

got into a row at the Griffin. And yet I shouldn't be ashamed of it. I should count my black eye the more respectable of the two. I should also regard the evil judgment much as another black eye, and wait till they both came round again. Lead on, Sim."

They left their horses with Burton, and went towards the camp. But when they reached the slope behind which it lay, much to Sim's discomfiture, my father, instead of lying down at the foot of it, as he expected, and creeping up the side of it, after the doom of the serpent, walked right up over the brow, and straight into the camp, followed by Wagtail. There was nothing going on—neither tinkering nor cooking; all seemed asleep; but presently out of two or three of the tents, the dingy squalor of which no moonshine could silver over, came three or four men, half undressed, who demanded of my father, in no gentle tones, what he wanted there.

"I'll tell you all about it," he answered. "I'm the parson of this parish, and, therefore, you're my own people, you see."

"We don't go to *your* church, parson," said one.

"I don't care; you're my own people for all that, and I want your help."

"Well, what's the matter? Whose cow's dead?" said the same man.

"This evening," returned my father, "one of my children is missing; and a woman who might be one of your clan—mind, I say *might be*; I don't know, and I mean no offence—but such a woman was seen about the place. All I want is the child, and if I don't find her I shall have to raise the county. I should be very sorry to disturb you; but I'm afraid, in that case, whether the woman be one of you or not, the place will be too hot for you. I'm no enemy to honest gipsies, but you know there is a set of tramps who call themselves gipsies who are nothing of the sort—only thieves. Tell me what I had better do to find my child. You know all about such things."

The men turned to each other, and began talking in under-tones, and in a language of which what my father heard he could not understand. At length the spokesman of the party addressed him again—

"We'll give you our word, sir, if that will satisfy you," he said, more respectfully than he had spoken before, "to send the child home directly if anyone should bring her to our camp. That's all we can say."

My father saw that his best chance lay in accepting the offer.

"Thank you," he said. "Perhaps I may have an opportunity of serving you some day."

They in their turn thanked him politely enough, and my father and Sim left the camp.

Upon this side the moor was skirted by a plantation which had been gradually creeping up the hill from the more sheltered hollow. It was here bordered by a deep trench, the bottom of which was full of young firs. Through the plantation there was a succession of green rides, by which the outskirts of my father's property could be reached. But, the moon being now up, my father resolved to cross the trench and halt for a time, watching the moor from the shelter of the firs, on the chance of the woman's making her appearance; for if she belonged to the camp, she would most probably approach it from the plantation, and might be overtaken before she could cross the moor to reach it.

They had lain ensconced in the firs for about half-an-hour, when suddenly, without any warning, Wagtail rushed into the underwood and vanished. They listened with all their ears, and in a few moments heard his joyous bark, followed instantly, however, by a howl of pain; and before they had got many yards in pursuit, he came cowering to my father's feet, who, patting his side, found it bleeding. He bound his handkerchief round him, and fastening the lash of Sam's whip to his collar that he might not go too fast for them, told him to find Theodora. Instantly he pulled away through the brushwood, giving a little yelp now and then as the stiff remnant of some broken twig or stem hurt his wounded side.

Before we reached the spot for which he was making, however, my father heard a rustling, nearer to the outskirts of the wood, and the same moment Wagtail turned and tugged fiercely in that direction. The figure of a woman rose up against the sky, and began to run for the open space beyond. Wagtail and my father pursued at speed, my father crying out that if she did not stop he would loose the dog on her. She paid no heed, but ran on.

"Mount and head her, Sim. Mount, Burton. Ride over everything!" cried my father, as he slipped Wagtail, who shot through the underwood like a bird, just as she reached the trench, and in an instant had her by the gown. My father saw something gleam in the moonlight, and again a howl broke from Wagtail, who was evidently once more wounded. But he held on. And now the horsemen, having crossed the trench, were approaching her in front, and my father was hard upon her behind. She gave a peculiar cry, half a shriek, and half a howl, clasped the child to her bosom, and stood rooted like a tree, evidently in the hope that her friends, hearing her signal, would come to her rescue. But it was too late. My father rushed upon her the instant she cried out. The dog was holding her by the poor ragged skirt, and the horses were reined snorting

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