frightened Harton.

“I—oh, no, no! Not that! Never that! Oh, Vic—please don’t make me marry you, Vic!”

Harton smiled a queer, twisted little smile.

“It is Crandeck, dear. He has loved you for a long while, and he wants to give you a happier life. We all think that it is best for Our Lady.”

She looked through the knotted, scant manukas into her world that she loved, and the sorrow on her still face hurt Harton’s soul.

“Do you? Tony, and “Pint-o’-Beer” Dick and Mrs Rooney—and all of you?”

“Yes; and your father. I know he would have wished it, dear. Crandeck is a real good fellow—”

Our Lady stood up.

“I will try,” she said; “but I can never love Crandeck like I do the plain, and I am not sure that you are right in thinking it best, Vic. Oh, it will hurt; but tell him I’ll try, Vic.”

“He’d sooner hear that from yourself,” said Harton, and departed.

So Our Lady gave her free word to Crandeck, and would have taken it back when she knew the whole of its meaning, but that Crandeck would not.

“I told you that I hated the place and the beastly hidden thing in the dream-part of it,” he said; “and I’m not going to wait here till its time is ripe. It might mean danger to you, dear heart; I seem to believe it does in my dream sometimes, and I’m blessed if I’ll chance it any longer. So we’ll go back to England, my own little love, and we’ll be awfully happy, and not hear the wind calling out of those unspeakably dreary mountains any more.”

Our Lady drew back from his kiss.

“Do you think you quite under-

stand?” she asked. “I am part of the plain, and it is part of me. It is alive, and it talks to me, and I love it—better than I shall ever love you, Crandeck. I’ll go with you because they all tell me there is—there is no other way. But it will be calling to me in the night, Crandeck; and I shall listen—and want to come back—always—always. Do you quite understand?”

“No, I don’t, and I don’t want to. You are a fanciful little lady, my sweetheart, and you will learn to love quick flesh better than dead earth. I’m going to teach you—and it’ll be one of the things that don’t hurt in the learning.”

But Tony knew better. He told Harton so as they rode home through the night, past the south-eastern corner of what had been Jamison’s boundary, with the warm breath of the light nor-west in their faces.

“Crandeck’s a good enough sort of chap—but wood and iron can’t assimilate, Harton, and we ought to have known it before. The plain is not even good arable land to him, and to her—neither of us know a tithe of what it is to her!”

“What in thunder are you driving at?”

“Have inanimate things soul-power over humans?”

“Bah!” said Harton; “you’re talking drivel.” But he smoked in painful thought until Tony jerked his colt back on its haunches with a quick hand dropped to the other man’s bridle-rein.

“Listen! That’s her singing. Good Heavens! An’ she’s a full four miles from the house!”

Harton, peering with screwed eyes past the bare grey trunks of cabbage-trees, saw Our Lady’s young, earnest face clear to the moon, and heard her words in the broad silence of the plain that listened to her.

“Good-bye, good-bye, dear wind of the red dawn and the evening! Good-bye, mountains—and smell of the flax—and the trampling nor-