

On the verandah, Alice turned to him with the same full look she had given him at first, only it was clear as a morning sky, and with it she gave him her hand. Sheridan looked into the cloudless depths of her eyes, as if searching for the word that only reached his senses through the warm pressure of her hand.

It was a silent meeting and parting, but it was completely eloquent and decisive. They had said all that each longed for, in the exquisite language of the soul. As Sheridan was departing, he turned once more to Alice.

'I shall come here this evening.'

She only smiled, and he went away with a satisfied heart.

On that morning, Mr. Wyville had started early for Fremantle, his mind revolving two important steps which he meant to take that day. Since the arrival of the ship he had been disquieted by the presence of Draper in the Colony. He questioned his own wisdom in bringing him there, or in keeping him there when he might have let him go.

But, in his wide experience of men, and of criminals, Mr. Wyville had never met one who was wholly bad; he had discovered, under the most unsightly and inharmonious natures, some secret chord that, when once struck, brought the heart up to the full tone of human kindness. This chord he had sought for in Draper. He had hoped that in the day of humiliation his heart would return to her he had so cruelly wronged.

There was only one step more to be taken—to release Harriet, and, if she would, let her seek her husband and appeal once more to his humanity.

On this day, Mr. Wyville intended to issue a pardon to Harriet Draper. The Government had awarded to Alice Walmsley, as some form of recompense for her unjust suffering, a considerable sum of money; and this money Mr. Wyville held, at Alice's request, for the benefit of Harriet.

Arrived at Fremantle, he proceeded to the prison, and signed the official papers necessary for the release. The money was made payable to Harriet at the Bank of Fremantle. He did not see her himself, but he took means of letting her know the residence of her husband; and he also provided that Draper should be informed of her release.

He watched her from his office window as she was led to the prison gate. And as she took the pardon in her hand, and turned toward the outer world in a bewildered way, the utter misery and loneliness of the woman smote Mr. Wyville's heart.

'God help her!' he murmured; 'she has no place to go to but to him.'

This done, Mr. Wyville set his mind toward Perth, where, on his return that day, he was to enter on another act of even deeper personal importance. Somehow, his heart was heavy as he walked from the prison, thinking of the next few hours. He had been more deeply impressed than he thought, perhaps, by the wretched fate of the poor woman he had just released.

At the stable where his horses were put up, he found Officer Lodge, who, with Ngarra-jil, he sent on to Perth in a light carriage before him. He followed on horseback. As he rode through the town, he passed the bank. In the portico sat a woman on a bench, with her head bent low on her hands. He was startled by the attitude; it recalled to his mind the figure of the unhappy Harriet, as he had seen her in the lock-up of Walton-le-Dale.

Something induced him to look at the woman a second time. As he did so, she raised her face, and smiled at a man who came quickly out of the Bank, pressing something like a heavy pocket-book into his breast. The woman was Harriet; and the man was Draper, who had just drawn her money from the Bank.

Mr. Wyville was in no mood to ride swiftly, so he let his horse choose its own pace. When about half way to Perth, however, he broke into a canter, and arrived shortly after the trap containing Ben Lodge and his native servant.

Mr. Wyville had not occupied the official residence of the Comptroller-General; but had kept his quarters

at the hotel, a very comfortable establishment. As he dismounted in the yard, Ben Lodge held his horse, and seemed in garrulous humor.

'Mr. Sheridan were here, sir,' said Ben, 'and he asked after you. He said he were going to Mr. Little's to-night, and he hoped to see you there.'

Mr. Wyville nodded to Ben, and was going toward the house; but Officer Lodge looked at him with a knowing look in his simple face, as if enjoying some secret pleasure.

'He's found her at last, sir,' he said.

Mr. Wyville could only smile at the remark, which he did not at all comprehend.

He were always fond of her. I've known him since he were a boy.'

Still Mr. Wyville did not speak; but he seemed interested, and he ceased to smile. Old Ben saw that he might continue.

'I thought at one time that they'd be married. It's years ago; but I see them as plain as if it were yesterday. He were a handsome fellow when he came home from sea—just like his father, old Captain Sheridan—I knew him well, too,—and just to think!'

Here old Ben stopped, and led the horse toward the stable, satisfied with his own eloquence. Mr. Wyville stood just where he had dismounted. He looked after Ben Lodge, then walked toward the hotel; but he changed his mind, and returned, and entered the stable, where Ben was unsaddling the horse.

'Was Mr. Sheridan alone when he started for Mr. Little's?' he asked.

'Yessir, he were alone.' Then Ben added, with a repetition of the knowing look: 'Happen, he don't want no company, sir; he never did when he were a boy, when she was 'round.'

Mr. Wyville looked at Ben Lodge in such a way that the old man would have been frightened had he raised his head. There was a sternness of brow rarely seen on the calm, strong face; and there was a light almost of terror in the eye.

'He were very fond of Alice, sure-ly,' said the old fellow, as he went on with his work; 'and I do believe he's just as fond of her to-day.'

'Do you tell me,' said Mr. Wyville, slowly, 'that Mr. Sheridan knew Miss Walmsley, very intimately, in Walton-le-Dale, years ago?'

'O, yessir; they was very hintimate, no doubt; and they were going to be married, folk said, when that precious rascal Draper hinterfered. They say in Walton to this day that he turned her head by lies against the man she loved.'

Ben Lodge carried the saddle to another part of the yard. Had he looked round he would have seen Mr. Wyville leaning against the stall, his face changed by mental suffering almost past recognition. In a minute, when the old man returned, Mr. Wyville passed him in silence, and entered the hotel.

The door of his room was locked for hours that day, and he sat beside his desk, sometimes with his head erect, and a blank suffering look in his eyes, and sometimes with his face buried in his hands. The agony through which his soul was passing was almost mortal. The powerful nature was ploughed to its depths. He saw the truth before him, as hard and palpable as a granite rock. He saw his own blind error. His heart, breaking from his will, tried to travel again the paths of sweet delusion which had brought so great and new a joy to his soul. But the strong will resisted, wrestled, refused to listen to the heart's cry of pain—and, in the end, conquered.

But the man had suffered wofully in the struggle. The lines on his bronzed face were manifestly deeper, and the lips were firmer set, as, toward evening, he rose from his seat and looked outward and upward at the beautiful deep sky. His lips moved as he looked, repeating the bitter words that were becoming sweet to his heart—'Thy will be done.'

Two hours later, when the glory of the sunset had departed, and the white moon was reflected in the mirror-like Swan, Will Sheridan and Alice stood beside the river. With one hand he held one of hers, and