

## THE VICAR'S GOVERNESS.

CHAPTER XXVIII.  
a scene on earth so full  
of cheering care  
in the flowers and  
brightness  
of art.

come down by the mid-night train to Langham, to drive across to Pillingham, and get back again to London by the evening train. "I am sorry," she said, "but I am not simple." says Mrs. Branscombe, in a strange tone. Then follows an unbroken silence that lasts for several minutes, and George sees poor Graham's face as it is turned carefully aside, but the hand that is resting on a stout branch twined near her sleeve is still there. "She is like the pretty filbert maid about dead white against the gray-green of the bark, as though extreme pressure, born of mental anguish and pain, had it compelled the poor little fingers to grasp with undue force whatever may be nearest to them."

"That silence has become positively unbearable," George says slowly.—

"And does all the world know this?"

"I hope not," says the faithful Gra-

mham, with a burst of indignation;

"even if they did, I don't see how it

can matter less than a private lie."

"You are a good soul, Graham," says

Mrs. Branscombe, wearily.

Something in her manner frightens

Graham more than all that has gone

before him.

"Oh, madam, do not pay any atten-

tion to such a wicked tale," she says,

hastily, "and forgive me for ever

not knowing the master could pos-

sibly believe in it."

"Of course not." The answer comes

with unnatural calmness from her white lips. Graham bursts into fresh tears, and flings her arms over his head.

Mrs. Branscombe, suddenly

realizing that at this, through

her head, she pulls

or two and places them in the

lap of her white gown, and bends

over the basin of a fountain looks

an image, and smiles at it, as

she may.

Then she blushes at her own vanity,

tells herself she will give a little fur-

ther, as (who has come in Sartis

from Hy) is doing in the shiv-

er.

The path by which this goes is a

thickly lined with shrubs on the right,

hand side, that she cannot see through them, nor can she see them from the beyond. You come to her from the distance, that, as she advances up the path, grow even louder. She is not thinking of them, or, indeed, of anything but the extreme loveliness of the hour, when words fall upon her ear that make themselves intelligible and send the blood with a quick rush to her heart.

"It is a disgraceful story altogether; and to have the master's name mixed up with it is shameful."

The voice, beyond doubt, belongs to Graham, the upper housemaid, and is full of honest indignation.

Hardy begins—she has heard

right, and, about any thought of

scaring George stands still upon the walk, and waits in breathless

silence for what may come next.

"Well, I think it is shameful," says

Andrews, "but I believe it is the truth for all that. Father saw him with his own eyes. He has

but one eye, and he is as it is now, he

has seen him plain."

"Do you mean to tell me," says Gra-

ham, with increasing interest, "that your master had either hand, act, or part in that? Ruth, sit down, sit down!"

leaves home?"

"Well, I only say what father told

me," says Andrews, in a half-sighed

fashion, "and I am not ashamed by her

anymore. And he ain't to lie much.

He saw him with her in the wood the

night she went to Lunnon, or when

they were walking along the road to

Lunnon Station. They do say, too, that he

had seen him plain."

A quick light footprint, a falling aside

of branches, and George pale, but composed, turns before them. Andrews, losing his head, drops the knife he is holding, and Graham grows a fine purple.

"I don't think you are doing much

good here, Andrews," says Mrs. Branscombe, pleasantly. "You look

well enough, but to the eastern walks, and see what can be done there."

Andrews, only too thankful for the chance of escape, picks up his knife and lets out a sharp retort.

Then George, turning to Graham, says slowly:

"Now, tell me every word of it, from beginning to end."

Her assumed unconsciousness has vanished. Every particle of color has flown from her face, and she is a complete contrast to her, who is shining with a new and most enviable brilliancy. Per-

haps she knows this herself, as after the first swift glance of her eyes, her eyes are fixed upon the ground, and she is concentrated once more with firm composure and reality.

George's feelings are this moment

would be impossible to describe. After

many months of afterward—she

herself gave some idea of them when

she declared to the cook that she

should have a second

child.

"I tell you, You

Branscombe, I will have

a heart!" She

is impatient,

peat so wile

angstfully, "I

madam, 'nother what

you can't

memory, or and—

reproach, or invol-

to her in a low

info tears,

the old

afternoon at Hyndale

told it to our man,

fully. "You know,

he said it to me,

the composed the ev-

ing London that eve-

ning, madam, we all know that

the woman, 'nother story is, but

wicked, how false, and it is wise

people only who will not give heed to

them."

"What fed Andrews to believe it was

your master?" She speaks in a loud

confession, as though she had not

heard a word of the preceding

speech. In truth, she has not listened

to it, her whole mind being engrossed

with the most hateful thing that

has fallen into her life.

"He says he saw him—that he knew

him by his height, his figure, his size,

as though the coat he wore was a light

overcoat, such as the master gener-

ally uses."

"And how can he explain away the

whole of his master's being in town that evening?"

At this question Graham unmistak-

ably hesitates before replying. When

the doors answer, it is with evident

reluctance.

"You see, madam," she says, "very

gently, "it would be quite possible to

When Sir James has gone, he comes over to her, and leaning his elbow on the child, she stands in such a position as enables him to command a full view of her face.

"Scrope takes a great interest in that girl Ruth," he says, purposefully introducing the subject, "and I am sorry to say that no tidings of her have ever since reached Pillingham." Georgia makes no reply. The nights have already grown chilly, and there is a fire in the grate, warming her hands. "There is a fire in the grate," she says, "and I am warming my hands." Georgia looks at her hands, and then at the fire. "I am looking at the prettiest filbert maid about dead white against the gray-green of the bark, as though the extreme pressure, born of mental anguish and pain, had compelled the poor little fingers to grasp with undue force whatever may be nearest to them."

"I can hardly understand her silence," persists Dorian, "I fear, wherever she goes, she is to be pitied."

Georgia rises her great violet eyes to his.

"She is very beautiful," says Mrs. Branscombe, wearily.

"I am not the only美丽的woman in the world," she says, "but I am the only one who is not a woman in the world."

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"I am not the only one who is not a woman