

MY LODGER'S WIFE.

The alarm from Fenian outbreaks is too recent to require any description here, even if I were capable of writing one; but as a plain widow woman—which I am—I have no pretension to write history. I only know that down at Weymouth, as well as everywhere else, we were always being startled by some fresh report of what the Fenians had done, or were going to do, generally the latter. This was common to all places, but we had special interest in them at Weymouth, because most of the men, when convicted, were sent to Portland, and we sometimes caught a sight of them on the platform of our station, when they were changed to the little branch line. I suppose almost everybody who reads these words knows that Portland Island is only two or three miles from our town, and that there are nearly two thousand convicts there. They have built the breakwater, and made a regular castle on the island, and so have done a great deal of work there, if they never did any before they came.

them, he painted my shutters, he painted my flower-boxes and was frequently tripping the flowers in them, while he actually went two or three times to the White Lion, the public house at the corner of the street, and drank his ale at the bar, instead of allowing the port man to bring it for him, as had hitherto been the case. I took the liberty of saying—for I was quite old enough to be a mother—that I hoped this last would not grow into a habit which might lead to harm, and to my surprise, he burst out crying, and cried so bitterly that I thought he would go into hysterics. I tried to soothe him, and took his hand in mine—he had a soft and delicate hand, too; but he rose, and, musing himself by a great effort, went up to his room. In the morning he apologized for disturbing me by his absurd ways; he had had news from home, he said. Of course, I told him not to think of anything of the kind; but in my own mind I wondered where he got the letters from which had so upset him, as I was quite certain the postman had not been near my house all day. All this time I had heard no more of the situation he expected; but soon after, the same stranger called again—Mr. Brown, I mean. He called very late one night, and went straight up to Lewis' room, came down in a very short time, and left without a word, as before. As I had admitted him, I had a fair chance of confirming my opinion; he was a warden, I was sure. He was a tall, big-bearded, big-eyed man, and dressed in a way which was very square when he spoke to you, as a soldier does; weather-browned, as all the Portland warders are, and with a certain quick, watchful look of the eye, which they all acquire very soon.

The next morning brought a heavy fall of rain, with gusts of wind from the sea; and on taking up Mr. Lewis' breakfast, I noticed that he looked excited, if not wild, and I feared he had taken cold. I told him so, but he said:—"No. The fact is, Mrs. Gerran, I must now tell you a little secret; I am married, and I expect my wife from town to-day." "Indeed!" I exclaimed, for I had never dreamed of such a thing. "Yes," he went on, "she is coming this evening, and I am a little worried to think what an unpleasant ride she will have." "She certainly will, poor thing," I said; "but I will do my best to make her comfortable, Mr. Lewis." "I know you will," he replied. "I thank you heartily, Mrs. Gerran. We rely on you very much."

As all attempts to recapture the convict had failed, and so there was no longer, I suppose, a hope of keeping it quiet, that night great bills were stuck up about the town, offering £500 reward for the apprehension of the convict; and when I went out for an hour or two, and when I came back, I found my windows cleaned, the mould in the flower-boxes turned over, and various little things done, which told me that Lewis had been at work again, as, indeed, I found was the case. He had, unfortunately, been taken very unwell just before I came home, but previously he had been busy as usual in the front of the house.

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